

**HETERODOXY IN MASSACHUSETTS**

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ABSTRACT

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In Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, Perry Miller asserts that, from 1630-1650, the clergy and magistrates of Massachusetts Bay worked in harmony to secure religious orthodoxy within the colony. Miller's evidence is based largely upon the "learned" minds of New England--that of the clergy and magistrates themselves--and, therefore, is somewhat suspect.

This thesis attempts to modify Miller's assertion. Although many of the ecclesiastical and civil authorities publicly demanded orthodoxy, there was a de facto acceptance of dissent, as long as this dissent posed no overt threat to the religious or political structure of the colony. Civil and ecclesiastical records tend to support the contention that there was, in fact, a great deal of religious heterodoxy within the first generation of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

If the old phrase, "mind over matter," rings at all true, then certainly Perry Miller has straddled the New England mind over seventeenth century American historiography. In Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, a precursor of the monumental New England Mind and a classic in its own right, Miller demonstrates Massachusetts' lay and spiritual leadership grappling successfully not only with the old Puritan dilemma--how to be in this world, yet, not of it--but, also, how to rule and keep God's Word. To be successful, Winthrop and his colleagues had to trim their sails, if not, perhaps, on the Arbella with their "affectionate" goodbye to England, then certainly when they launched their own ship of state in Massachusetts Bay. Although Congregationalists, they disowned Separatism; although opponents of arbitrary government, they wished to rule without written codification; although Protestants, they would entrust biblical interpretation not to the layman, but to the minister. Miller's interpretation of this first generation is the story of the victory of church over sect--a victory which succeeded in the colony only after it had been



won in the minds of the political and religious leadership of Massachusetts Bay.

There is a sharp distinction between the concept of church and sect:

The church type, as Troeltsch put it, is mobile and adaptive; it is dominated by the world because it wishes to dominate the world. 'A church tries to organize the forces of society on whatever level they are found and to control them for its own stated ends--which have been for the most part, individual salvation.'

The sect, on the other hand, is radical in its stress on voluntary membership and perfection. It tends to withdraw from the world for fear of contamination. It rejects compromise. . . . The typical sect prefers isolation to compromise.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Congregational leaders who were to settle New England vehemently denied that they wished to separate from England, Miller reveals that much of their thinking was, and remained, Separatist. Each was a devout Puritan, and ". . . the Puritan was sure he had an unanswerable cause"; if his cause was God's, then his opponent must be Antichrist.<sup>2</sup> As Congregationalists, they believed that voluntary consociation of members in individual congregations was the proper form of church government, indeed, the only form allowed by the Bible.

Yet, these men did not take the radical, though logical, step of the Separatist; they did not physically

<sup>1</sup>Ernst Troeltsch, Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, quoted by Thomas Hault, The Sociology of Religion (New York: Dryden Press, 1958), p. 78.

<sup>2</sup>Perry Miller, Orthodoxy in Massachusetts (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965), p. 23.

withdraw from the unregenerate. That, Miller asserts, would have been political suicide.<sup>1</sup> Instead, a spiritual compromise was made:

If the good Christians of a parish came to service voluntarily, they could then disregard the unregenerate who were constrained to be present, and assume that they alone were assembling to covenant with God.<sup>2</sup>

In settling New England, the magistrates and elders established the Congregational Way by continuing this ability to adapt. When Wilson was elected minister at Charlestown, Winthrop wrote that the election did not intend Wilson to renounce the ministry he received in England.<sup>3</sup> Voluntary support for the minister, a salient feature of non-Separatist Congregationalism, was soon exchanged for public support; at the first Court of Assistants, ". . . the first thing propounded is, how the ministers shall be maintained," and a house was ordered built, at public charge, for Mr. Wilson.<sup>4</sup> The first General Court after the Synod of 1637 ordered that those who did not voluntarily contribute to the churches ". . . shalbee compelled thereto by assessment and distress to bee levied by the constable, or other officer of the towne; . . ."

<sup>1</sup> Miller, Orthodoxy, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in J. B. Felt, Ecclesiastical History of New England (2 vols.; Boston: Congregational Library Association, 1855), I, p. 141.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Frothingham, Jr., History of Charlestown, Massachusetts (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1845), p. 68.

Nothing more strikingly signals the transformation of the English heterodoxy into the New England orthodoxy than this complete reversal of the original position.<sup>1</sup>

Laws were established against absenting oneself from church meetings.<sup>2</sup> No group could form a church without the approval of the magistrates and the majority of the established churches.<sup>3</sup> In 1646 the General Court made it illegal to disturb the order of the churches ". . . by open renouncing their church estate, or their ministry, or oth<sup>r</sup> ordinances dispensed in y<sup>m</sup>. . . ." <sup>4</sup> In 1653 it decreed that no one would be allowed to preach without the consent of the elders of the four closest churches or of the County Court.<sup>5</sup> A year later only men who were orthodox ". . . concerninge the mayne points of Xstian religion . . ." could serve as deputies.<sup>6</sup> And, of course, the whole political structure was based upon a franchise limited to church members.

Exemplifying Troeltsch's comment, the leaders of Massachusetts were thus compromising with the world in order

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, Orthodoxy, p. 256.

<sup>2</sup> e.g., law of March 4, 1634/5; cf. Nathaniel Shurtleff, Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England (5 vols.; Boston: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1853-54), I, p. 140. Hereafter referred to as Massachusetts Bay Records.

<sup>3</sup> law of March 3, 1634/5; Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>4</sup> law of November 4, 1646; Ibid., II, p. 178.

<sup>5</sup> law of May 18, 1653; Ibid., IV, Pt. 1, p. 122.

<sup>6</sup> law of October 17, 1654; Ibid., III, p. 357.

that they might dominate it and establish their city on a hill. One further example may be noted in the career of John Endecott. As governor of the settlement at Salem, this stern Puritan was instrumental in instituting the first Congregational church in the colony. When he sent home the influential Browns, for gathering into a service and reading from the Book of Common Prayer, he was chastised by Craddock, according to Miller, for his lack of tact.<sup>1</sup> Under orders to squelch the raising of tobacco (it being injurious to health and morals), his attempt to do so, was resisted by the original colonists, whose appeal to the Court of Assistants in England was upheld, the monetary profit noted.<sup>2</sup> It was Endecott who cut down the maypole at Merry Mount (changing the name to Mount Dagon) in punishing the peaky Thomas Morton. But Morton was not the King of England, and when, in his zeal Endecott publicly cut the "popish" cross of Saint George from the English flag, he was reprovved by the General Court and denied office for one year. Protesting the Court's treatment of his friend, Roger Williams, Endecott was committed. Released after apologizing, he followed Winthrop as the dominant executive of the colony and never again embarrassed the government of Massachusetts Bay, except, perhaps, in his zealous punishment of the Quakers. They,

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<sup>1</sup>Miller, Orthodoxy, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup>Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, Dictionary of National Biography, From the Earliest Times to 1900 (22 vols.; Oxford: University Press, 1964), VI, p. 785.

like Norton, were unlikely to threaten Massachusetts politically or militarily.

What Endecott had, at first, failed to understand was the precarious position of the new settlement. Winthrop and his fellow Assistants had to fear the arbitrary power of Charles I and Laud, as well as dealing with the powerful Sir Ferdinando Gorges, an Anglican whose patent conflicted with theirs. The Congregational Way had to prove itself one of stability and social order. "It was, in short, to demonstrate conclusively that Congregationalism could and should be a competent state religion."<sup>1</sup>

The second half of Orthodoxy in Massachusetts is devoted to demonstrating how the ministers and Assistants worked jointly in this task. The loyal opposition ministry of England was now the sole religious leadership of New England; its function was, thus, drastically altered:

. . . the task of dominating a new environment called upon the system to subordinate the radical insistencies of its youth to the responsibilities of a vested interest. The duty of the Church was no longer to hold aloft a barely attainable ideal of Christian virtue, but rather to train up law-abiding members.<sup>2</sup>

Ministerial control of the congregations of the Bay included a suppression of the democratic tendencies of Congregationalism. Although each congregation could choose and censure its officers, the ministers asserted that they

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, Orthodoxy, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

received their power of office, not from the congregation, but from God. And, as they were the official interpreters of the Bible, these same clergymen, with their elders, examined candidates for church membership, prepared censures, and ran the meetings. The congregation, in fact, ". . . resolved itself in the practice of doing what it was told. . . ."1

In dealing with specific problems, the ministry clearly revealed that it was thinking as a church, not a sect. Although, ideally, the church was only for the regenerate, it was admitted that hypocrites could and did sneak in. But, for a visible church, what was important was profession, and, at least, hypocrites were publicly obedient. In contrast, many ministers admitted that there probably were regenerate men and women outside any of the churches, but the fault lay with these people, not with the system. Concerning the question of baptism, ". . . the most serious threat to uniformity the New England Way had yet encountered . . .," the Synod of 1648 did not even take a stand.2 Yet, this synod did formalize Congregationalism:

It was no longer the polity of small and isolated congregations like those of Amsterdam and Scrooby. It was now substantially the established church of New England, and as such was united by common interests, and bound together by the necessarily conservative attitude toward other politics which such a position implied.3

<sup>1</sup> Miller, Orthodoxy, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>3</sup> Williston Walker, The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), p. 166.

The conservative attitude of the ministry was matched by the magistrates. Firstly, the government of the colony had to demonstrate that it was independent of England enough to exercise direct control over the populace. Already in 1632, Winthrop was fortifying the Bay against the possible arrival of a royal governor. By the mid 1640's, the General Court was denying right of appeal to England and arrested those who tried.

Next, the magistrates had to contain any tendency towards democracy. Although they lost a few battles (e.g., the Body of Liberties replacing arbitrary government), with ecclesiastical assistance they still were able "... to mould the commonwealth."<sup>1</sup> The Assistants instituted religion as a necessary qualification for citizenship, and the ministers used their power over their congregations to expedite state policy. For example, in 1634 many residents of Newtown petitioned for removal to Connecticut. The Deputies approved, but the Assistants negated this approval. The Reverend John Cotton supported the veto, and the Assistants' ruling stood. The magistrates also used synods to strengthen their position; although the synod was to be only advisory and not compulsory, a decision reached by the most learned and official interpreters of the Bible proved almost irresistible.

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, Orthodoxy, p. 239.

In Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, then, Perry Miller established the thesis that the Massachusetts magistrates and clergy of the first generation successfully cooperated in the establishment of orthodoxy and the suppression of error. His supportive evidence is, indeed, formidable; yet, it is overwhelmingly the product of the learned minds of the colony's religious and lay leadership. As Professor Michael McGiffert has pointed-out, was the "articulate, educated view" the only view?<sup>1</sup> Was it, in fact, even the majority position?

A second criticism McGiffert records is Miller's emphasis on the rationalism of New England Puritanism. Perhaps it has been over-emphasized to the detriment of the emotional aspect. In an article entitled "Puritanism and New Settlement," Robert A. East states:

A distinctive force in the expansion of the New England frontier in the seventeenth century and later which is insufficiently appreciated is a certain explosive character in Calvinistic Puritanism itself. The dynamic church principle inherent in the doctrine of every man his own priest was in constant disharmony with the severe external authority attempted in practice by the Puritan clergy and elders. From this dichotomy of conflicting principles and authority (only temporarily and uneasily reconciled in the congregational system), it resulted that, somewhat on the principle of rocket acceleration, Puritan settlements in the early colonies divided and subdivided until it would seem that every saint would eventually have his own habitat as well as his own church.<sup>2</sup>

East points to the founding of Connecticut as one such early

<sup>1</sup>Michael McGiffert, "American Puritan Studies in the 1960's," William and Mary Quarterly, XXVII (January, 1970), 58.

<sup>2</sup>Robert A. East, "Puritanism and New Settlement," New England Quarterly, XVII (June, 1944), 255.



example; he feels that prominent among the reasons for removal was the fact

that too many of the great divines and elders could not live together harmoniously. Hooker undoubtedly felt that the Congregational system was in serious danger in Boston.<sup>1</sup>

In deemphasizing this emotive dynamism, Miller, in effect, has joined Winthrop, Cotton, and their colleagues in ignoring the really radical origins of Congregationalism--sixteenth century Anabaptism. In 1525 at Waldshut, Germany, Balthasar Hubmaier resigned as priest of his parish and immediately was elected minister by his congregation; this marked the inception of Congregationalism.<sup>2</sup> Simultaneously, peasants in revolt demanded congregational government, a located clergy, and preaching the gospel from the Bible. Several aspects of the Anabaptist church view are identical to those of New England Congregationalists:

1. The church must be a voluntary association, taking its spirit and discipline from those who intentionally belong to its fellowship.

2. The church must follow the guide lines of the New Testament as to confession of faith and organizational pattern.

In the history of Christianity there have been some who said that the Bible was ambiguous as to doctrine and organization. The traditional orthodox view has been that it gives clear indications on doctrine but is ambiguous as to organizational pattern. The Anabaptists maintained that the New Testament was clear both as to the content of Christian faith and

<sup>1</sup> East, "Puritanism and New Settlement," p. 259.

<sup>2</sup> Franklin Littell, The Anabaptist View of the Church. A Study in the Origins of Sectarian Protestantism (Boston: Starr King Press, 1958), p. 17.

the organizational procedures of the true Christian Community.<sup>1</sup>

Also, it was of great significance that the Bible, recently translated into German, was avidly read and discussed by many handicraftsmen and peasants. Of course, there were marked differences between the early Anabaptists and the New England Congregationalists (e.g., concerning predestination and infant baptism), but these differences do not negate the radical heritage derived by the latter from the former.

This heritage was diametrically opposed to the tendencies of compromise and centralization that the New England Way was heading. Williams made the first major challenge when he refused to join with the congregation at Boston,

. . . because they would not make a public declaration of their repentance for having communion with the churches of England, while they lived there; and, besides had declared his opinion, that the magistrates might not punish the breach of Sabbath, nor any other offence, as it was a breach of the first table. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Williams, thinking in terms of a sect, advanced a "pure" and uncompromising position; he called for extreme physical separation and complete voluntarism. The first belief the makers of the Massachusetts ecclesiastical order had long before deemed impolitic; the second was not only blasphemous, but also threatened social order.

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<sup>1</sup>Littell, The Anabaptist View, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup>John Winthrop, Winthrop's Journal, "History of New England," 1630-1649, ed. by James Hosmer (2 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), I, p. 62.

Anne Hutchinson posed an even more serious threat, both because of the number of her followers and because of the opinions she broached, especially, her belief in divine personal revelation, distinct from and above the Bible:

To accept her doctrine would mean the abandonment of the fundamental belief for which the Puritans had crossed the water--the belief that truth for man was to be found in the Bible. It would mean a complete change in their daily lives, in their church, and in their state.<sup>1</sup>

This opinion went even beyond the radical tendencies of the Anabaptists. But it drifted into England with the early Familists and later was adopted by the Quakers, who were soon to rankle the Puritan government so grievously.

Williams and Hutchinson were removed, but the thesis of this paper is that they were but the acute symptoms of heterodoxy, and not the disease itself. One first grows suspicious of the claim, that Massachusetts was orthodox, through superficial evidence. Both Williams and Hutchinson dominated, for a time, their respective congregations; each drew a band of followers into exile. When Gorton and his adherents were arrested, chained, and put to work in several of the towns, their public utterances so influenced many of the townspeople, especially among the women, that the magistrates countermanded their previous orders and had the heretics sent from the colony.<sup>2</sup> When William Brend, the

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<sup>1</sup>Edmund Morgan, "The Case Against Anne Hutchinson," New England Quarterly, X (December, 1937), 637.

<sup>2</sup>Winthrop, Journal, II, p. 149.

Quaker, was savagely beaten by his jailor, the populace was so angered, that the authorities promised to publicly punish the turnkey.<sup>1</sup> At the execution of Robinson and Stephenson, the magistrates ordered on duty one hundred soldiers,

. . . completely armed with pike, & musketeers, with powder & bullet. . . . It is ordered, that thirty six of the soldiers be ordered by Captain Oliver to remain in & about the town as sentinels to preserve the peace of the place while the rest go to the execution.<sup>2</sup>

Could such a little leaven raise the whole lump of dissent so easily, if the climate had not been receptive in the first place?

Such circumstantial evidence, however attractive and indicative, is not enough to state with certainty that Massachusetts Bay was far more heterodox than Miller supposed. Yet, upon examination of colonial and county court proceedings and town and church records, one can, indeed, make such a statement.

On February 12, 1655,

. . . Edward Brecke was called upon the church why after so much waiting they did not put in practice their argmt about Baptizing church members children who not in full Comunion as he speaks: Mr Mather answered Reason was double first 2 churches not willinge of o<sup>r</sup> practice 2 none rendered upon churches Conclusio but Edw answered in Conscience he thought we Rather neglect o<sup>r</sup> knowne duty than to

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Hallowell, The Quaker Invasion of Massachusetts (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1884), p. 87.

<sup>2</sup>Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, IV, Pt. 1, pp. 383-384.

offend those meanings (the 2 churches that were erroneous in their argument).<sup>1</sup>

Here, buried in the records of the Dorchester Church is a vivid example of what can be found occurring throughout the colony at this time. The Reverend Mather represents the established social order, the Church--we must go slow; we must weigh the thoughts of others. Brecke, in contrast, although but a member of the so-called "silent democracy," is not willing to compromise his conscience.

There is nothing further in the records concerning Brecke, but there are many accounts of men and women like him, people who chose to speak-out, take action against, or merely co-exist with what the New England Way had become to them--a series of compromises and "half-way" truths.

Massachusetts Congregationalism, because it was a church, was willing to compromise rather than risk continual confrontation; only when the social order seemed threatened, as in the case of Williams, Hutchinson, and the Quakers, did it join with the state in taking drastic action. The ecclesiastical and political leaders of Massachusetts Bay were, in fact, faced with scores of dissenters from their way of life--Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, and simply conscience-stricken Puritans. And, although there was a constant flow of anti-heretic legislation, the policy of the Massachusetts government was not determined by this

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<sup>1</sup>Records of the First Church at Dorchester (Boston: George Ellis, 1891), p. 165.

legislation. A political animal, it had to adapt to survive. This meant swearing affection to the Church of England, harassing lone Anglican ministers, and quietly accepting Anglican worship amongst people it could not change. When the Presbyterians briefly dominated England, it meant calling for mutual understanding between the two faiths, pointing to the freedom the New England Presbyterians Parker, Noyes, and Hobart enjoyed, and framing an ecclesiastical code, in part, from fear of these men's influence. Baptists and Quakers, for the most part, were not only New England men and women, but very often church members. Some were banished, some left willingly, but some came and went as they pleased, and some simply stayed. Both faiths endured.

Richard Mather may have stated with confidence, ". . . there is no material point, either in constitution, or government, wherein the Churches in New England . . . do not observe the same course."<sup>1</sup> Yet, this statement was but wishful thinking. John Cotton was more to the point, and far more accurate, when he admitted to Saltonstall,

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, we have tolerated in our church some anabaptists, some antinomians and some seekers, and do so still at this daye 1652 -- though seekers of all others have least reason to desire toleration in church fellowship. . . . Others carry their dissent more privately and inoffensively and soe are borne withall in much meeknesse. We are far from arrogating complete infallibility of judgment to ourselves or affecting uniformity.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Mather, Church-Government and Church Covenant Discussed, p. 82, quoted in Miller, Orthodoxy, p. 261.

Uniformity God never required, infallibility, he never granted us.<sup>1</sup>

It is the heterodoxy of Massachusetts Bay between 1630-1660, accepted by the rulers of the colony, which this thesis shall attempt to demonstrate.

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<sup>1</sup>Letter of John Cotton to Sir Richard Saltonstall, quoted by Felt, Eccelesiastical History, II, p. 63.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE ANGLICANS

#### The Great Paradox

"We will not say, as the separatists were wont to say at their leaving of England, 'Farewell, Babylon!' 'farewell, Rome!' but we will say 'farewell dear England! farewell, the Church in England, and all the Christian friends there!'—We do not go to New-England as separatists from the Church of England; though we cannot but separate from the corruptions in it: but we go to practise the positive part of church reformation, and propogate the gospel in America."<sup>1</sup>

Such was the feeling expressed by Reverend Francis Higginson as he sailed to the New World. These lines have become justly famous, if only because they eloquently express the great paradox regarding the relationship of the churches of New England to the Church of England. For both Higginson and Reverend Samuel Skelton ". . . came over with a professed intention of practising church reformation,"<sup>2</sup> but this reformation soon dealt with not only ceremonies, but the very form of church government itself. Joining with Governor

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<sup>1</sup> Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, or The Ecclesiastical History of New-England, From its First Planting in the Year 1620, Unto the Year of Our Lord 1698 (2 vols.; New York: Russell and Russell, 1937), I, p. 362.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Young, ed., Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1910), p. 97.



Endecott in Salem, they established a Congregational church, in form similar to that of the Separatists of New Plymouth.

To heighten this paradox, Endecott took swift and drastic action against Samuel and John Brown, who gave visible proof of their dissatisfaction at this apparent break with the mother church:

These two brothers gathered a company together in a place distinct from the public assembly, and there, sundry times, the book of common prayer was read unto such as resorted thither. . . . They accused the ministers as departing from the orders of the church of England, that they were separatists, and would be anabaptists, etc. but for themselves, they would hold to the orders of the church of England.<sup>1</sup>

The two ministers denied the charge of Separatism, but stated that, having suffered for their nonconformity in England, they would now exercise their liberty to renounce the Book of Common Prayer and ceremonies, ". . . because they judged the imposition of these things to be sinful corruptions in the worship of God."<sup>2</sup> Agreeing with Skelton and Higginson, the Governor and his Council sent the brothers home on the next ship. As both the Browns were "persons of quality,"<sup>3</sup> patentees of the company, and designated as large landowners

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<sup>1</sup> Young, Chronicles, pp. 100-101.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> Mather, Magnalia, I, p. 67.

in the new colony,<sup>1</sup> Governor Craddock sent the colonists a letter of sharp chastisement.

But the Salem Church was set in a strict Congregational way, so much so, in fact, that it denied communion to the newly arrived Governor Winthrop, Thomas Dudley, Isaac Johnson, and William Coddington.<sup>2</sup> Upon hearing of this, a disturbed John Cotton wrote to Samuel Skelton and attempted to disprove the notion that only a member of a particular reformed church might be admitted to the Sacrament and that only Separatist churches were such reformed churches. He pondered at Skelton's change of opinion and concluded:

. . . you went hence of another judgment, & I am afraid your change hath sprung fro(m) new-Plymouth men, who(m) though I much esteeme as godly & loving Christians, yet their grounds which they received for this tenant fro(m) mr. Robins(o)n, do not satisfye mee; though the man I reverence as godly & learned.<sup>3</sup>

This question--why did the Puritan settlers of Massachusetts Bay adopt Congregationalism--is important in understanding the subsequent relationship of Anglicanism to the colony. Until Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, historians of New England had stressed two elements in explanation:

<sup>1</sup> In the first letter from the Governor of the New England Company to Endecott, 17 April 1629, Endecott was ordered to grant each brother 200 acres at the first division; cited in Raymond Albright, A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church (New York: Macmillan Co., 1964), pp. 46-48.

<sup>2</sup> David Hall, "John Cotton's Letter to Samuel Skelton," William and Mary Quarterly, XXII (July, 1965), p. 480.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 482.

distance from England and proximity to New Plymouth. Concerning the first element, Robert Winthrop noted the obvious physical difficulties:

An attempt to stretch any practical episcopal authority across the Atlantic, at that day, would not only have been futile in itself, but would have involved the New England churches in endless embarrassment and confusion. Confirmations, consecrations, orderings of priests and deacons, and everything else dependent on bishops, must have been postponed indefinitely.<sup>1</sup>

As supportive evidence, he pointed to the extreme difficulty and practical impossibility of Virginia's attempt to be ruled ecclesiastically from England. Winthrop concluded that the colonists selected the Congregational form of worship, because it was ". . . the only mode, in which that worship could, under the circumstances, have been arranged and conducted here."<sup>2</sup>

Concerning the second point, Williston Walker noted the importance of a conversation between Dr. Samuel Fuller of New Plymouth and John Endecott. In 1628 Dr. Fuller, who was also a deacon of the New Plymouth Church, administered to the sick of Salem. While there he also assuaged the fear Endecott and others of his company had concerning Separatists.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert C. Winthrop, "The Relations of the Founders of the Massachusetts Colony to the Church of England," in appendix to William S. Perry, The History of the American Episcopal Church, 1587-1883, Vol. I, The Planting and Growth of the American Colonial Church, 1587-1783 (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1885), p. 473.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 478.

<sup>3</sup>Walker, Creeds, pp. 102-103.

However, Walker admitted that in this letter Endecott stated that he himself had, for a long time, believed in the Congregational form of church government. This belief Perry Miller would trace to others and magnified it into his contention that, rather than taking Congregationalism from the Separatists at New Plymouth, many of the leaders of the colony were already inclined towards this form of church government:

"What Cotton declares of himself must evidently be postulated for many others: 'I knew their Religion before I came into New England . . . and I came with a purpose to join with their churches.'"<sup>1</sup>

Miller's arguments are strong and very persuasive; however, his thesis has not gone unchallenged.<sup>2</sup> Yet, even critics such as Larzer Ziff do not deny Miller's basic contention that Massachusetts Bay Congregationalism was not quite the same as New Plymouth Separatism, the crucial difference being that the former vehemently denied that it had renounced the Church of England. This denial led the Massachusetts authorities to drive the gifted Roger Williams from his Salem pulpit and punish the respected John Endecott for cutting the cross from the English flag.

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<sup>1</sup>Miller, Orthodoxy, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup>cf. Larzer Ziff, "The Salem Puritans in the 'Free Aire of a New World,'" Huntington Library Quarterly, 20 (1957), pp. 373-384. Ziff would reemphasize the influence of New Plymouth and points to Cotton's letter to Skelton in asserting that Cotton was not in favor of Congregationalism at this early stage.

The reasons for continued association with the Church of England relate to what was described in the introduction as the differences between church and sect. While in England, those non-separating Congregationalists realized that to deny the Church of England as a true church might well have led to their being "harried out of the land." For their own physical security, they had to tell themselves that they were in the Church, yet not of it:

Their plea might be a cobweb of sophistry, their conduct might amount to virtual schism, but that did not matter if by their own rationalizations they could write for themselves a clean bill of political health.<sup>1</sup>

And when they settled their government and church way in New England, these civil and religious leaders had not only to inform, but to assure others that their churches were but truly reformed members of the Church of England.

Paramount in importance were the King and his advisors, especially Laud. They had to be shown that Congregational churches would not encourage social upheaval. "It was, in short, to demonstrate conclusively that Congregationalism could and should be a competent state religion."<sup>2</sup> That this was a real necessity is evidenced in Gorges' Description of New-England. Sir Ferdinando wrote that the Council for New England had returned its patent to the King, because the Council (and he especially) was blamed for the chaos then occurring there, caused by "great swarms"

<sup>1</sup>Miller, Orthodoxy, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

of sectaries

. . . that had the State of the established Church Government in such scorn, and contempt, as finding themselves in a country of liberty, where tongues might speake with out controule, many fuller of malice than reason. . . .<sup>1</sup>

This attachment to the Church of England John Cotton masterfully demonstrated in his famous sermon to the Church of Salem in 1636. The controversy between the General Court and Roger Williams over the latter's uncompromising Separatist opinions had embroiled the Salem congregation, several members of which left with Williams for Providence. After admitting that the opinions expressed in his letter to Skelton were erroneous, and that Congregationalism was the true church way, Cotton then proceeded to call a halt to any Separatist tendencies which might lead from such an admission. Condemning those who, like Williams, were so unyielding that they would show no pity towards defiled churches, Cotton asks, "Will you suffer your borther's ox to lie in the mire? and will not pluck it out? And are not brethren more than oxen."<sup>2</sup> Thus, it is not only commendable to retain ties with the Church of England; it is necessary, and by a strange twist of logic, an important political expediency has become a Christian duty. Cotton concludes

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<sup>1</sup> James P. Baxter, ed., Sir Ferdinando Gorges and His Province of Maine, Vol. II, Prince Society Publications (Boston: Prince Society, 1890), XIX, pp. 62-63.

<sup>2</sup> John Cotton, "Sermon Delivered at Salem, 1636," in John Cotton on the Churches of England, ed. by Larzer Ziff (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 67.

eloquently and irresistibly.

Therefore if you belong to Christ, He will show you it is not the water of separation that will serve your turn, but getting Christ Jesus, and sitting closer to Him, and to your brethren, by admonishing and reproving them, if you see them defiled. This will keep you clean, and your soul comfortable: That the Lord hath made an everlasting covenant with you that shall never be forgotten.<sup>1</sup>

Evincing loyalty to the Church and King of England, this devastating one-two punch--the Court's banishment of Williams and Cotton's majestic and eloquent rationalization--was intended to maintain social control as well as religious uniformity. In order to maintain such control, however, the Court and religious leaders were soon placed in the ironic and dangerous, yet necessary, position of dealing with another group which dissented from the Congregational Way--not the Separatists, but the Anglicans!

### The Threat of Gorges

Perhaps the most ominous figure worrying the minds of the Massachusetts magistrates was not King Charles or Archbishop Laud, but rather Sir Ferdinando Gorges.<sup>2</sup> Beginning as a soldier of fortune with important connections, Gorges was knighted for his valor by Queen Elizabeth and given command of the fortifications at Plymouth. Implicated in the Essex

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<sup>1</sup> Ziff, John Cotton on the Churches of New England, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> The following biographical information, unless otherwise noted, is from C. M. Macinnes, Ferdinando Gorges and New England (Bristol: Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1965).

conspiracy, he fell from favor.

Upon James' ascension, Gorges was restored to his former duties, but the new peace with Spain made a soldier's life unexciting as well as unprofitable. As a remedy, he became interested in colonization. Gorges helped finance John Smith's exploration and charting of the New England coast in 1614, and in 1620 he became one of the founders of the Council for New England. Three years later the Council sent Gorges' son Robert and a small group of settlers to establish a colony. This group was

. . . fairly well selected for the work at hand. There were families in it as well as single men,--mechanics, farmers and traders, as well as gentlemen and divines.<sup>1</sup>

This last word, "divines," should be noted; these religious leaders were the first Anglican ministers in New England, for the faith of the new colony was to be strictly that of the Church of England. Writing in 1622, Gorges gave as a reason for the settlement "above all the rest,"

" . . . by this oportynite there is noe Countrie within this Realme, but by this course hath a special occasion and meanea presented unto them to dedicate their best service to the God of Heaven and earth by endeavouring to advance his glory in seeking howe to settle the Christian ffaith in those heathenish and Desert places in

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Francis Adams, Three Episodes of Massachusetts History (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1892), I, p. 143.



the world wch whoe shall refuse to further, lett  
him undergoe the blame there of himselfe."<sup>1</sup>

In defending, before a hostile Parliament, the fishing monopoly granted the Council for New England, Gorges maintained that

. . . the enlargement of the King's Dominions, with the advancement of Religion in those desert parts, are matters of highest consequence, and far exceeding a simple and disorderly course of Fishing. . . .<sup>2</sup>

The question of Gorges' sincerity and dedication to the Church of England has traditionally been stressed by historians, from the seventeenth century onwards; if only to emphasize the thesis that Sir Ferdinando's over-riding ambition was, by hook or by crook, to insure the Church of England as the only church in New England. What is certain is that largely through his actions the Massachusetts Bay Colony was faced with an Anglican threat both at home and abroad.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Macinnes, Ferdinando Gorges, cited from Gorges' "Reasons showing the Benefit that may ensue to these his Maests Realmes by settling of the Plantacon in New England, and especially to the Western parts of this Kingdom."

<sup>2</sup>Baxter, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>This "plot" William Bradford mentioned in History of Plymouth Plantation: 1620-1647 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1898), pp. 391-392, as Gorges working in direct collusion with Laud ". . . to disturbe ye peace of ye churches here, and to overthrow their proceedings and further growth, which was ye thing he aimed at." Thomas Hutchinson, in his History of New England, II, p. 454, stated that John Robinson was prevented from emigrating to New England because ". . . Sir Ferdinando Gorges and others were at this time determined that New England should be settled under Episcopacy, and though they would allow and encourage the people to settle

The first and most immediate threat was the possibility that the King might revoke the patent and institute rule through a governor-general and the bishops. This threat became very real when the patentees of the Council for New England surrendered their patent to England. While the Massachusetts Assistants sent excuses to England, in order to avoid returning their patent,

The governor and council, and divers of the ministers, and others, met at Castle Island, and there agreed upon erecting two platforms and one small fortification to secure them both. . . .<sup>1</sup>

A month later, the General Court received dispatches warning the colonists that ships filled with soldiers were soon to

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here, they were unwilling that any Puritan ministers should accompany them" (Young, Chronicles, p. 82). According to the nineteenth century historian Charles Adams, "Sir Ferdinando was a professor of high-church principles, and the Council for New England had no sympathy with Puritans. In all its plans a special prominence had been given to the propagation of the gospel, and the present was distinctly to be a Church settlement in the Massachusetts Bay, as contrasted with the Separatist settlement already effected at Plymouth" (Adams, Three Episodes, I, p. 142). More recently, however, C. M. Macinnes reveals a more tolerant and prudent aspect in Gorges' character: "When it was suggested that Massachusetts should be abandoned because of its obstinacy and disloyalty to the King, Gorges declared that, ". . . no prince ever abandoned people or territory because of schismatic tendencies but rather sought to win them with the largest conditions of all favor and freedom. . . ." (Macinnes, Ferdinando Gorges, p. 24, quoted from R. A. Preston's Gorges of Plymouth Fort, p. 315). It should also be noted that Robert Gorges, kinsman to Ferdinando and the latter's choice as governor for his province of Maine, was inclined somewhat towards Puritanism; cf. Robert E. Moody, A Proprietary Experiment in Early New England History: Thomas Gorges and the Province of Maine (Boston: Boston University Press, 1963), p. 18.

<sup>1</sup> J. Winthrop, Journal, I, p. 130.

set sail to institute a new governor and the Anglican religion. The Court ordered the training of a militia and created a council of war. Defenses were ordered built for Dorchester and Charlestown. That feeling was running high was evidenced by Endecott's cutting the cross from the royal colors. Although Endecott was punished, the General Court, supported by the clergy, ordered cannon mounted on Castle Island.<sup>1</sup> The ships which were to bear the governor never came, and when, in 1638, the lords commissioners again demanded the patent, it was decided that

. . . a letter should be written by the governor, in the name of the court, to excuse our not sending of it; for it was resolved best not to send it. . . .<sup>2</sup>

By then it was too late for Charles or Laud to enforce their demand; the war with Scotland had begun.

### The First Anglicans in Massachusetts

The Robert Gorges colony of 1623 proved an abortive attempt, and an Anglican minister who accompanied the expedition soon realized this. In Governor Bradford's words, Reverend Morell

. . . had I know not what power and authority of superintendence over the churches granted him, and sundrie instructions for that end; but he never showed it, or made any use of it; (it should seeme he saw it was in vaine;) he only speake of it to some hear at his going away.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adams, Three Episodes, I, p. 287.

<sup>2</sup> J. Winthrop, Journal, I, p. 273.

<sup>3</sup> Bradford, History of Plymouth Plantation, p. 185.

Although Morell left the year after Robert Gorges, Reverend William Blackstone stayed on in the New World, living a solitary existence as the first English inhabitant of the area now known as Boston.<sup>1</sup> When Winthrop and many of his company found Charlestown an inconvenient and unhealthy place, Blackstone invited them to his land. He was admitted to the freemanship in 1631, but in 1635 he sold most of his property and for nearly twenty-five years lived a hermit's existence near Rehoboth. The reasons for his removal may have been due to religious differences as well as to the growing congestion of the area. Blackstone never joined a church in the New World, and Cotton Mather described him as one of the "godly Episcopalians" living in New England at the time. But he was certainly a moderate Anglican, for he stated, "I came from England, because I did not like the lord-bishops; but I can't join with you, because I would not be under the lord brethren."<sup>2</sup> Blackstone occasionally visited Boston and Providence, preaching in the latter place. He was married by Governor Endecott in Boston in 1659.

Far less harmonious were the relations between the Congregationalists and another Anglican, Samuel Maverick. Maverick was a gentleman and a well-to-do merchant who had connections with the Gorges interest. He came to New England

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<sup>1</sup>The following biographical information, unless otherwise noted, is from Thomas Amory, William Blackstone, Boston's First Inhabitant (Boston: Old State House, 1877).

<sup>2</sup>Mather, Magnalia, I, p. 243.

in 1624 and settled at Winnisimmet (Chelsea). When the Arbella arrived near Noddles Island, its company was entertained by Maverick,

. . . a man of very loving and courteous behaviour, very ready to entertaine strangers, yet an enemy to the Reformation in hand, being strong for the Lordly Prelaticall power. . . .<sup>1</sup>

He was personally on friendly relations with Winthrop,<sup>2</sup> made a freeman of the colony in 1631 (before religion was made a test of citizenship), and was granted Noddles Island in 1633 and an additional six hundred acres in 1640.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, when the colony grew fearful of an invasion by a royal governor and an episcopal prelacy, the Massachusetts Council of War ordered Maverick and his family to leave Noddles Island, remove to Boston, and to entertain no strangers for longer than one night without leave from some

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Johnson, Wonder-Working Providence of Sions Saviour in New England--"History of New England, 1628-1651," ed. by J. Franklin Jameson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Maverick to Winthrop: "Yourself, ever honored Sir, and honest Captain Gibbons, are the only men which ever dealt plainly with me, by way of reproof and admonition, when you have heard anything in which I have been faulty, which I hope hath not been water split upon a stone, and by it you have much obliged me"---"Letters of Samuel Maverick," Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, VII, Fourth Series (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1865), p. 308. Although he may have changed his mind later, in 1633 Winthrop wrote of Maverick, concerning an Indian epidemic, "Among others, Mr. Maverick of Winesimett is worthy of a perpetual remembrance. Himself, his wife, and servants, went daily to them, ministered to their necessities, and buried their dead, and took home many of their children"---J. Winthrop, Journal, I, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> Introduction to John Child, New England's Jonas Cast Up At London (Boston: William Parsons Lund, 1869).

Assistant, on penalty of one-hundred pounds.<sup>1</sup> Although this order was soon repealed and never enforced, it is obvious that Maverick was regarded with suspicion, perhaps as an agent of Gorges. Feeling harassed, he wrote to Winthrop in 1640.

There are those who take an inquisition-like course, by endeavoring to gather what they can from malcontented servants, or the like; which course I conceive is not warrantable. . . . I hope God will enable me in some measure to walk inoffensively, but finding by ten years' experience that I am ever sore to divers here, I have seriously resolved to remove hence. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Maverick did not remove himself, and in 1646 was a co-petitioner with Dr. Robert Child and five others for an increase in the civil and religious liberties of non-church members. He was heavily fined, because, since he was a freeman and had taken an oath of fidelity to the government, his offense was all the greater.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, when the other petitioners left Massachusetts, Maverick remained. Later, he did sail for England, only to return as a royal commissioner of Charles II. He desired that the Church of England be legally established, supported by a church rate on all persons, yet he favored toleration concerning "fundamentals" (e.g., the Book of Common Prayer should not be

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<sup>1</sup>Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, p. 208.

<sup>2</sup>"Letters of Samuel Maverick," pp. 380-309.

<sup>3</sup>J. Winthrop, Journal, II, p. 316.

required).<sup>1</sup> In this he failed. It was then that Maverick removed himself from New England to New York.

Another early settler who preceeded the Congregationalists was Thomas Walford, a blacksmith who made his home at Mishawum (Charlestown). He was an Episcopalian and soon was brought before the General Court of 1631:

"Tho: Walford of Charlton, is ffyned 40 shillings, and is injoynd, hee and his wife, to departe out of the lymits of this pattent before the 20 th day of October nexte, under paine of confiscacion of his goods, for his contempt of authoritie, and confrontinge officers, &c."

Yet, over two years later, the Court stated

. . . that the goods of Thomas Walford shal be sequestered and remaine in the hands of Ancient Gennison, to satisfie the debts he owes in the Bay to severall persons.<sup>2</sup>

And in January of the following year (1634), his name is still on the list of the residents of Charlestown. About this time, however, Walford and his family did leave Charlestown and travelled northward to Portsmouth. Here Walford lived for the rest of his life, was granted land, and chosen a selectman and warden of the church.

It is true that there was one early settler, a self-proclaimed member of the Church of England, who was handled

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin De Costa, "Early Discoveries and Settlements on the Coast of New England, Under Church Auspices," in appendix to Perry, History of the American Episcopal Church, p. 494.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Adams, Three Episodes, I, p. 337.

roughly and summarily by the General Court. This man was Thomas Morton, author of New English Canaan. In this work, a sarcastic and scathing attack of the governors of New Plymouth and the Massachusetts Bay, he portrayed himself as a martyr for the Church of England. In referring to his quarrel with the New Plymouth government, Morton stated that he was attacked

" . . . because mine host was a man that indeavoured to advance the dignity of the Church of England; which they (on the contrary part) would labour to vilifie, with uncivile termes: enveying against the sacred booke of common prayer, and mine host that used it in a laudable manner amongst his family, as a practise of piety."<sup>1</sup>

Yet, the previous page is filled with Morton exulting in the scandalous revelries at his home, the name of which he changed from Mt. Wollaston to Merry Mount. His arrest was caused by his libertine behavior as well as by his dangerous practice of selling guns and ammunition to the Indians. In fact, the Episcopalian Blackstone was mentioned by Bradford as a subscriber to a letter condemning Morton which accompanied the prisoner to England.<sup>2</sup>

Released from an English jail, Morton worked as Gorges' lawyer to repeal the Massachusetts Company's patent, and in 1634 he wrote a jubilant letter to William Jeffry of Wessagussett, one of the first to have contributed to Morton's initial arrest by Standish. In it he exclaimed:

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Adams, Three Episodes, I, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 285.



"Repent, you cruel separatists, repent, there are as yet but forty days. If Jove vouchsafe to thunder, the charter and kingdom of the separatists will fall asunder. Repent you cruel schismatics, repent."<sup>1</sup>

But this warning does not ring true when matched against Morton's previous moral conduct. Besides, would a devout Anglican call his God--Jove?

Another supporter of the Church of England, who arrived later than the preceding four (1637), was Thomas Lechford. Imprisoned in England for defending his friend William Prynne, a Presbyterian, Lechford became, in the New World, a defender of the bishops. Not only was he disadvantaged by this, but his "calling," the law, was frowned upon by the Puritan elders and magistrates. Consequently, he could not make a living and, at the same time, jeopardized his residency in the colony through his actions. Having argued publicly for the Episcopacy, he was called before the Court of Assistants on December 1, 1640. Here Lechford confessed that he had erred in standing for the Church of England and promised to cease this controversy and attend to his calling.<sup>2</sup>

However, he apparently did not keep his promise. For on July 5, 1641, he was requested by Dudley to express his objections to the government and the ecclesiastical form of Massachusetts. He submitted a defense of Episcopacy in a

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Adams, Three Episodes, I, p. 285.

<sup>2</sup>Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, p. 422.

manuscript treatise. Dudley declared that the lawyer's arguments were "erronious and dangerous, if not heretical" and forwarded the manuscript to Governor Winthrop with the suggestion ". . . that instead of putting it to the presse as hee desireth, it may rather be putt into the fire, as I desire."<sup>1</sup>

It was then submitted to a council of elders, who, wrote Lechford, could not find the author guilty of error, although, of course, they would not affirm his beliefs. Yet, because of these opinions, the Court denied him employment as a clerk or notary, for fear of offending the churches.<sup>2</sup> On August 3 of the same year, Lechford returned to England, where he wrote his famous appraisal of New England, Plain-Dealing.

#### The Church of Weymouth

Concerning Lechford and the Massachusetts government, the Episcopalian historian Perry wrote:

That his prelatival views and his zeal in advocating them made him obnoxious to the magistrates, to the ministers, and to the members of the Puritan church, is evident. The wonder is that he was tolerated at all.<sup>3</sup>

Perry's apparent bewilderment would be justified if rigid orthodoxy was the prevalent policy of the Bay. It was not.

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<sup>1</sup> Lechford's Plain-Dealing, quoted in Perry, History of the American Episcopal Church, I, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> Perry, History of the American Episcopal Church, I, p. 99.

For, seven years after Lechford's departure, John Cotton wrote that the lawyer

" . . . was not kept out of our churches for maintaining the authority of Bishops; for we have in our churches some well-respected brethren, who do indifferently allow either Episcopal, or Presbyterian, or Congregational Government."<sup>1</sup>

Concerning the first form of divergent worship, Anglicanism, Cotton may well have been thinking of the church at Weymouth: The first settlers of Wessagusset (as it was then called) were members of the ill-fated companies of Francis Weston and Robert Gorges and " . . . were mainly of the Episcopal form of religion. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Created a town by the General Court in July of 1635, Weymouth gathered into a church under the ministry of Reverend Benjamin Hull, who, suggested Savage, " . . . seemed to be in the Episcopal interest. . . ."<sup>3</sup> Hull left the town in 1638 and was replaced by Reverend Thomas Jenner, an orthodox Congregationalist. Almost immediately, a number of the congregation grew dissatisfied and invited Mr. Robert Lenthal, who had ministered to some of them in England, to be

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<sup>1</sup> Felt, Ecclesiastical History, II, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> William Hyde, "Early History of Weymouth," History of Weymouth, Massachusetts, Vol. I, Historical (Boston: Weymouth Historical Society, 1923), p. 97.

<sup>3</sup> James Savage, Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England Showing Three Generations of Those Who Came Before May, 1692, on the Basis of Farmer's Register (4 vols.; Boston: Little, 1860-62), II, p. 492. There is a discrepancy, for the Weymouth town records gives the minister's name as Joseph Hull.

their spiritual leader.<sup>1</sup> Upon his arrival in Massachusetts, Lenthall was influenced by the opinions of Anne Hutchinson, but Cotton soon persuaded him to renounce them. Yet, Lenthall and his supporters held some other dangerous opinions. Called before the General Court in March of 1639, in the words of Thomas Lechford:

A minister standing upon his Ministry, as of the Church of England, and arguing against their Covenant, and being elected by some of Weymouth to be their Minister, was compelled to recant some words; one that made the election, & got hands to the paper, was fined 10 pounds, and thereupon speaking a few crosse words, 5. pound more, and payed it downe presently; Another of them for saying one of the Ministers of the Bay was a Brownist, or had a Brownisticall head, and for a supposed lie, was whipt: and all these by the general or quarter civill Courts.<sup>2</sup>

The "paper" which Lechford mentioned was an "instrument," a petition ". . . to set up a church state wherein all the baptized might be communicants, without any further trial of them. . . ."; it also ". . . would have declared against the New-England design of church-reformation."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> David Benedict, in his General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World (New York: Lewis Colby and Co., 1848), stated that this was an attempt to form a Baptist congregation. But he must be incorrect. In Lenthall's examination by the Conference of Elders, his opinion concerning baptism is declared orthodox by Cotton--cf. J. Hammond Trumbull, "Conference of the Elders of Massachusetts with the Reverend Robert Lenthall, of Weymouth, Held at Dorchester, February 10, 1639," The Congregational Quarterly, XIX (1877), p. 247.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Lechford, Plain-Dealing (London: N. Butler, 1642), p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Mather, Magnalia, I, p. 244.

Although he did humble himself before the General Court, in a conference with the Massachusetts elders--Wilson, Cotton, Symmes, Welde, Eliot, Newman, and Jenner--Lenthall stated that he was ". . . for witnessing the truth, unjustly cast out of my place . . ." and that he and his flock ". . . desire to reform ourselves, and to go on according to the customs of the churches here."<sup>1</sup> However, he rejected the church covenant as being necessary for the formation of a church (although he did accept the covenant of grace and flatly denied Arminianism), and he questioned whether his first ordination was nullified. Having humbled himself somewhat, Lenthall could have remained, but he chose to leave New England and returned home in 1642.

#### Anglicanism in the Annexed Territories

The Episcopal interest within Massachusetts proper, though definitely present, was small. However, as the colony pushed its influence into outlying territories, it was confronted by far more numerous adherents to the Church of England.

Bordering upon the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the land at the Piscataqua River (Dover, New Hampshire) had been settled by 1628, perhaps as early as 1623, and had a strong inclination towards Anglicanism. In 1630 Walter Neal arrived to govern the area; he carried a commission from Sir

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<sup>1</sup>Trumbull, "Conference of the Elders . . .," p. 240.

Ferdinando Gorges and John Mason. "Being so empowered, indicates his preference for the established church."<sup>1</sup> It was to Piscataqua where the Reverend George Burdett journeyed after leaving Salem, and it was here where letters addressed by him to the Archbishop were found. When Winthrop thought to summon Burdett to appear before the General Court to answer a contempt charge, the Governor hesitated, lest ". . . if he [Burdett] should suffer in this cause, it would ingratiate him more with the archbishops, (with whom he had intelligence, etc.). . . ." <sup>2</sup> In February of 1640, Captain Underhill, an excommunicant from the Boston Church, tried very hard

. . . to ingratiate himself with the state of England, and with some gentlemen at the river's mouth, who were very zealous that way, and had lately set up common prayer, etc. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Dover was not the only settlement in what is now New Hampshire which inclined towards the Church of England. For example, in 1640, ". . . an Episcopal society is formed at Portsmouth. . . ." <sup>4</sup>

In 1641 the holders of the Hilton and Piscataqua patents transferred their rights of jurisdiction to Massachusetts. However, the actions of the Bay government towards

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<sup>1</sup> Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> J. Winthrop, Journal, I, p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 329.

<sup>4</sup> Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, p. 449.

the Anglicans of its newly acquired territory were something less than suppressive.

At this time there was a division within the Church of Dover. Hanserd Knollys was the minister, but a majority of his congregation left him and chose Reverend Thomas Larkham in his stead. Thus, the two churches existed as rivals. Knollys (a future Baptist) followed a strict congregational policy. He refused to baptize children of non-church members and did not use the sign of the cross in baptizing, nor would he read any funeral service. Moreover, he would not admit any not sound in faith.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, "Larkham received all into his church, even immoral persons, who promised amendment. He baptized any children offered, and introduced the Episcopal service at funerals."<sup>2</sup>

A petition was sent to the Massachusetts General Court asking for assistance. Consequently, a committee, including Simon Bradstreet and Hugh Peter, was sent to investigate and to try to settle the difficulty. This committee was able to arrange a satisfactory compromise. Knolly's excommunication of Larkham was recalled, the sentences of censure against Captain Underhill and other supporters of Knollys were lifted, and Knollys himself was dismissed from the church, having admitted and repented

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<sup>1</sup>John Seales, History of Dover, New Hampshire, Vol. I (Dover: by authority of City Councils, 1923), p. 145.

<sup>2</sup>Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, p. 451.

immoral conduct with two of his maidservants.<sup>1</sup> Larkham was not punished for his religious practices.<sup>2</sup>

In May of 1642 the General Court Judged Richard Gibson. A minister of the Church of England, he had arrived in New England a few years before and ministered first to a fishing plantation in Maine, then at Piscataqua, and presently was employed by fishermen working at the Isle of Shoals:

He, being wholly addicted to the hierarchy and discipline of England, did exercise a ministerial function in the same way and did marry and baptize at the Isle of Shoals which was now found to be within our jurisdiction.

Angered at a sermon delivered by Reverend Larkham against "hirelings" (i.e., the episcopacy), Gibson sent him an angry letter. ". . . wherein he did scandalize our government, and oppose our title to these parts, and provoke the people, by way of arguments, to revolt from us. . . ." Confronted with this letter and charged with the above, Gibson could not deny the accusation and was committed to the marshall. A few days later he admitted the charges and submitted himself to the Court's favor: "Whereupon, in regard he was a stranger, and was to depart the country within a few days, he was discharged without any fine or other punishment."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Winthrop, Journal, II, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Although he followed many Episcopal rites, Larkham later delivered a sermon against the episcopacy itself--  
Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



On September 27, 1642, the General Court conferred its citizenship upon each inhabitant of Piscataqua who had previously been a freeman there, without regard to church membership.<sup>1</sup> Samuel Maverick was not to be the only Episcopalian allowed to vote.

A similar pattern of Anglican inclination and Massachusetts moderation may be found in regard to Maine. On September 7, 1636 the local government at Saco required that the rates for the Episcopal minister there be paid quarterly, "the first payment to begin at Michaelmas next."<sup>2</sup> On April 3, 1639 Sir Ferdinando Gorges obtained a royal charter granting him the province of Maine. His form of government broke down the province into ballywicks, hundreds, parishes, and tythings.<sup>3</sup>

The following year he sent his kinsman, Thomas Gorges, to govern as Deputy Governor. Although a member of the Church of England, the younger Gorges inclined somewhat towards Puritanism, and the necessity of obtaining a minister in a land where nearly all ministers practiced Congregationalism gave him cause for toleration. He stated that he

"steered as neere as we could to the course of England for ecclesiastical. We required no man to the common prayer booke or to the ceremonies of the

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<sup>1</sup>Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, pp. 502-503.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>3</sup>Baxter, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, p. 65.

Church of England but allowed the Libertie of  
Conscience in this particular. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

However, it was required of

" . . . all the inhabitants from Piscataqua to  
Kennebunk, which have any children unbaptized,  
that as soon as a minister is settled in any of  
their plantations, they bring their said  
children to baptism, and if any shall refuse to  
submit to the said order, that then the partie  
so refusing shall be summoned to answer this  
their contempt."<sup>2</sup>

Also in 1641, Thomas Jenner, presently preaching at  
Saco, wrote Winthrop that, while he preached the gospel to  
the inhabitants, he had not yet denounced the episcopacy  
because they were warmly attached to that form of church  
government.<sup>3</sup> When the New England Confederation was formed,  
Maine was not invited to join " . . . because they ran a  
different course from us both in their ministry and civil  
administration. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

By 1647 the inhabitants of Kittery, abandoned by  
Thomas Gorges and ignored by Sir Ferdinando, contracted them-  
selves into a formal government, to be headed by an elected  
governor and five counsellors. At the same time, however,  
the General Court of Massachusetts reviewed its grant and  
declared the patents of Gorges and Rigby (Lygonia--the Plough  
Patent) to be within its boundaries and sent a commission to

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<sup>1</sup>Moody, "A Proprietary Experiment," p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, p. 447.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Winthrop, Journal, II, p. 99.

Kittery with an offer to receive it under Massachusetts' jurisdiction. Rejected, the Court persisted, and a second Commission received Kittery's submission (November 20, 1652). Its inhabitants were insured the equal rights and protection enjoyed by those of Massachusetts, and

. . . the franchise of the Colony was granted on the sole condition of taking the freeman's oath, independent of the religious or any other test, and Kittery was allowed to send two Deputies to the General Court.<sup>1</sup>

Two days later, Agamenticus (York) followed suit and was shortly afterwards joined by Wells and Saco--again, with no religious test required for citizenship.

In acquiring Maine, the General Court of Massachusetts had to deal with at least one irritating Anglican minister. Robert Jordan arrived at Saco about 1640; this churchman moved to Falmouth and labored in the area for over thirty years. Marrying the daughter of John Winter, governor of the commercial plantation on Richmond's Island, Jordan became wealthy and influential. This did not prevent him from being imprisoned in 1654, yet four years later he was sworn a freeman.<sup>2</sup> Occasionally he was harassed for practising his religion, as in 1660:

"Whereas it appears to this Court, by severall testimonies of good repute, that Mr. Robert Jordan did, in July last, after exercise was ended upon the Lord's day, in the house of Mrs.

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<sup>1</sup>John Palfrey, History of New England (5 vols.; Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1860), II, p. 382.

<sup>2</sup>Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, II, p. 569.

Mackworth, in the toune of Falmouth, then & there baptize three children of Nathanel Wales, of the same toune, to the offence of the government of this Commonwealth, the Court judgeth it necessary to beare wittnes aft such irregular practises, doe therefore order that the secretary, by letter, in the name of this Court, require him to desist from any such practises for the future, and also that he appeare before the next Generall Court to ansrs what shall be layd agt him for what he hath donne for the tyme past.<sup>1</sup>

That he was not silenced is evidenced by future prosecutions.<sup>2</sup>  
 Jordan did not leave until Indians burnt down his house during King Philip's War.

#### Concluding Remarks

Thus, in dealing with early inhabitants of the Massachusetts Bay, settlers of newly acquired territories, or lone ministers, the government of Massachusetts did not make it a rule to take harsh action and demand that Anglicans conform to the Congregational Way. Although there were cases of persecution, the colony's policy was evidenced far more by a spirit of toleration than has been generally accepted. This was especially true in the case of annexed areas.

One reason for this was certainly fear of English intervention and the desire to assuage the apprehensions of the rulers of the mother country. Although the colony was prepared to defend militarily the status-quo--even against

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<sup>1</sup> Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, IV, Pt. 1, p. 436; quoted by Perry, History of the American Episcopal Church, I, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, p. 451.

the King's soldiers, it did not plan to provoke such an attack. If non-Separatist Congregationalism was a paradox, at least it left its followers far more comfortable than his icy logic left Roger Williams.

But that is certainly not the only reason, for Charles I was executed three years before Anglicans in Maine were granted the franchise. As suggested in the previous chapter, the religious order of Massachusetts was a church, not a sect, and could therefore afford a more tolerant attitude--as long as it was not actively threatened. Episcopalians in New Hampshire and Maine were required to take a political oath of allegiance, not a religious test. Those Anglicans who were most severely punished--Morton and Lechford--were censured not for their religion, but for their threat to the social order. Richard Gibson's real offense was that he fomented unrest, not that he was an Anglican minister. Self-professed Anglicans like Maverick and Jordan were harassed, but they made Massachusetts their home.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PRESBYTERIANS

As the Massachusetts Bay Colony moved into its second decade of existence, the magistrates and elders had much to be proud of. The attack upon their Charter had failed dismally, and demands from the King himself had not only been ignored, but defied. And if the populace was not totally orthodox in faith, at least it had been defused from any explosive unrest which might tend to shatter the present social order—Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson, with their most devoted followers, were outside the pale of the colony. Supporters of the Church of England were penalized if they became too vocal, or quietly absorbed (though not digested) into the colonial mainstream. An economic declension may have set in, due to a drastic plummet in immigration, but the elders could take even this as an encouraging sign. For instead of fleeing to New England, Puritans had first defied the King, and in 1642, were to take up arms against him. The overwhelming power of the Church of England was broken, and Archbishop Laud, the Puritan's arch-enemy, was imprisoned, tried for treason, and executed.

In England, the control which Laud, through the Courts of the High Commission, exercised over religious and

political thought suddenly vanished, leaving a vacuum, which, in turn, was soon swollen by many sects, preaching and printing thousands of thoughts on subjects as diverse as adult baptism and regicide. What Sir Ferdinando Gorges had erroneously stated as happening to Massachusetts had, in fact, taken place in his native land--"swarmes" of sectaries were running rampant.

But if the archbishops of the Church of England had lost their authority, the leadership of the Puritan opposition had not come to battle unprepared. In terms of influence and numbers, by far the largest group of reforming clergy were the Presbyterians.<sup>1</sup> Like non-Separating Congregationalism in that it desired to reform, rather than separate from, the Church of England, Presbyterianism yet differed from the New England Way in three important respects: it wished to replace the episcopacy with a similarly comprehensive system, and thus insisted upon regeneration only for the elders; the church was to be governed solely by the elders, without any participation by the members (not even the members' consent to the elders' rulings); and synods were to have binding authority over each congregation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>At the Westminster Assembly of Divines, only five ministers were Independents.

<sup>2</sup>Ziff, John Cotton on the Churches of New England, p. 24.

### The Church at Newbury

Richard Mather would have us believe that the differences between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism were irreconcilable. When asked, in 1643, by some English Puritans if a body of Presbyterians could practice its way in Massachusetts, Mather answered that if Christ has allowed only one discipline as correct, and if the discipline

" . . . which we hear practice, be (as we are persuaded of it) the same which Christ hath appointed, and therefore unalterable . . . we see not how another can be lawfull; and therefore if a company of people shall come hither, and here set up and practise another, we pray you thinke not much, if we cannot promise to approve of them."<sup>1</sup>

Yet, writing a few years later, Edward Winslow stated:

So also 't is well known that before these unhappy troubles arose in England and Scotland, there were divers gentlemen of Scotland that groaned under the heavy pressures of those times, wrote to New England to know whether they might be freely suffered to exercise their Presbyterian government amongst us; and it was answered affirmatively they might.<sup>2</sup>

Winslow was referring to a letter sent to Winthrop in July of 1634; in that same month the Court granted a township of land to these men. Winslow proceeded to describe the land as being between Ipswich and Newbury, where four towns have since settled,

. . . so that there they might have had a complete Presbytery, and whither they intended to have come.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Mather, Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed, p. 83; quoted in Miller, Orthodoxy, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Winslow, "Brief Narration," quoted in Young, Chronicles, p. 404.



But meeting with manifold crosses, being half seas through, they gave over their intendments; and as I have heard, these were many of the gentlemen that first fell upon the late Covenant in Scotland.<sup>1</sup>

Although these Scotsmen never reached New England, other Presbyterians did. Richard Denton, "Whose name no memory of dishonour mars,"<sup>2</sup> ministered to the inhabitants of Watertown in 1638/39; then he removed to Wethersfield, moving again to Stamford, when he ". . . withdrew from New England in 1644 on account of Presbyterianism. . . ." <sup>3</sup>

If Denton was not successful with his ministry in Massachusetts, the contrary may be said of the pastor and teacher at Newbury:

For 't is well known that Mr. Parker and Mr. Noyce, who are ministers of Jesus Christ at Newbury, are in that way, and so know, so far as a single congregation can be exercised in it, yet never had the least molestation or disturbance, and have and find as good respect from magistrates and people as other elders in the Congregational or primitive way.<sup>4</sup>

The town, founded in 1634, was named in honor of its first minister, Thomas Parker, who had preached at Newbury, in Berkshire. The son of the great scholar, Robert Parker, Thomas spent many years in scholarly pursuits, eventually going blind as a result of his studies. Assisted by William Ames, one of the fathers of Congregationalism, he studied in

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<sup>1</sup> Winslow, "Brief Narration," p. 404.

<sup>2</sup> C. Mather, Magnalia, I, p. 399.

<sup>3</sup> Footnote in Johnson, Wonder-Working Providence, p. 193.

<sup>4</sup> Winslow, "Brief Narration," p. 402.

Holland. However, his religious beliefs differed from Ames, and Parker's ordination as a Presbyter was only stopped by his sudden return to England.<sup>1</sup> Writing to a friend in attendance at the Presbyterian-dominated Westminster Assembly of Divines, Parker asked for help in remedying the confusion caused in Massachusetts by Newbury's church government. He wrote:

And although wee hold a fundamentall power of government in the people, in respect of election of Ministers, and of some acts in cases extraordinary, as in the want of Ministers; yet we judge, upon mature deliberation, that the ordinary exercise of government must be so in the Presbyters, as not to depend upon the expresse votes and suffrages of the people.<sup>2</sup>

He voiced his preference in the Ministerial Convention of 1643 as well as in the Synods of 1646 and 1662, and although his arguments and motion were not accepted, they were respectfully heard.

James Noyes, both a student and cousin of Parker, soon joined him as teacher of the Newbury Church. He shared Parker's opinions, believing that ecclesiastical councils were binding. Noyes also baptized those who professed repentance, faith, and submission to the biblical ordinances; they need not prove regeneration, for he believed that ". . . God took into covenant some that were vessels of

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<sup>1</sup>C. Mather, Magnalia, I, p. 481.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Parker, "True Copy of a Letter Written by Mr. T(homas) P(arker) . . . Declaring his Judgement touching the Government practised in the Churches of New England" (London, 1644), pp. 3-4.

wrath, as for other ends, so to facilitate the conversion of their elect children."<sup>1</sup> In his treatise on church government, the "Temples measured . . . .," Noyes unquestionably stated his preference for Presbyterianism:

The church is to be carried, not to carry; to obey, not to command; to be subject, not to govern. . . . if all members, young and old, children and men, if thousands together must judge and govern upon conscience together with the presbytery, first, it must needs interrupt the work. Second, it is work enough, a double labor for the elders to instruct the church how to judge. There is more time spent in informing the church, than in determining the case. Must elders hold the hands of the common members (as the master teacheth scholars to write) and act only by them? Third, pride is an epidemical disease in a democratical government, who is sufficient to hold the reins of authority? Where there are no standing magistrates in the commonwealth, and in the church, no governors at all, the offspring is like to be an Ichabod. Fourth, confusion and disturbance are inevitable.<sup>2</sup>

Upon Charles II's restoration, Noyes wrote, in the "Epistle Dedicatory to the King," that the Independent Oliver Cromwell was one of the "Usurpers" who was responsible for ". . . the beheading of our late gracious and most excellent King Charles the first, of blessed memory," and that this terrible act probably hastened Parker's death (although he did not die

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<sup>1</sup> From a biographical sketch by Nicholas Noyes, in Mather, Magnalia, I, p. 485.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Joshua Coffin, A Sketch of the History of Newbury, Newburyport, and West Newbury, from 1635 to 1845 (Boston: Samuel G. Drake, 1845), pp. 72-73.

until 1677).<sup>1</sup>

Parker and Noyes not only were Presbyterians, but they actively practiced this form of church government in Newbury. In 1641/42 Lechford recorded,

"Of late some Churches are of opinion, that any may be admitted to Church-fellowship, that are not extremely ignorant or scandalous: but this they are not very forward to practice, except at Newberry."<sup>2</sup>

The views which these two ministers put into effect at Newbury disturbed the other elders of Massachusetts enough to call for a ministerial convention, its purpose being to dissuade Parker and Noyes from their present practice. Meeting in September of 1643, with Cotton and Hooker as moderators, both sides presented their arguments and answered their opponents. Among the decisions reached by the Convention, the consent of the congregation was deemed necessary for admissions and excommunications, and the parish churches in England could not be properly reformed without, at least, a renewed covenant.<sup>3</sup> But Parker and Noyes could not agree with these statements, and so the basic disagreement remained. In fact, Parker wrote that there was "much conjunction" at the Convention concerning his assertion that

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Jeremiah Chaplin, Life of Henry Dunster, First President of Harvard College (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1872), p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> Lechford, Plain-Dealing, pp. 21-22; quoted by Walker, Creeds, p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> Walker, Creeds, p. 138.

" . . . the rule must be so large, that the weakest Christians may be received. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

The relationship between the Newbury ministers and their Congregational colleagues was marked by a great spirit of toleration. Cotton Mather called Parker "sweet-spirited" and "a person of most extensive charity."<sup>2</sup> It may be argued that Mather was of a later generation and wished to deemphasize any contention that passed between his forefathers. Yet, a member of that first generation, Edward Johnson, who had no love for dissenters, wrote of Parker and Noyes.

. . . it were to be wished that all persons, who have had any hand in those hot contentions, which have fallen out since about Presbyterian and Independent Government in Churches, would have looked on this Example, comparing it with the Word of God, and assuredly it would have stayed (all the godly at lest) of either part from such unworthy expressions as have passed, to the grief of many of God's people. . . .<sup>3</sup>

It may also be possible that the differences between Newbury's ministers and the other elders of Massachusetts were deemphasized due to one great similarity--the fear of democracy and social disorder. Therefore, it is not really surprising to find that one of the pillars of New England Congregationalism, John Wilson, twice called upon Noyes to preach against Antinomianism and the Hutchinson faction.<sup>4</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup>Parker, "True Copy of a Letter . . .," p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Mather, Magnalia, I, p. 483.

<sup>3</sup>Johnson, Wonder-Working Providence, pp. 98-99.

<sup>4</sup>Noyes' article in Mather, Magnalia, I, p. 484.

the crucial gubernatorial contest between Winthrop and Vane, ten residents of Newbury, including Noyes' brother Nicholas, walked forty miles to Cambridge so that they might take the freeman's oath and vote for Winthrop. Only three citizens of Newbury were disarmed by the General Court, and one of them, Richard Dummer, the town's largest landowner, paid half the town's contribution towards the financial relief of Winthrop.<sup>1</sup>

As for its internal church affairs, there is no record of any major discord for the first thirty years of Newbury's existence. Johnson described the town's Presbyterianism to be of a moderate nature:

The teaching elders in this place have carried it very lovingly toward their people, permitting them to assist in admitting of persons into church society, and in church censures, so long as they act regularly, but in case of maladministration they assume the power wholly to themselves.<sup>2</sup>

However, the 1660's revealed much discord within the church and suggests that underlying discontent with the elders' arbitrary ways had long existed. In 1664 Parker's salary was reduced from £80 to £60. The following year his salary was renewed to its former level, but internal strife was to continue.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Coffin, History of Newbury, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Coffin, History of Newbury, p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> Coffin, History of Newbury, p. 69.

In 1669, a large portion of the congregation, perhaps a majority, accused Parker of error and stated that he had broken several agreements made with the church. When Parker declared that his critics were guilty of sin, they wrote a retort (for which they were brought before the General Court):

"To these things thus charged upon us, the major part of the brethren adhering to Jesus Christ and his word do answer, that we do not judge ourselves guilty of those sins as you have publicly charged upon us, having duly examined our consciences and actions by the word of God, and therefore cannot approve of your proceedings therein, but do conceive that you have proceeded therein beside the rule that Christ hath given his church to walk by, and have exercised lordship over God's heritage by charging the major part of the brethren of the church, as we conceive unjustly, with many sins. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

#### "Creeping" Presbyterianism

Another possible reason, besides fear of social disorder, for the amicable coexistence between Presbyterian Newbury and Congregational New England was the latter's de facto acceptance of ecclesiastical influence outside of and over the individual church. One of the first actions which brought Roger Williams into conflict with the New England

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Coffin, History of Newbury, p. 81. It is interesting to note that, thirty-five years after the gathering of the church at Newbury, a witness to this event, John Pike, testified that the church was formed in a Congregational way, ". . . and soe continued together lovingly a considerable number of years untill other doctrine began to be preached amongst us." — Chaplain, Henry Dunster, p. 17. If true, had Parker, in reality, begun as a Congregationalist and then changed his mind in the "free air of a New World," or had he deliberately and methodically attempted to move the church to his way of thinking?

clergy was his protest, along with Samuel Skelton, against the regular meeting held by the ministers in the Boston area, Williams ". . . prognosticating that it might in time bring forth a Presbytery, or superintendency to the prejudice of the churches' liberties."<sup>1</sup>

In 1634, the elders of the Massachusetts churches were called by the pastor and the congregation to settle a difference within the Church of Lynn, where some of the brethren, opposing the proceedings of Stephen Bachelor, had separated from church communion. Through outside help, the two parties were reconciled.

Two years later Thomas James, Pastor of the Charlestown Church, was accused of holding a "spirit of jealousy" towards Zachariah Symmes, the teacher.

. . . they were constrained to call in the help of the elders and messengers of the next churches; and it being the case of an elder, the neighbor churches, to whom they sent for advice, sent most elders, but few other messengers.<sup>2</sup>

This gathering of elders found James at fault and advised, that if he and Symmes could not come to an accord, he should leave. James left.

When Jonathan Burr was invited to join Richard Mather as minister to the Church of Dorchester, a question arose

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<sup>1</sup>William Hubbard, A General History of New England From the Discovery to 1680. Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Vols. V-VI of the Second Series (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1848), V, pp. 189-190.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 191.



concerning Burr's opinions as being close to Antinomianism. He wrote his opinions and forwarded them to Mather, who reported them, perhaps, rather unfairly. A controversy between the two ensued, and they called for assistance from other churches. Consequently, in February 1640, the Governor, Winthrop, and ten ministers from neighboring churches spent four days in consultation. Both Burr and Mather apologized and were reconciled.<sup>1</sup>

The Massachusetts Body of Liberties allowed that

" . . . once in every month of the year, when the season will bear it, it shall be lawful for the ministers and elders near adjoining together, with any other of the brethren, with the consent of the churches, to assemble by course in each several church, one after another, to the intent, after the preaching of the word by such a minister as shall be requested thereto by the elders of the church where the assembly is held, the rest of the day may be spent in public Christian conference about the discussing and resolving of any such doubts and cases of conscience, concerning matter of doctrine, or worship, or government of the church, as shall be propounded by any of the brethren of that church, with leave also to any other brother to propound his<sup>2</sup> objections or answers for further satisfaction, according to the word of God. "2

Of course, there is no mention that these meetings would have any binding authority over the individual congregations, and the brethren were granted certain important powers--to call the meetings in the first place and to propose and discuss questions concerning doctrine and government. But, in fact, as Miller noted, the elders had enormous power to

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<sup>1</sup> Hubbard, General History of New England, p. 278.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, p. 440.

interpret the Word.<sup>1</sup> And it was the clergy, not the brethren, who selected the ministers to preach, therefore making quite unlikely a repetition of Wheelwright's provoking fast-day sermon. Finally, the very fact that the Body of Liberties codified the legality of regular meetings revealed a distrust of the capability of the individual congregations to deal with matters which might become dangerous and socially disruptive (the examples of the Salem Church's support of Williams and Boston's of Hutchinson were still fresh). This legal article was but one of a series of laws which strengthened the discretionary powers of the magistrates and clergy at the expense of the individual churches.<sup>2</sup>

In 1642 a controversy occurred which illustrated this distrust and, at the same time, contrasted the position of church and sect. When the church members of Woburn wished to ordain Thomas Carter as their minister, they were advised that, since there was no other church officer, the elders of other churches should be asked to solemnize the event.

. . . but others, supposing it might be an occasion of introducing the dependency of churches, &c., and so of a presbytery, were not so free to admit thereof, and therefore it was performed by one of their own members, though not so well to the satisfaction of some of the magistrates and ministers then present; and since that time it hath been more frequent, in such cases, to desire the elders of neighboring churches, by virtue of communion of churches, to ordain such as are by the churches and

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<sup>1</sup>Miller, Orthodoxy, Chapter VI, "The New England Way," especially p. 182.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter I, pp. 3-4.

people chosen to be their officers, where there are no elders before.<sup>1</sup>

The proponents of the individual congregation, undefiled by outside intrusion, may have won the day at Woburn, but two years later, the magistrates and elders, invited to witness the formation of a church at Wenham, found the candidates not sufficiently prepared. They, therefore, advised a postponement, which was done.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the greatest act of external authority, certainly the most ironic, occurred in 1646, when the clergy out-presbyterianized the Presbyterian minister of Hingham, Peter Hobart. A woman of that town came to the Cambridge Synod to complain of her excommunication. The elders were just adjourning and had no time to consider the matter. Then a minority of the Hingham Church invited the neighboring elders to come to consider the problem. Since a majority did not extend the invitation, these elders questioned if they should comply. It was answered that the majority would naturally not complain of its own act, and if the minority was not heard, ". . . then God should have left no means of redress in such a case, which could not be."<sup>3</sup> A council, therefore, did convene at Hingham, stipulating that it came not to impose a decision, but to give advice. However, these

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<sup>1</sup>Hubbard, General History of New England, V, pp. 408-409.

<sup>2</sup>Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, p. 529.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 579.

elders heard the difficulties and did reconcile the conflicting parties.

### A Spirit of Brotherly Love

Just as Congregationalism, as actually practiced, moved steadily towards more and more centralization, so did the ideology of the New England Way shift quietly, though perceptively. Although Massachusetts Congregationalism was not codified until the Cambridge Synod, the clergy generally agreed that the ultimate ecclesiastical power was delegated by Christ to the individual churches. The members of each congregation had the authority to admit and excommunicate members and to choose their ministers. Yet, the officer obtained his authority from God, not from the congregation. Elders prepared all church business--e.g., interviewing church candidates and preparing censures--and ran the meetings; the congregation ". . . resolved itself in practice into a doing of what it was told. . . ." <sup>1</sup> In 1637 when John Davenport (in his ". . . Nine Positions") and Richard Mather (". . . Thirty-Two Questions") were questioned by English Presbyterians as to the Congregational Way, they denied the binding authority of synods. However, according to Walker,

The Congregationalism of both of these replies is of the type of Barrowe rather than of Browne. It gives practically all power into the hands of the officers of the church, and leaves to the brethren little more than the bare right to consent. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, Orthodoxy, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> Walker, Creeds, p. 135.

Six years later, when Presbyterianism was on the ascendent in England, Hugh Peter, no doubt wishing to be politic as well as polite, blurred the distinctions between it and Congregationalism, as he accentuated the evil of a common enemy:

"I do conceive that this sword will not be sheathed, which is now drawn, till church work be better known. Presbytery and Independency are the ways of worship and church fellowship now looked at, since we hope Episcopacy is confined out, and will be buried without expectation of another resurrection. We need not tell the wise whence tyranny grew in churches, and how commonwealths got their pressure in the like kind."<sup>1</sup>

On the other side, Samuel Rutherford, author of the Due Right of Presbyteries, was ready to admit those similarities which did exist between the two methods of church government. While asserting that only the elders could conclude decisions,

. . . we urge not a Church assembly of Elders only to exclude people from hearing, yea and in an orderly way, from speaking, reasoning and disputing even in our Generall assembly. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Rutherford also accepted baptism as a covenant which sealed a person's entry into the Visible Church, that infidels must give a confession of their faith before being baptized, and that at the election of a minister by the people both parties

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<sup>1</sup> Prefatory remarks to Richard Mather's Church-Covenant and Church-Government Discussed; quoted by Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, p. 484.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Rutherford, Due Right of Presbyteries or, A Peaceable Plea for the Government of the Church of Scotland (London: R. Whittaker and A. Crook, 1644), p. 35.

were bound to each other by an oath, ~~this~~ church covenant might be lawfully sworn, although it was not necessary for church membership.<sup>1</sup>

Robert Baylie, a Scotsman and Presbyterian like Rutherford, but far less conciliatory, wrote a scathing attack upon Congregationalism (or Independency, as he called it) and upon John Cotton especially. His Dissuasive From the Errours of the Time called the Independents the smallest of the sects and stated, "Concerning their Original, the Separatists were their Fathers."<sup>2</sup> He pointed to Cotton, "the greatest promoter and Patron of Independency," as originally opposing this scheme of church government, using the latter's letter of chastisement to Samuel Skelton as proof.<sup>3</sup> Now, not only had Cotton joined this movement, but he has even partaken of ". . . the horrible Errours of the Antinomians and Familists, with his dear friend Mistress Hutchinson. . . ."<sup>4</sup> Baylie, quoting Cotton, further asserted that ". . . in New-England they give the right hand of Fellowship to the Brownists Sacraments," while in London New England Congregationalists were reported to attend Separatist services.<sup>5</sup> Not only did these Independents accept only the

<sup>1</sup> Rutherford, Due Right of Presbyteries, pp. 86-88.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Baylie, A Dissuasive From the Errours of the Time (London: published by authority, 1645), p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

regenerate into their churches, but they went even a step further than the Separatists, for they demanded an account of a candidate's regeneration. Yet, even Baylie admitted that there was one trend among Congregationalists towards a more Presbyterian-like stance:

But the putting of the power of Jurisdiction in the peoples hand, brings confusion into the Church, for it makes the feet above the head, it puts the greatest power in the hand of the meanest, it gives power to the Flocke to depose and excommunicate their Pastour. Our brethren were lately wont to digest with the Brownists these absurdities, but now they beginne to dislike them, and rather then to stand on their Prior Tenets, they will limit the Minor, asserting that the power of Jurisdiction belongs to the people not fervently, but jointly with their Officers; so that neither they can excommunicate their Officers, nor their Officers can excommunicate them.<sup>1</sup>

In his Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven and Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared, Cotton chose to answer in a spirit of amicability, like Rutherford, rather than of harsh partnership, as Baylie did; his tone is quite conciliatory. In this Cotton reflected the spirit of the General Court, which, in 1645, ordered the printing and dispersal throughout the colony of a book, from England, called United our Dutie:

"It being principallie applyed and presented to the godlie, reverend, and learned brethren of the Presbyterian judgement, and the dissentinge, godlie, reverend, and learned brethren, commonly called Independent, contending together about church government, earnestly dissuading them from bitter speaking and writing against one another. It being a subject in the general applicable to most

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<sup>1</sup> Baylie, A Dissuasive From the Errours of the Time, p. 185.

Christian churches and states, and not unsuitable to our present condition."<sup>1</sup>

The Congregationalism described in Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven is marked by great balance between the powers of the brethren and that of the church officers. Yet, although the brethren might censure some of the elders, they might not censure all; who, then, would pass sentence (in this, Cotton differed from Hooker)? And he denied that the elders in a synod have no authority, for if they proceeded according to the word of God,

they may consider and conclude sundry points expedient for the estate of their churches, which the churches were either ignorant or doubtful of before.<sup>2</sup>

If a particular church was in error, and was corrected by the synod, but still persisted in this error, the other churches could choose to withdraw from fellowship with it.

Defending the New England ministry from Baylie's charge that it had allowed schism to run rampant, Cotton stated that his fellow ministers did what Presbyterians would have done in the same situation--convene a synod, call the delinquents before it, and convince them of, or condemn them for, their errors.<sup>3</sup> He summarized the clergy's power in a metaphor which might have even pleased Baylie:

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, p. 545.

<sup>2</sup>John Cotton, "Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, 1644," in Ziff, John Cotton, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 291.



A queen may call her servants, her mariners, to pilot and conduct her over the sea to such an haven: yet they being called by her to such an office, she must not rule them in steering their course, but submit herself to be ruled by them, till they have brought her to her desired haven. So is the case between the church and her elders.<sup>1</sup>

In the Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared, Cotton continued his own defense and increased his conciliatory attitude towards Presbyterianism. Although our churches do not accept all the inhabitants of a nation, he asserted, we do not separate from Protestant churches which do, but only from those which openly sin, ". . . or at least do not openly hold forth any spiritual discerning of the Lord's body. . . ." <sup>2</sup> And in correcting Baylie, Cotton showed supreme brotherly affection towards Presbyterianism:

Nor do I yet understand why he should account the religion of New England another religion, than that of England and Scotland and other reformed churches. Difference in some external form of church administration is not wont in the writings of judicious divines, to make up the note and name of a different religion.<sup>3</sup>

The sum and substance of Congregationalism, issued by the Cambridge Synod of 1646-48, echoed Cotton, both in his arguments and in his appeal for mutual forbearance in order to further the true Word of God. The "Preface" to the Platform stated:

<sup>1</sup> Cotton, "Keys of the Kingdom," p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> Cotton, "Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared, 1648," in Ziff, John Cotton, p. 188.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

This Synod having perused, & considered (with much gladness of heart, & thankfulness to God) the confession of faith published of late by the Reverend [Presbyterian-dominated] Westminster Assembly in England, doe judge it to be very holy, orthodox, and judicious in all matters of faith; & doe therefore freely and fully consent thereunto, for the substance thereof. Only in those things which have respect to church government & discipline, wee refer our selves to the platform of church discipline, agreed upon by this present assembly. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The church discipline preferred by the Cambridge Synod was, of course, Congregationalism, and while the essential features of this form were maintained (e.g., the church as existing before its officers), the powers as well as the limitations of a synod are designated. The synod has no jurisdiction; it cannot censure an individual in error. It is, however, "Decisive in determining by way of discussion and disputation, what is truth, and so consequently resolving the question in weighty matters of Religion. . . ." <sup>2</sup> As for the Synod's declaration of truth, ". . . it binds the conscience." <sup>3</sup> That this power over one's conscience could be as forceful as power over one's body, perhaps more so, had been evidenced by the clergy's dominance both within each church and in general colonial affairs (e.g., gathering of churches, dealing with heretics, and giving political support to the magistrates). The "Preface" closed with a call for unity between both forms of church government:

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<sup>1</sup> Cambridge Synod and Platform; in Walker, Creeds, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

. . . is difference about Church-order becom the inlett of all the disorders in the kingdom? hath the Lord indeed left us to such hardness of heart, that Church-government shall become a snare to Zion. . . . If it is possible, for a little faith (so much as a grain of mustardseed) to remove a mountaine: is it not possible, for so much strength of faith, as is to be found in all the godly in the kingdom, to remove those Images of jealousie, & to cast those stumbling-blocks out of the way, which may hinder the free passage of brotherly love amongst brethren?<sup>1</sup>

### The Church at Hingham

The one church which refused to send any representatives to the Cambridge Synod was Hingham, and the reason for this was largely due to the policies of its minister, Peter Hobart. Hobart was a professed Presbyterian. As Winslow testified,

'T is known also, that Mr. Hubbard, the minister at Hengam, hath declared himself for that way; nay, which is more than ever I heard of the other two [i.e., Parker and Noyes], he refuseth to baptize no children that are tendered to him, (although this liberty stands not upon a Presbyterian bottom,) and yet the civil state never molested him for it.<sup>2</sup>

Hobart was born in Hingham, in the County of Norfolk. His parents were so pious that their Puritanism was attacked by irreligious neighbors.<sup>3</sup> According to John Waters, Edmund Hobart Sr., his family, and many of their neighbors emigrated to Massachusetts, ". . . as members of a conscious community of God's people";

<sup>1</sup> Cambridge Synod and Platform, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> Winslow, "Brief Narration," p. 403.

<sup>3</sup> Mather, Magnalia, I, p. 498.

. . . with an established ruling class and a church policy that was clearly Presbyterian. . . They were willing to go into the "Wilderness" because they had seen signs of Anti-Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Having become a devout minister with strong Puritan inclinations, Peter Hobart also decided to remove to New England to escape further persecution. Arriving in Charlestown in 1635, he was offered a post by several churches, but decided to become minister at Hingham, where Hobart joined his parents and brothers--Edmund, Thomas, and Joshua. In fact, the town was settled, to a large extent, by residents of Old Hingham.<sup>2</sup> This familiarity with many of the inhabitants of his former home, in addition to a strong nucleus of familial support, may have greatly facilitated Hobart's practice of a Presbyterian form of church government:

Unlike the Boston church, which by 1640 included less than half of the capital's population, the Hingham church encompassed virtually the entire town's one-hundred and forty families. There was thus an identity between townsmen and church that gave the pastor a role of unquestioned authority.<sup>3</sup>

In 1645 a schism occurred in Hingham which did question Hobart's authority, and which brought him before the

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<sup>1</sup> John J. Waters, "Hingham, Massachusetts, 1631-1661: An East Anglican Hierarchy in the New World," Journal of Social History, I (Summer, 1968), pp. 356-360.

<sup>2</sup> cf. Waters. The Hobarts and other East Anglicans were, within a few years, to gain almost complete control of the political and religious offices of the town from their West County predecessors (who had not yet formed a church).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 362.

magistracy:

I should have mentioned in the Hingham case, what care and pains many of the elders had taken to reconcile the differences which were grown in that church. Mr. Hubbert, the pastor there, being of a Presbyterian spirit, did manage all affairs without the church's advice, which divers of the congregation not liking of, they were divided in two parts.<sup>1</sup>

The incident which sparked the division was a controversy over the office of militia captain. The town residents, having selected their usual captain, Anthony Eames, then decided to place Bozoon Allen, Eames' lieutenant, in his stead. When Allen's name was presented before the Court for confirmation, the magistrates ordered the matter to rest until they had considered further. But the militia, ignoring the order, again chose Allen. Eames refused to abide by the decision, and both men led militia drills, with about two-thirds of the militia following Allen. Angry words passed between the two parties, and Eames was brought before the church and charged with lying. Hobart urged his prompt excommunication. The captain complained to several of the magistrates, who sent warrants to five of the main offenders.

Hobart, who was ". . . brother to three of the principal in this sedition," accompanied his brothers to Boston.<sup>2</sup> The minister harangued the magistrates and called the complaintants "talebearers." The accused denied most of

<sup>1</sup> Winthrop, Journal, II, pp. 244-245.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 230.

the charges and were bound over. Then another five were summoned from Hingham and charged with lying in the church concerning the magistrates. These men demanded to know their accusers, which Deputy-Governor Winthrop denied as necessary, since it was not a trial. The accused refused to give bond, and when two of them later again were asked to give bond and refused, these two were committed. Hobart, then, not only led his town in a petition which criticized the power of the magistrates, but he himself was fined for his contemptuous words and actions.

He was thereafter distrusted by both the elders and the magistrates. When, in 1646, the Court asked the elders to meet with them to advise a policy dealing with problems caused by Samuel Gorton and Dr. Child, Hobart was asked to leave the room.<sup>1</sup> And the following year he was not allowed to preach in Boston at the marriage of one of his townsmen. One reason was the fear that such sermons might induce the old English custom of a minister solemnizing the marriage ceremony. But the other reason was

. . . that his spirit had been discovered to be adverse to our ecclesiastical and civil government, and he was a bold man, and would speak his mind. . . .<sup>2</sup>

### The Remonstrance

One man, not mentioned by Winthrop, yet perhaps involved in the Hingham affair, was William Vassall. He was

<sup>1</sup> Winthrop, Journal, II, p. 289.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 330.

one of the original Massachusetts patentees of 1629, but removed to Scituate in Plymouth Colony, where no religious qualification was required for citizenship. His religious beliefs were definitely not Congregational. For when Charles Chauncy became minister to the Church of Scituate, Vassall withdrew from the church with several other persons and formed a second church. Chauncy accused him and the other dissidents of irregularities, including a far more open policy of baptism. Vassall admitted to "some difference" in their sacraments, and that they would receive into communion those who presented "the manifestation of their grace," yet did not belong to a particular church.<sup>1</sup> Vassall accused Chauncy of rejecting the former church state of Scituate, for when he became minister, Chauncy demanded that all former members be admitted anew and refused communion to those who did not follow this order. That Vassall may have been a Presbyterian is suggested in his following comment:

"As for that some may think that we incline towards the Scottish discipline, I conceive the difference in that to be more in words than in substance, and not that we differ much in the main; and this is the great matter that causes reports to grow, like snow-balls, bigger and bigger by rolling. But those that know us fear not our inclining to the bishops; or to receiving profane persons to the sacraments."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> George Langdon, Jr., Pilgrim Colony: A History of New Plymouth, 1620-1691 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 62-63.

<sup>2</sup> Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, pp. 498-499.

Vassall may have been friendly with Hobart, since he lived close to Hingham and held similar views on church government. Winslow believed this and declared Vassall to be the instigator of the controversy at Hingham.<sup>1</sup>

Vassall continued to cause trouble. In October of 1645 he petitioned the Court of New Plymouth, "To allow and maintaine full and free tolerance of religion to all men that would preserve the Civill peace."<sup>2</sup> Although a majority of the Deputies seemed willing to approve, the magistrates, led by Governor Bradford, spoke against the measure, and, in the end, Bradford refused to allow that the petition be put to a vote. Shortly afterwards, Vassall petitioned Massachusetts for the same religious freedom, and later appealed to Parliament,

. . . . that the distinctions which were maintained here, both in civil and church estate, might be taken away, and that we might be wholly governed by the laws of England. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Parliament had, by then, engaged in the Solemn League and Covenant with Scotland; the body to which Vassall was appealing was an official instrument of Presbyterianism. He knew it, and the magistrates of New Plymouth and

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Winslow, New-England's Salamander Discovered. Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Vol. II, 3rd Series (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1830), p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> Winthrop Papers, 5, pp. 55-56; quoted in Langdon, Pilgrim Colony, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> Winthrop, Journal, II, p. 271.



Massachusetts also knew it.

So too did another group of petitioners, who shortly after Vassall, reiterated and expanded his requests to the General Court of Massachusetts. These men--Dr. Robert Child, Thomas Fowle, Samuel Maverick, John Smith, Thomas Burton, David Yale, and John Dand--complained that,

"Whereas there are diverse sober, righteous and godly men, eminent for knowledge and other gracious gifts of the holy spirit, no wayes scandalous in their lives and conversations, members of the church of England . . . not dissenting from the latest and best reformation of England, Scotland, &c. yet they and their posterity are detained from the seales of the covenant of free grace, because as it is supposed, they will not take these churches covenants, for which as yet they see no light in Gods word. . . ."1

This desire for the allowance of Presbyterian worship was not scandalous, especially considering that the churches of Newbury and Hingham were already practicing that way. Nor was their demand for an extention of the franchise, for a bill allowing non-freeman equal power with freeman in town affairs ". . . was drawn up, and ready to pass. . . ."2

But the petition went on to demand that no one be banished unless convicted of breaking ". . . the known Lawes of England in so high a manner, as to deserve so high a

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<sup>1</sup> Walker, Creeds, p. 165. The religious persuasions of the petitioners varied. Maverick was an Anglican. Probably only Child and Burton were Presbyterians. cf. Johnson, Wonder-Working Providence, p. 240; and Winslow, Salamander, p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> Winthrop, Journal, II, p. 271.

punishment.<sup>1</sup> And it blamed the spread of heresy in New England upon the restrictiveness of Congregational policy.

Whence (as we conceive) abound an ocean of inconveniences; Dishonor to God and his Ordinances, little profit by the Ministry, increase of Anabaptism, and of those that totally contemn all Ordinances as vain, fading of Christian graces, decrease of Brotherly love, Heresies, Schisms, &. The whole body of the Members of the Churches of England; like sheep scattered in the wilderness, without a shepherd, in a forlorne sad condition.<sup>2</sup>

Robert Child, spokesman for the petitioners, wrote to the younger Winthrop in May of 1641, rejoicing that ". . . Lord p'lates--deanes, prebends, are fallen," and hoped that the same fate awaited the bishops.<sup>3</sup> His biographer, George Kittredge, believed him to have been a high Presbyterian and used, as supportive evidence, the petition itself and Major John Child's comments upon his own and his brother Robert's beliefs.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, Kittredge believed Child to have been so devout that the doctor wanted, all along, to place the colony under the direct control of a Presbyterian Parliament:

Indeed, the whole Remonstrance, if read with all the circumstances in mind, reveals itself at once as a paper intended, from the first, for the eyes of the

<sup>1</sup> John Child, New England's Jonas, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Winthrop Papers, 111, pp. 150-151; quoted in George Kittredge, "Dr. Robert Child the Remonstrant," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Vol. XXI, Transactions (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1920), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Kittredge, "Dr. Robert Child," pp. 90-92.

Presbyterian party in England, both in the Parliament and out, who had long looked askance at New England as a stronghold of Independency. Only in form was it addressed to our General Court. . . . What Child had in mind was that the colonists should be forced to take the Covenant!<sup>1</sup>

This "conspiracy" theory is based upon much inference, as at least one historian has totally rejected it.<sup>2</sup> In fact, it is quite probable that the primary aim of the petition was not religious at all, but rather political.<sup>3</sup>

However, having followed the Ministerial Convention of 1643 and the Hingham controversy (both which arose largely due to the influence of a Presbyterian element in Massachusetts), the Remonstrance may have caused the magistrates some apprehension, especially since it supported men ". . . not dissenting from the latest and best reformation of England, Scotland, &c."<sup>4</sup> Edward Johnson actually called the petitioning a "plot,"<sup>5</sup> and Winslow seemed to agree with this

<sup>1</sup>Kittredge, "Dr. Robert Child," p. 85.

<sup>2</sup>cf. S. E. Morison, Builders of the Bay Colony (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1930). In addition, Robert E. Wall, Jr. asserts that the petitioners might well have seriously hoped for support from three important areas within the colony: the Presbyterians, the Deputies, and the unenfranchised. cf. his Massachusetts Bay: The Crucial Decade, 1640-1650 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 164-165.

<sup>3</sup>cf. Wall, Massachusetts Bay: The Crucial Decade, p. 163. "Although Vassall apparently was a Presbyterian, the objective which tied him and his associates together was more likely the political goal of upsetting the domination of the magistrates in Massachusetts."

<sup>4</sup>They also may have noticed that Thomas Burton was a member of Hobart's church.

<sup>5</sup>Johnson, Wonder-Working Providence, p. 241.

opinion, for he stated,

Now had a peaceable reformation beene the marke they aymed at, they would not have gone about this to make the government so much despised farre and neare. . . .<sup>1</sup>

But even taking this into consideration, the magistrates desired to continue to follow a policy of conciliation with Presbyterianism; for they did not wish originally to call the petitioners before the General Court. Winthrop wrote,

"I had thought we should onely have declared o<sup>r</sup> apprehensions concerning the Petition, w<sup>th</sup>out questioning the Petitioners but, the Deptyes called upon it, whereupon M<sup>r</sup> Fowle was forced to putt in bond to ans<sup>r</sup>, &c., & the rest being called, did p<sup>r</sup>esently appeale to the Parlt, etc.; so as we are like to proceed to some Censure for their appeal, if not for the petition."<sup>2</sup>

#### Concluding Remarks

As in the case of the Anglican threat of the previous decade, the ecclesiastical and political rulers of Massachusetts feared the religious implications of Presbyterianism, while respecting the political power behind the faith. This respect (and fear) influenced the colonial leadership into tolerating actual dissenting churches in Newbury and Hingham<sup>3</sup> in acting with forbearance towards certain threats to the social order. Hobart and Child were

<sup>1</sup> Winslow, Salamander, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> Winthrop to Winthrop, Jr., 16 Nov. 1646; quoted by Robert Winthrop, Life and Letters of John Winthrop (2 vols.; Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1869), II, p. 357.

fined for sedition, not banished.

Yet, there is more, for the elders of the Cambridge Synod spoke honestly when they declared their wholehearted agreement with the doctrines laid down by the Westminster Assembly. After all, both the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians were Puritans; they held a common repugnance towards the episcopacy and had shared alike in its persecutions. Compared to an accordance in faith, ecclesiastical differences might justifiably be considered minor, especially considering that those differences were not nearly as great in practice as they were in theory.

Since it appeared that Presbyterianism would never become the controlling system in the colony, and Congregationalism would never become the controlling system in the homeland, and since adherents of both parties were united in Christian essentials, the time had come to explore ways of living together so that both might turn their attention to the destroyers of doctrine. Puritanism was moving into another political phase.<sup>1</sup>

Congregationalism had come a long way since it was the tiny minority of a politically weak movement. It had grown into the dominant church in what was proving to be a world of its own. As such, it found much in common with English Presbyterianism. But the enjoyment of power carried with it responsibilities. And nowhere were these responsibilities greater than in the area of social control. The "destroyers of doctrine" who had broken loose in England found their counterparts in the New World. As a church dealing with

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<sup>1</sup>Ziff, John Cotton, p. 34.

sects, New England Congregationalism had to accept the challenge of schism and defeat it in order to survive.

It is in this conflict, exemplified in the reaction to the Baptists and the Quakers, that the nature of the New England Church is best portrayed. To study Anglicanism and Presbyterianism in contrast to Anabaptism and Quakerism is to understand the paradox of Edward Johnson, who could attack the signers of the Remonstrance because they did not wish to worship in a Presbyterian church but wanted all of New England to follow that way, and, at the same time, who could damn those wishing to turn Massachusetts into an "Army for tolerationists."<sup>1</sup> Yet even against the schismatic sectarians, the policy of the New England Way differed only in degree, not in kind.

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson, Wonder-Working Providence, pp. 240-241; p. 269.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BAPTISTS

First therefore hee laid a sore affliction upon me wherein he laid me lower in myne own eyes than at any time before, & showed mee the emptiness of all my guifts & parts; left mee neither power nor will, so as I became as a weaned child. I could now no more look at what I had been or what I had done, nor be discontented for want of strength or assurance, mine eyes were only upon his free mercy in Jesus Christ. I knew I was worthy of nothing, for I knew I could do nothing for him or for myself. I could only mourn, & weep to think of free mercy to such a vile wretch as I was. Though I had no power to apply it yet I felt comfort in it. I did not long continue in this estate, but the good spirit of the Lord breathed upon my soule, & said I should live.<sup>1</sup>

This moving and emotional confession was not written by John Bunyan or James Nayler; it was penned by John Winthrop. Winthrop was like the sectarians, whom he unhesitatingly condemned, in his Protestant roots—an acute awareness of God's presence and omnipresence, and a feeling of intimacy with Him. Therefore, while in England, Winthrop opposed the episcopacy and "popish" sacraments, and found himself sharing arguments with Separatists and even more politically and socially reprehensible characters.

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<sup>1</sup>Governor John Winthrop's (the elder) Christian Experience, in R. Winthrop, Life and Letters of John Winthrop, II, p. 171.

However, while on the Arbella sailing to a new world, Winthrop sounded a discordant note. He stated that, since the voyage's basic intent was to seek a new home

"... under a due forme of Government both civill and ecclesiasticall, . . . the care of the publique must oversway all private respects."<sup>1</sup> Granted that this was to enable the group to do further service for God, it still remained questionable whether one could maintain a personal relationship with the Lord and, at the same time, be willing to risk compromising that intimacy for the good of the majority. For Winthrop this was a paradox which, through constant struggle, he was able to control.<sup>2</sup>

For others, who followed the Governor to Massachusetts, the problem remained a conflict:

The dynamic church principle inherent in the doctrine of every man his own priest was in constant disharmony with the severe external authority attempted in practice by the Puritan clergy and elders.<sup>3</sup>

In such a conflict, many made the choice to follow their God even in defiance of authority. It was no wonder that Thomas Venner, leader of the bloody Fifth Monarchy riots in London

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<sup>1</sup> John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," quoted by Morison, Builders of the Bay Colony, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> of. Edmund S. Morgan, The Puritan Dilemma. The Story of John Winthrop (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1958).

<sup>3</sup> East, "Puritanism and New Settlement," p. 255.



in 1661, spent fourteen years in Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> The colony had to deal with many such obstinate persons; for example, in 1640 Hugh Buet was found guilty of heresy--he held that he was free from original sin--and banished upon pain of death.<sup>2</sup>

Others, though not banished, could be just as unruly, and far more vocal. The tumult within the Church of Newbury has already been noted; there, many members of the congregation took it upon themselves to judge their minister in error, after " . . . having duly examined our consciences and actions by the word of God. . . ."<sup>3</sup> The wife of Thomas Trusler was fined for calling her teacher a liar.<sup>4</sup> Edmund Marshall was presented before the Court for stating that Mr. Thomas Dunham had preached blasphemy.<sup>5</sup> And Elizabeth Leag was arrested, " . . . for saying that if the people followed Mr. Walton's preaching or ministry they would all go to hell."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Venner was a church member of Salem and freeman of the colony, as well as juryman and constable. of Sidney Perley, The History of Salem Massachusetts (2 vols.; Salem: Sidney Perley, 1924), I, p. 424.

<sup>2</sup> Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, I, p. 312; J. Winthrop, Journal, II, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Coffin, History of Newbury, p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County (8 vols.; Salem: Essex Institute, 1911), I, p. 68.

<sup>5</sup> Felt, Ecclesiastical History, II, p. 48.

<sup>6</sup> Quarterly Courts of Essex County, II, p. 190.

Yet, perhaps most maddening for the ministers of Massachusetts was the quiet stubbornness which characterized many of their church members. The Salem Church Records serve to show one such example. Brother Weston withdrew from the church because, in part, he was not allowed to ask questions in public; because certain others, permitted membership, had not given satisfaction; and because this church accepted some who held communion with the Church of England. As Weston succinctly and boldly put it, ". . . that the Church he counts to walk according to her light or apprehension. and he walks according to his."<sup>1</sup>

As long as these incidents, though numerous, remained isolated, they were as bubbles over a pan of boiling water, mere visible signs of the heat within. But when dissenters found common ground for protest, and even began to form dissenting groups within the colony, the orthodoxy of Massachusetts was seriously threatened:

Established religions are, as we have seen, embodiments of the principle of conservatism; but if this is so, then the revolutionary forces of a society must form their own religious organizations, parallel but antagonistic embodiments of the principle of revolt. These organizations, born of a negative attack to the contemporary established socio-economic and political system, are traditionally called sects.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel White, New England Congregationalism in Its Origin and Purity: Illustrated by the Foundation and Early Records of the First Church in Salem, and Various Discussions Pertaining to the Subject (Salem: n.p., 1861), p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Werner Stark, The Sociology of Religion. A Study of Christendom (2 vols.; New York: Fordham University Press, 1967), II--Sectarian Religion, pp. 1-2.

The earliest sect in New England was the Baptists. Beginning as individuals professing their beliefs independently, the Baptists established themselves in Rhode Island, and after attempting to form churches within Massachusetts, finally succeeded in 1665, and in the capital of Congregationalism--Boston. These physical manifestations only underscored the far more real and present danger which the Baptist beliefs threatened the established clergy--an open denial and challenge to the New England Way in general, and covenant theology in particular. The Baptists were to try the Massachusetts magistrates and ministers severely, yet, even in this case, the demand for orthodoxy was colored, not black and white, but with definite shades of gray.

#### Historical Precedents

Although Baptists claim descent from both the Bible and early persecuted groups, it will be convenient to trace their ancestry from the Reformation, because it was from there that the New England Baptists took their basic beliefs, and because the attitude taken by the Massachusetts authorities against these sectarians was colored by prejudices against the Anabaptists of the previous century.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>At Anne Hutchinson's trial, Thomas Dudley may have been under the shadow of the Anabaptist revolt at Munster, when he said, "These disturbances that have come among the Germans have been all grounded upon revelations; and so they that vented them have stirred up their hearers to take up arms against their prince and to cut the throats of one

When both Luther and Zwingli were willing to draw the line of reformation at the state church and parish system, a group of reformers, led by ex-priests and artisans, demanded a total commitment to the restoration of the primitive system of church government--congregationalism through the voluntary consent of regenerate adults.<sup>1</sup> These individuals felt that infant baptism was invalid, since only an adult was capable of making the decision to follow the way of God--hence, their name--antipaedobaptists, or Anabaptists.

Many of these Anabaptists were militant millenarians, as was most clearly evidenced by their brutal seizure of Munster. They were feared not for their religious beliefs, but because they were a threat to the established social order. One historian has called Anabaptism ". . . the culminating effort of medieval Christian Communism . . ."<sup>2</sup>, while another stated that the more moderate Reformers, like Zwingli, considered ". . . the Anabaptist Movement nothing less than the destruction of the very basis of society

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another; and these have been the fruits of them.'"  
Three Episodes, I, p. 505. The sixteenth century Anabaptists were specifically condemned in the anti-Baptist ordinance of 1644.

<sup>1</sup> These early Anabaptists were not deterministic, but rather believed that each man, by his own choice, was saved or damned. cf. Rufus Jones, Studies in Mystical Religion (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1909), p. 374.

<sup>2</sup> E. B. Bax, Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists (New York: Macmillan Co., 1903), p. 374.

itself."<sup>1</sup> Writing of these radicals, who in doctrine were very close to him, Luther characterized them as those " . . . who are ever inclined towards revolt, interfere in political matters and arrogantly desire to rule."<sup>2</sup> The artisan and proletarian membership of the movement only increased the fear of those in power.

After the Munster uprising was crushed, the remaining Anabaptists moved towards a non-violent position. But even this threatened authority. These sectarians denied service in the military, refused to accept civil office, and avoided law courts. What was most subversive, however, was their refusal to pay taxes for a state church and their belief in religious toleration.<sup>3</sup> Since it was commonly accepted that the church buttressed the state and the state, in turn, protected the church, this concept of complete voluntarism was, indeed, revolutionary.

Several Anabaptists emigrated to England, settling in Norfolk, Suffolk, and the coastal towns, and made many converts. The first English Baptist minister is generally recognized as John Smyth. Having taken his orders in the

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<sup>1</sup> A. C. Underwood, A History of the English Baptists (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, Ltd., 1961), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Stark, Sociology of Religion, II, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> The Anabaptists' first confession of faith, issued in 1527, ". . . openly claimed and proclaimed religious liberty." Henry King, A Summer Visit of Three Rhode Islanders to the Massachusetts Bay in 1651 (Providence: Preston and Rounds, 1896), p. 75.

Church of England in 1594, Smyth was to become successively a Puritan, Separatist, and Baptist. He was a lecturer and preacher in Lincoln in 1600, but by 1606 he had joined a group of Separatists at Gainsborough, removing with them to Amsterdam. He became acquainted with and influenced the Pilgrims' spiritual leader, John Robinson. However, through reading the Bible and witnessing the Mennonites, Smyth became a Baptist and formed a new church by baptizing first himself and then his followers, instead of by a mutual covenant. He preferred Arminianism to Calvinism and wrote in favor of religious toleration. Smyth died in 1612, and that same year, his one-time follower, Thomas Helwys, led a group back to England to form the First General (i.e., Arminian) Baptist Church. By 1626 there were at least four more such churches in the London area alone.

The first Particular (i.e., Calvinist or determinist) Baptist Church of England, according to Rufus Jones, was formed in Southwark, London, in 1616, under the ministry of Henry Jacob.<sup>2</sup> Jacob, an Oxford graduate, emigrated to Zealand and, after conferring with John Robinson, grouped some fellow

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<sup>1</sup> Underwood, History of the English Baptists, pp. 40-46.

<sup>2</sup> Jones, Mystical Religion, p. 415. Underwood (pp. 56-58), while not refuting Jones' assertion, believed it unclear whether Jacob's church rejected infant baptism or merely baptism in a parish church. He further added that a Particular Baptist Church was definitely formed in 1638 under John Spilsbury. Chaplin, in his Life of Henry Dunster, p. 203, citing Deane's History of Scituate, referred to Lathrop as "an Independent minister."

English exiles into a congregation. He then became a Baptist, and his congregation moved to England. Jacob was succeeded by John Lathrop, who, with thirty followers, emigrated to New England in 1634. These first Particular Baptists, rather than emerging directly from the continental Anabaptists, ". . . arose as secessions from an Independent Church whose Calvinistic ideology they retained."<sup>1</sup>

When the Civil War broke out, the Baptists were, perhaps, the largest sect in England and, renouncing their anathema to military service, provided Cromwell with many officers, including a number of generals. Their ideas concerning toleration influenced the New Model Army and the Protector himself.<sup>2</sup>

In New England, while there were some Baptists who emigrated to Massachusetts, William McLoughlin asserts (and this paper will attempt to support) that the growth of Baptism was an internal matter and, as such, was Calvinist rather than Arminian in nature.<sup>3</sup> These Baptists reverted to pacifism, and their congregational approach to church government was similar to the established ecclesiastical order. In

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<sup>1</sup> Underwood, History of the English Baptists, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-80.

<sup>3</sup> William McLoughlin, New England Dissent, 1630-1833, The Baptists and the Separation of Church and State (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), I, p. 6. "In short, the Baptist movement in New England was essentially an indigenous, parallel movement to that of England and not an offshoot or extension of it."

fact, Anabaptism, ironically, was the common ancestor of all who practiced congregationalism, whether Independent or Baptist. But unlike Congregationalists, the Baptists had not compromised their belief in voluntary support of the ministry. By remaining uncompromising Calvinists, they also challenged the New England Way in four critical areas:

... first, the right or efficacy of the baptism of infants--a challenge which began by refuting the continuity of the Abrahamic covenant on which the whole Puritan system rested; second, the right of separatism or schism--which challenged the concept of uniformity of belief and practice in a Bible Commonwealth in Covenant with God; third, pietism and zeal in the face of increasing formalism--which challenged the Puritans to return to their fundamental ideal of a voluntary church of visible believers--but which the Puritans chose to deride as perfectionism tending toward antinomianism, and fourth, the New England doctrine of preparation for grace--which challenged the conservative nature of the Bible Commonwealth, by urging a more direct reliance upon God's grace and less upon the institutionalized continuity of church growth.<sup>1</sup>

Rather than reincarnations of the German terrorists of a hundred years before, these New England Baptists were, in fact, the conscience pricking the New England Way.

#### Outside the Bay

Just as the Anglicanism and Presbyterianism of England threatened the religious order of Massachusetts, so too did the rise of the Baptist sect in the mother country grieve the colony's leaders. But the Baptist menace proved far closer to home than England. It was as if a congenital virus was

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<sup>1</sup> McLoughlin, New England Dissent, I, p. 28.



ever threatening to break-out:

Some few of these Baptist people have been among the planters of New-England from the beginning, and have been welcome to the communion of our churches, which they have enjoyed, reserving their particular opinion unto themselves. But at length it came to pass that, while some of our churches used, it may be, a little too much of cogeny towards the brethren, which would weakly turn their backs when infants were brought forth to be baptized in the congregation, there were some of these brethren who, in a day of temptation, broke forth into schismatical practices that were justly offensive unto all the churches in this wilderness. . . .

Fear of this schism was first noted in New Plymouth, during the time Roger Williams preached. Disagreeing with some of the leaders of the Plymouth Church, Williams asked for a dismissal to the Church of Salem. Many were unwilling to lose Williams but submitted to the Elder Brewster's request that this be done, for he feared, " . . . that he would run the same course of rigid separation and anabaptistry, that Mr. John Smith at Amsterdam had done."<sup>2</sup> While preaching in New Plymouth and Salem, Williams certainly revealed Separatist tendencies, but there is no record, at this early stage, of an inclination towards antipaedobaptism. However, shortly after banishment, Williams not only became a Baptist, but organized a church. In March of 1639 Winthrop wrote:

At Providence things grew still worse; for a sister of Mrs. Hutchinson, the wife of one Scott, being infected with Anabaptistry, and going last year to live at Providence,

<sup>1</sup> C. Mather, Magnalia, II, p. 532.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Isaac Backus, A History of New England with Particular Reference to the Denomination of Christians Called Baptists (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1969), p. 43.

Mr. Williams was taken (or rather emboldened) by her to make open profession thereof, and accordingly was rebaptized by one Holyman, a poor man late of Salem. Then Mr. Williams rebaptized him and some ten more. They also denied the baptizing of infants, and would have no magistrates.<sup>1</sup>

This Ezekiel Holliman was charged, in 1638, with neglect of public worship and drawing many to his opinions.<sup>2</sup> He was one of the first settlers of Dedham and an original subscriber to its church covenant. He acted as a town leader in 1636,<sup>3</sup> and was referred to as "goodman Holiman."<sup>4</sup> In 1637 he moved to Salem, and shortly afterwards, joined Williams in Providence. Not only Holliman, but other members of the Salem Church--his wife Mary, John Throgmorton, Thomas Olney, Stukely Westcoat, their wives, and the widow Reeves--were all censured by Reverend Hugh Peter for leaving Salem and joining the Baptist church at Providence.<sup>5</sup>

A few months after his baptism, Williams turned Seeker, but the church endured, perhaps to Williams' chagrin. For, in January of 1642, Winthrop recorded an attempted armed conflict at Providence between two groups of "anabaptists,"

<sup>1</sup> J. Winthrop, Journal, I, p. 297.

<sup>2</sup> Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, p. 334.

<sup>3</sup> The Early Records of the Town of Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636-1659 (6 vols.; Dedham: Dedham Transcript Press, 1892), III, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Town Records of Salem (3 vols.; Salem: Essex Institute Press, 1868), I, p. 104.

<sup>5</sup> Backus, History of New England, p. 28.

one group being only against the baptizing of infants, while the other, prodded by Samuel Gorton ". . . denied all magistracy and churches." Williams, however, used his influence to avert bloodshed.<sup>1</sup>

As in Providence, so too did the Island of Aquineck nurture Baptist dissent. John Winthrop wrote in 1641,

Mrs. Hutchinson and those of Aquiday Island broached new heresies every year. Diverse of them turned professed anabaptists, and would not wear any arms, and denied all magistracy among Christians, and maintained that there were no churches since those founded by the apostles and evangelists, nor could any be, nor any pastors ordained, nor seals administered but by such, and that the church was to want these all the time she continued in the wilderness, as yet she was.<sup>2</sup>

The following year Richard Bellingham wrote to New Plymouth in hopes that it would join Massachusetts in keeping Aquineck Island outside of any colonial union, for the island was full of faction and seditious beliefs, which had been spreading into the Bay:

"We have had some experience hereof by some of their undertakers, or emissaries, who have lately come amongst us, and have made publick defiance against magistracie, ministrie, churches, & church covenants, &c. as anti-christian; secretly also sowing y<sup>e</sup> seeds of Familisme, and Anabaptistrie. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

Two groups of those who were disarmed in the Hutchinson controversy left Massachusetts in 1638. One body settled

<sup>1</sup> J. Winthrop, Journal, II, p. 53. Lechford stated that most of the inhabitants of Providence were Anabaptists. (Plain-Dealing, p. 42).

<sup>2</sup> J. Winthrop, Journal, II, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Bradford, History of Plymouth Plantation, p. 461.

at Pocasset (Newport); they were led by John Clarke, who was to become the first minister of the Baptist church presently formed there. The others inhabited Portsmouth, at the head of the island. Eighteen of them entered into a civil compact; twelve of these were members of the Boston Church.<sup>1</sup>

Even Plymouth Colony was troubled by Baptists. In 1634 Reverend John Lathrop led a company which settled in Scituate and established a church. Concerning the subject of baptism, this group ". . . seem not all to have been fully settled on this point, and they found others in Scituate ready to sympathize with them."<sup>2</sup> When Lathrop was replaced by Charles Chauncy, the church contained members holding three beliefs concerning baptism: infant sprinkling, adult immersion only, or infant immersion (the latter being Chauncy's position).

In 1649/50 the Plymouth General Court, prodded by a letter of concern from the Massachusetts government, quelled an attempt to form a Baptist church at Rehoboth. This attempt was led by Obadiah Holmes, a former member of the Church of Salem. This attempt seemed to have been inspired by Aquineck Baptists; for in that same year Williams wrote to Winthrop:

<sup>1</sup> George E. Ellis, The Puritan Age and Rule in the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay, 1629-1685 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1888), p. 348.

<sup>2</sup> Deane, History of Scituate; quoted by Chaplin, Life of Henry Dunster, p. 203.

"At Seakonk, a great many have lately concurred with Mr. John Clarke and our Providence men, about the point of a new baptism and the manner by dipping; and Mr. John Clarke hath been there lately, and Mr. Lucar, and hath dipped them."<sup>1</sup>

On October 2, 1650, Holmes, John Hazel, Edward Smith, Joseph Tory, William Deuell, their wives, and Mrs. James Man were presented before the Court ". . . for continewing of a meeting upon the Lords day from house to house, contrary to the order of this Court."<sup>2</sup> An order to cease and desist was issued, and Holmes was ordered to file a bond of £10.

Three years later, in another town of New Plymouth, "John Cook, who appears to have been an anabaptist, causes great divisions in the Barnstable Church."<sup>3</sup>

Bordered by this sectarian menace, Massachusetts could not expect to escape unscathed. However, the governors of the colony were soon to realize that their chief concern was protecting themselves and their charges from an internal threat.

#### The First Baptists in the Bay

As was the case for New England generally, there were Baptists living within the colony of Massachusetts almost

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<sup>1</sup> Publications of the Narragansett Club, VI, p. 188; quoted by Henry Burrage, A History of the Baptists in New England (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1894), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Nathaniel Shurtleff, Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England (12 vols.; Boston: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1855-61), II, p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> Felt, Ecclesiastical History, II, p. 117.

from its inception. Writing to Isaac Backus in 1772, John Davis, Pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Boston, stated that Seth Sweetser was the first Baptist to settle in Massachusetts. Davis added that, because of his Baptist views, Sweetser was denied the right of an inhabitant as well as a share in the common land of Charlestown, where he lived.<sup>1</sup>

Sweetser arrived in Massachusetts in 1638. If he was a Baptist upon arrival, he probably kept his opinions to himself, for not only was Sweetser accepted as a freeman in 1639, but that same year was made a member of the church.<sup>2</sup> And he did share in the commons, as his name was on a Charlestown list of division in 1657/8.<sup>3</sup>

It was not until 1668 that Sweetser became troublesome to the authorities. In that year he was one of two men fined severely for circulating a petition asking clemency for the Baptist Thomas Gould, who had been sentenced to banishment.<sup>4</sup> No wonder--Sweetser's son Benjamin was an early member of Gould's Baptist church in Boston.

The first serious confrontation with a Baptist in Massachusetts occurred in 1642, when Lady Deborah Moody,

<sup>1</sup> McLoughlin, New England Dissent, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, IV, p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> Charlestown Land Records. Third Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston, Vol. III (Boston, 1878), p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Frothingham, Jr., The History of Charlestown, Massachusetts (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1845), p. 172.

Mrs. King, and Mrs. John Tilton were brought before the County Court at Salem. . . . for houldinge that the baptising of infants is noe ordinance of God."<sup>1</sup> Lady Moody had settled at Lynn in 1640, where she was granted four hundred acres by the General Court, and the next year bought the estate of Mr. John Humphrey, a former Deputy-Governor of the colony who returned to England. The County Court could not persuade her to renounce this dangerous opinion, and thereupon the Lady Moody

. . . was dealt withal by many of the elders and others, and admonished by the church of Salem, (whereof she was a member) but persisting still, and to avoid further trouble, etc., she removed to the Dutch against the advice of all her friends. Many others, infected with anabaptism, removed thither also. She was after excommunicated.<sup>2</sup>

Lady Moody and her female companions serve to emphasize the importance of women as contributors to schism within Massachusetts. Women had been causing a great deal of trouble in England; several had even begun to preach:

" . . . the lace-woman began with making a speech to this purpose, that now those days were come and were fulfilled which was spoken of in Scriptures, that God would pour out His Spirit upon the handmaidens, and they should prophesy, and after this speech she made a prayer for almost half an hour, and after her prayer took that text, If ye love Me, Keep My Commandments; when she had read the text she laboured to

<sup>1</sup>Ellis, Puritan Age, p. 381.

<sup>2</sup>J. Winthrop, Journal, II, p. 126.

analyze the chapter as well as she could, and then spake upon the text. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

This description could have fitted Anne Hutchinson equally well, for she also believed in prophecy and passed critical comments upon the biblical text.

Women were causing such a disturbance in New England, that it proved difficult for the Massachusetts clergy to defend itself, especially against thrusts by the English Presbyterians. William Prynne stated that Independents let women vote, preach, and prophecize in church, and asked,

"Whether Independents admitting women not only to vote as members, but somethimes to preach, expound, speak publicly as predicants in their conventicles, be not directly contrary to the Apostles' doctrine and practice, and a mere politick invention to engage that sex to their party?"<sup>2</sup>

As far as they related to the Congregationalists of New England, these charges were false, as John Cotton was quick to point out--women were not allowed to speak with authority, nor were they permitted to make "bold inquiry."<sup>3</sup>

But to state that women were not allowed to speak out or prophecize did not mean that this did not occur. In 1652 Mrs. Holgrave of Gloucester was presented before the County Court, for stating:

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<sup>1</sup> Edwards, Gangraena, or Catalogue and Discovery of Errors, Heresies, and Blasphemies (London, 1646); quoted by Jones, Mystical Religion, p. 420.

<sup>2</sup> Barclay, Inner Life, p. 157; quoted by Jones, Mystical Religion, p. 421.

<sup>3</sup> Cotton, "Keys of the Kingdom," p. 144.



"... y<sup>t</sup> if it were not for the Law she would never come to the meeting, the Teacher was soe dead and accordinglye she did seldom come and with all perswaded Gudwife Vincent to come to her house on the Sabbath days and read goode bookes, affirming that the Teacher was fitter to bee a Ladye's chamberman than to be in y<sup>e</sup> pulpit."<sup>1</sup>

It should be remembered that so great an independent thinker as Roger Williams was persuaded to declare himself a Baptist by a woman--Catherine Scott, Anne Hutchinson's sister.

Very often women joined their husbands in dissent, such as Ezekial and Mary Holliman. Many women even took the initiative. The Baptist Samuel Hubbard, who moved from Massachusetts to Connecticut, wrote:

"God having enlightened both, but mostly my wife, into his holy ordinance of baptizing only visible believers, and being jealous for it, she was most earnestly struck at, and answered twice publicly, where I was also said to be as bad as she, and threatened with imprisonment to Hartford jail, if we did not renounce it or remove."<sup>2</sup>

Not every husband took his wife's "enlightenment" as harmoniously as Hubbard. Mary Oliver of Salem was described by Winthrop as

... (for ability of speech, and appearance of zeal and devotion) far before Mrs. Hutchinson, and so the fitter instrument to have done hurt, but that she was poor and had little acquaintance.

Refused admittance into church membership in 1638, she grew angry and spoke uncivilly in church, for which she was committed. After a few days, Mary acknowledged her error and

<sup>1</sup> Felt, Ecclesiastical History, II, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Backus, History of New England, p. ix.

was released. However, she continued to hold erroneous opinions, such as, "That all that dwell in the same town, and will profess their faith in Christ Jesus, ought to be received to the sacraments there. . . ." Five years later Mary was whipped for criticizing the magistrates; she took her punishment ". . . with a masculine spirit; glorying in her suffering."<sup>1</sup> Although dejected afterwards, she retained enough spirit to reproach the elders in 1646, for which a cleft-stick was driven through her tongue. Her husband Thomas, annoyed at her actions, ". . . was driven to go home in 1648 or 9. . . ." <sup>2</sup> He did return a few years later.

#### Economic Background of the Baptists

In 1644 Thomas Painter, a joiner then living in Hingham, refused to allow his wife, a church member, to bring their child for baptism.<sup>3</sup> This preference for adult baptism was probably recent, since four years before, Painter had allowed his infant son to be baptized. Presented before the Court, he was ordered to allow the sacrament. Painter not only refused, but also caused a disturbance in church,

<sup>1</sup>J. Winthrop, Journal, I, pp. 285-286.

<sup>2</sup>Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, III, p. 311.

<sup>3</sup>Winthrop stated that Painter was not a member of the Hingham Church. However, Painter's name appears on the Boston Church Records as a member. cf. The Records of the First Church in Boston, 1630-1868, ed. by Richard Pierce. Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Vol. XXXIX, Collections (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1961), p. 31.

calling the ceremony "antichristian." He again was brought before the Court.

Whereupon after much patience and clear conviction of his error, etc., because he was very poor, so as no other but corporal punishment could be fastened upon him, he was ordered to be whipped, not for his opinion, but for reproaching the Lord's ordinance, and for his bold and evil behavior both at home and in the court.<sup>1</sup>

Painter further irritated the elders by boasting that God had helped him endure the punishment. Thereupon, a few of his neighbors stepped forward and condemned him as a liar and an idler. Painter returned to Boston, where, in 1649, he was granted liberty to erect a mill.<sup>2</sup> Later, he settled in Newport, joining Clarke's Baptist church; his name is on the list of Newport freemen, dated 1655.

Sociologists have generally identified sectarians as economically and socially unsuccessful. Thomas Hault, for example, has written:

Being unworldly and nonconformist, furthermore, religious movements in their early stages do not seem 'respectable' and therefore seldom attract established and successful people. Such people do not wish to reject the world; it has been good to them.<sup>3</sup>

Painter would seem to support this contention.

<sup>1</sup> J. Winthrop, Journal, II, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> Boston Town Records. Second Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston, 1877, Vol. II (Boston, 1877), p. 97.

<sup>3</sup> Hault, Sociology of Religion, p. 70. cf. Stark, Sociology of Religion, II, p. 158. ". . . the sects substitute high religious status for low social status. . . ."

But he may well have been the exception. For those dissenters studied in this thesis proved to be of varied economic backgrounds. There were, like Painter, men of modest means. Benanual Bowers was a modest landowner, receiving in 1652 only twenty acres in a Cambridge land division--which was among the smallest grants.<sup>1</sup> John George, a member of Gould's Baptist church, was a chimney cleaner and received a small portion in his town's land division in 1657/8.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, other dissenters were quite well-to-do. Richard Dummer of Newbury has already been mentioned. Disarmed in the Hutchinson controversy, he was the town's largest landowner. The Baptist Townsend Bishop's grant of land in 1635, three hundred acres, was surpassed by none.<sup>3</sup> The General Court granted Lady Deborah Moody four hundred acres. Thomas Gould was among the twelve largest partakers in a Charlestown land division of 1657/8; this occurred two years after he had spoken against infant baptism.<sup>4</sup>

Most fell somewhere between Painter and Bishop. For example, many dissenters living in Essex County can be found

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<sup>1</sup>Records of the Town of Cambridge (Formerly Newtowne), Massachusetts, 1630-1703 (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1901), p. 98.

<sup>2</sup>Charlestown Land Records. Third Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston (Boston, 1878), p. 77.

<sup>3</sup>Town Records of Salem, I, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>Charlestown Land Records, p. 80.

in its probate records. This in itself was a mark of some economic success, for the poor were not likely to have their wills probated. These records reveal Richard Goodale, a member of Gould's Baptist Church, with property valued at £328--not including an estate in Connecticut; Seth Sweetser at £270--including seven lots of land; and William Witter at £132.<sup>1</sup>

### Early Prosecutions

The Salem Quarterly Court Records reveal several Baptist prosecutions also occurring at the time of Painter's arrest. In June of 1643, Thomas Patience, James Hubberd, the wife of John Tilton, Jr., Mrs. King, and William Bound and his wife, all of Lynn, were presented for holding that infant baptism was no ordinance of God; Hubberd and Mrs. Tilton had argued publicly against it. Mrs. King and Mrs. Tilton had already been before the Court with Lady Moody. After the names of Patience, King, and Hubberd, the Court marked "Gone away" and "Gone."

Goodman Joseph Redknap of Lynn was also brought before the Court, in 1644, for refusing to allow a child of his to be baptized. His wife was ordered to have the sacrament performed, and if her husband objected, he was to be taken to Boston and jailed. Governor Winthrop, being present, asked why Redknap would not allow the baptism:

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<sup>1</sup>Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts (3 vols.; Salem: Essex Institute, 1916), III, pp. 100-101; I, pp. 350-351. Charlestown Land Records, p. 921.

Mr. Redknap said "he would not trouble ye Ct. & he is not satisfied in the thing, he himself not being in fellowship. I would not justify my self nor yet condemne myself, he would have noe hand in it."<sup>1</sup>

Winthrop then tried to soothe the dissenter's conscience by telling him that he need not directly participate in the baptismal ceremony, but merely allow it to be done. However, Redknap remained unsatisfied.

Two years later he was again presented before the Court, this time for withdrawing from infant baptism; he was joined by Joseph Floyd (or Flood) and his wife, Matthew West, and Michael Shafflen. In November of 1651 Redknap was summoned.

. . . for usually leaving the congregation at the time of the administration of the seal of baptism. He answered that it was necessary, on account of the condition of his family.<sup>2</sup>

In July of 1652 he was admonished, not only ". . . for wilful absence from public ordinance on Lord's day," but for ". . . being at a private unwarrantable meeting."<sup>3</sup>

Redknap was admitted a freeman to the colony, and, as far as the records show, lived out his life in Massachusetts, dying in Boston in 1686 at the age of 110.<sup>4</sup> Even after these prosecutions the government allowed him to earn a living in

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<sup>1</sup> Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts (8 vols.; Salem: Essex Institute, 1911), I, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>4</sup> Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, p. 531.

the colony; in 1657 he was permitted to "drawe beare" at a spring between Salem and Lynn ". . . during the pleasure of the Court."<sup>1</sup>

Concerning Redknap's co-defendants, Matthew West, a freeman, eventually settled in Newport, where he was on the freeman list of 1655. Joseph Floyd was to move to Chelsea. However, Michael Shafflen seems to have remained in Salem. Having been admitted to the freemanship in 1642 and chosen rater and constable in 1645, he was listed as a juror in 1656.<sup>2</sup>

These prosecutions did not prevent Winthrop from stating, in 1644, that "Anabaptistry increased and spread in the country. . . ." Consequently, the magistrates proposed an anti-Baptist ordinance which, having been first approved by the elders ". . . with some mitigations," was approved by the Deputies.<sup>3</sup> The ordinance, dated November 13, 1644, began by dredging-up the fearful specter of Munster and called Anabaptists

. . . y<sup>e</sup> incendiaries of comon wealths, & y<sup>e</sup> infectors of persons in maine matt<sup>rs</sup> of religion, & y<sup>e</sup> troublers of churches in all places where they have bene. . . .<sup>4</sup>

It proceeded to describe how such people in New England

<sup>1</sup> Essex Quarterly Court Records, II, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Town Records of Salem, I, pp. 137, 140, 194.

<sup>3</sup> J. Winthrop, Journal, II, p. 177.

<sup>4</sup> Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, II, p. 85.

instigated dissatisfaction and unrest by denying the lawfulness of the magistracy, especially where it concerned matters of the first table of the Mosaic code. Therefore, it was ordered that any person in the colony's jurisdiction who ". . . shall either openly condemne or oppose . . ." infant baptism, secretly seduce others from this ordinance, deny the ordinance and just powers of the magistracy, and who shall, after conviction, continue these practices, such persons shall be banished.<sup>1</sup>

The wording of the law was strong, but it is significant that those subject to conviction were ones who "openly" practiced these illegalities. Winslow defended the ordinance by emphasizing this point:

'Tis true we have a severe law, but we never did or will execute the rigor of it upon any; and have men living amongst us, nay some in our churches, of that judgment; and as long as they carry themselves peaceable, as hitherto they do, we will leave them to God, ourselves having performed the duty of brethren to them.<sup>2</sup>

If in practice the government was ambivalent towards Baptists, in theory it called for orthodoxy, as the Baptist menace seemed to increase. In 1645 several merchants led a petition calling for a repeal against this ordinance and the stranger enactment. Thereupon several elders went to beseech the Deputies and magistrates,

<sup>1</sup> Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, II, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Winslow, "Hypocrisie Unmasked," Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers, ed. by Alexander Young (London: John M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1910), p. 405.



. . . laying before then what advantage it would give to the anabaptists (who began to increase very fast through<sup>1</sup> the country here, and much more in England. . . .

The Court refused to acquiesce to the petitioners' requests.

One of the reasons the Cambridge Synod was convened was the hope that, through a concerted effort, the elders could resolve the divergent opinions regarding the subject of baptism. One opinion was held by ". . . some amongst us who doe thinke that w<sup>t</sup>soever be y<sup>e</sup> state of y<sup>e</sup> parents, baptisme ought not to be dispenced to any infants w<sup>t</sup>soever. . . ."2

The two leading ministers of New England were not lax in realizing the Baptist threat, nor in warning their countrymen. Writing to Reverend Thomas Shepherd of Cambridge in 1647, Thomas Hooker stated:

"I like those Anabaptists and their opinion every day worse than other. The suppressing of what books they please, and the correspondences they hold here, and the cariages of some subtle and closse spirited persons amongst you, y<sup>t</sup> seem to me to keep pace and proportion with them per omnia, is an ill presage, that unlesse you be very watchfull, you will have an army in the field before you know how to prepare or oppose."3

That same year John Cotton issued his Grounds and Ends of the Baptism of the Children of the Faithful. Cotton clearly realized that the implications of the Baptists'

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<sup>1</sup> J. Winthrop, Journal, II, pp. 259-260. Thomas Fowle, who was to sign the Remonstrance with Child, was one of the petitioners.

<sup>2</sup> Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, III, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup> Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, p. 614.

stance threatened the foundation of Massachusetts' ecclesiastical order:

"For if godly parents do withdraw their children from the covenant, and from the seal of the covenant, they do make void (as much as in them lieth) the covenant both to themselves and to their children, and then will the Lord cut off such souls from his people."<sup>1</sup>

To deny the covenant by rejecting the baptism of infants of the regenerate was to deny the special relationship that existed between God and His chosen people. It is no wonder that Cotton condemned the evangelizing of the Newport Baptists--Clarke, Holmes, and Crandal--as a capital offense, ". . . that denying Infants Baptism would overthrow all . . . and therefore they were foul-murderers. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

But the anti-Baptist ordinance, the Cambridge Synod, the warnings of Hooker and Cotton did not prevent the further contagion of Baptism. In 1645 Townshend Bishop of Salem was presented for rejecting infant baptism. A freeman and member of the church, Bishop had an infant son baptized as late as 1642. One of the largest landowners in the town, he was elected selectman in 1640 and, ironically, in 1644 was one of those chosen to discover which Salem residents were not attending church.<sup>3</sup> Shortly after his arrest, Bishop left Salem.

<sup>1</sup>Chaplin, Life of Henry Dunster, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup>John Spur's testimony, quoted in John Clarke, III Newes from New England, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Fourth Series, II (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1854), p. 56.

<sup>3</sup>Town Records of Salem, I, pp. 14, 49, 130.

The following year John Wood of Salem and Mr. George Taylor of Lynn were presented before the Essex Quarterly Court for withholding their children from Baptism. Joseph Floyd, his wife, and William Bowditch's wife were charged with withdrawing from the ordinance of baptism. The Floyds were admonished.

In 1648 the Court, being informed that Edward Starbuck of Dover now held a "pfeession of Anabaptistry," ordered his case to be heard at the next Court of Assistants, if the evidence could be prepared in time. This was a serious charge, since Starbuck was a very important man in Dover, having been elected Deputy in 1643 and 1646. In 1643 he was also chosen an elder of the church. The Massachusetts authorities did not change his opinions; in fact, Starbuck later became a Quaker. However, Starbuck remained in Dover until 1669, when he left to settle Nantucket, of which he had been a chief promoter.<sup>1</sup>

The "Newport Three,"  
Dunster, and Gould

The spread of Baptism throughout the colony of Massachusetts Bay seemed to be increasing, but thus far had been largely unorganized. However, a series of events soon occurred which greatly intensified the growth of this schism and may have led directly to a serious visible crack in the pretended orthodoxy of Massachusetts.

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<sup>1</sup> Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, IV, pp. 171-172.

One of the towns which provided more than its share of schismatics was Lynn. Perhaps the most irascible of the Lynn Baptists was William Witter, who lived at Swamscot, two miles outside of town. In February of 1642/3, Witter was presented before the County Court for speaking against infant baptism and ". . . for saying that Mr. Cobbett taught things against his own conscience." However, he was ". . . willing to see the light . . .", and was ordered to ". . . acknowledge his faith next lecture and ask Mr. Cobbet's forgiveness."<sup>1</sup> Yet, in 1645 Witter was again presented

. . . for saying, y<sup>e</sup> they who stayed whiles a child is baptized doe worpp y<sup>e</sup> divell, . . . he further sayd, y<sup>e</sup> they who stayed at y<sup>e</sup> baptizing of a child did take y<sup>e</sup> name of y<sup>e</sup> Father, Sonne, & Holy Gost in vayne, broake y<sup>e</sup> Saboath, & confessed & justified y<sup>e</sup> former speech.<sup>2</sup>

The Court sentenced him to make a public confession of his error at the Church of Lynn, or else be disciplined at the next General Court. Witter did not make such a confession and was, therefore, ordered to appear before the next Court of Assistants. It was not recorded if he made such an appearance, but in 1651 Witter was again before the County Court, charged with absenting himself from public ordinances for nine months and ". . . for neglecting discourses, and being rebaptized."<sup>3</sup> He died where he had lived, at Lynn, at

<sup>1</sup> Essex Quarterly Court, I, pp. 51-52.

<sup>2</sup> Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, III, pp. 67-68.

<sup>3</sup> Essex Quarterly Court, I, p. 244.

the age of seventy-five.

Witter was accused of being "rebaptized" by three representatives of the Newport Baptist Church, who had come to visit him at his request. Isaac Backus identified Witter as a member of the Newport congregation, who because of his age could not journey there.<sup>1</sup> On July 12, 1651, as Witter, a few of his neighbors, and the visitors--John Clarke, Obadiah Holmes, and John Crandal--were worshipping together in the old man's home, two constables entered and arrested the strangers.

The constables brought the trio to a church service at Lynn, despite Clarke's warning:

Since we have heard the word of Salvation by Jesus Christ, we have been taught as those that first trusted in Christ, to be obedient unto him by word and deed; wherefore if we be forc'd to your Meeting, we shal declare our dissent from you both by word and gesture. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Clarke was as good as his word. When they entered the meeting house, the congregation was in prayer. He thereupon put his hat back upon his head, sat down, and began reading.

<sup>1</sup> Backus, History of New England, p. 175. This had led Dr. H. Lincoln, in an article for the "Examiner and Chronicle," December 23, 1875, to speculate that Witter wrote the Newport Church that there were persons in his neighborhood who wished to be baptized, and that the trio's journey was a proselytizing mission. If so, this would be reason enough for the fear engendered in the government by this incident. cf. Nathan Wood, The History of the First Baptist Church of Boston (1665-1899) (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1899), p. 15. Also, Williams had already written Winthrop to warn him of Clarke's proselytizing mission at Seaconck (see page 94).

<sup>2</sup> Clarke, Ill Newes, p. 29.

Clarke tried to speak to the congregation, but was interrupted and then silenced by the minister.

The constable of Lynn was ordered to bring "The Newport Three" before the next County Court held at Boston, where they were to be charged with attending a private meeting on the Lord's Day, disturbing the peace of the Lynn Congregation, ". . . seducing and drawing aside of others after their erroneous judgements and practices," and suspicion of rebaptizing one or more persons.<sup>1</sup> They were each sentenced to pay a heavy fine or be whipped, but ". . . the Court Sentenced you not for your judgement or Conscience, but for matter of fact, and practice. . . ." <sup>2</sup> Thus, if these men had kept their opinions to themselves, they would, in turn, have been left undisturbed. However, in worshipping with inhabitants of Massachusetts and in disturbing a church,

. . . all this tends to the dishonour of God, the despising the ordinances of God amongst us, the peace of the Churches, and seducing the Subjects of this Commonwealth from the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and perverting the strait waies of the Lord. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Sympathizers of the accused paid the fines of Clarke and Crandal and offered the same for Holmes, but he refused. A deeply religious man, Holmes had first settled in Salem and was accepted as a church member in 1640. Five years later he

<sup>1</sup>Clarke, Ill News, pp. 30-31.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

was dismissed to the new church in Seaconck (Rehoboth). In 1649 he complained to the Plymouth General Court against his minister, Samuel Newman, who had accused Holmes of taking a false oath in Court; Newman admitted himself to be in error.<sup>1</sup> However, that same year, Holmes criticized Newman for allowing a member of the congregation to be admonished without seeking the consent of the whole membership. The church split over this issue, and the minister's party having a bare majority, Newman castigated Holmes, who

" . . . told them that I should renounce them, and not have any more fellowship with them, till either they saw their sin, or I further light. . . ."2

Several other members joined Holmes, who had become a Baptist, and the group met regularly, until the New Plymouth magistrates ordered the meetings stopped. Excommunicated, Holmes left for Newport, where he became a preacher in the Baptist church.

Holmes was publicly whipped in Boston, but he did not regret this action, ". . . for before my return, some submitted to the Lord, and were baptized, and divers were put upon the way of enquiry. . . ."3 One so influenced was John Spur, who had been admitted to the freemanship and the Boston

<sup>1</sup> Richard Bowen, Early Rehoboth, Documented Historical Studies of Families and Events in this Plymouth Colony Township (4 vols.; Rehoboth: privately printed, 1945), I, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Clarke, Ill News, pp. 53-54.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 51-52.

Church in 1639 and who had his infant son baptized in 1650. However, just before the arrest of Clarke, Holmes, and Crandal, Spur was admonished by his church ". . . for his insolent bearing witness against Baptisme and singing and the church covenant as now ordinances of god. . ."<sup>1</sup> A few weeks later he was excommunicated for the above, as well as for withdrawing from communion. Immediately after Holmes was whipped, Spur met him and blessed his fellow Baptist. For this open contempt of the magistracy, Spur himself was sentenced to be fined or whipped. Although a mere 4s., Spur, like Holmes, refused to pay the fine. A sympathizer, however, did pay it.

The Baptist heresy continued to spread. In 1653 John Warren and Thomas Arnold were fined and Henry Felch admonished by the Middlesex Quarterly Court for absenting themselves from public ordinances during the ceremony of baptism.<sup>2</sup> Arnold and Warren were residents of Watertown; Felch had once lived there but had moved to Reading in 1647. There is no evidence that Felch and Warren (who was a selectman from 1636-40) left the colony. Arnold, a freeman, remained in Watertown, for he was selected hog-watcher in 1657.<sup>3</sup> In 1656 Benenual Bowers of Charlestown and Cambridge

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<sup>1</sup> Records of the First Church in Boston, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Felt, Ecclesiastical History, II, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> Watertown Records (8 vols.; Watertown: Watertown Historical Society, 1894), I, p. 53.



was also convicted of absenting himself from the ordinance of baptism; this marked the beginning of over twenty-five years of prosecution by the Massachusetts government against the Bowers family, who moved from Baptism to quakerism.<sup>1</sup>

Bowers may have been influenced into renouncing infant baptism by an illustrious relative, Henry Dunster, first President of Harvard College.<sup>2</sup> His biographer, Jeremiah Chaplin, believed that it was very possible that the persecution of Clarke, Holmes, and Crandal--". . . Puritans in their faith, save mainly in the one point of baptism . . ."--caused Dunster to review in earnest the question of infant baptism.<sup>3</sup> He came to believe that there was no specific allowance in the Bible for the sacrament, and, in his sermons, he began to argue against it:

"If parents' church-membership makes their children members, then John admitted makes his first-born a church-member; excommunicated for 7 years makes suppose 4 children non-members; restored in y<sup>e</sup> 9th year makes his sixth child a member. Show me where Christ ever intended such a covenant."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lucius Paige, History of Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1630-1877 (Boston: Houghton and Co., 1877), p. 345; McLoughlin, New England Dissent, I, pp. 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> Paige, History of Cambridge, p. 345. Bowers' wife, Elizabeth Dunster, was called "my cousin Bowers" in Henry Dunster's will. Savage thought she was, perhaps, his niece. cf. Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, I, p. 223.

<sup>3</sup> Chaplin, Life of Henry Dunster, pp. 112-113.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 114; quoted from the Dunster Mss. in the Library of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Upon the birth of his own child in 1653, he refused to have the infant baptized. The Cambridge Church was much disturbed; many of the congregation began to incline towards Dunster's position. The minister, John Mitchell, was hard pressed to restore discipline, especially since Dunster had been his teacher. The Massachusetts government watched closely and was seriously alarmed; since Harvard University reared the future clergy of New England, it would not do to have its President and most learned scholar a professed Baptist. Called to Boston, in February of 1654, to meet with a group of ministers, Dunster declared that, "All instituted Gospel worship hath some express word of Scripture. But Paedobaptism hath none."<sup>1</sup> The Overseers of the university were willing to allow Dunster remain as President, if only he would remain silent on the topic,<sup>2</sup> but when an infant was offered for baptism on July 30, 1654, Dunster rose and spoke against the sacrament.

Shortly before he was to be presented before the County Court, Dunster resigned. On April 3, 1655, the Court found him guilty, not of being a Baptist, but ". . . for disturbance of the ordinances of Christ upon the Lord's day. . . ."<sup>3</sup> He was sentenced to be publicly admonished on the next lecture day. His successor as President was Charles Chauncy, whose views concerning baptism also were not

<sup>1</sup> Ellis, Puritan Age, p. 397.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 398.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

orthodox and had caused problems in the Church of Scituate. But although Chauncy believed in immersion and not sprinkling of infants, he agreed to keep his opinions strictly to himself.<sup>1</sup>

When, in 1657, Dunster was presented for refusing to have a second child baptized, he was joined by Thomas Gould of Charlestown, who was charged with a similar offense. They may have known each other previously; it is even possible that Dunster stayed at Gould's home in 1655 and influenced him to become a Baptist.<sup>2</sup>

Gould was admitted to the Charlestown Church in 1640 and made a freeman of the colony in 1641. In the latter year, he had a daughter baptized. He then moved but returned in 1649 and, three years later, rented a farm belonging to John Winthrop, Jr. He was also, at that time, readmitted into the church and elected a selectman.<sup>3</sup>

During this time, Gould began to have doubts concerning infant baptism, and, in 1655, refused to have his second daughter baptized:

"It having been a long time a scruple to me about infant baptism, God was pleased at last to make it clear to me by the rule of the gospel, that children were not capable nor fit subjects for such an ordinance, because Christ gave this

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 400-401.

<sup>2</sup> Chaplin, *Life of Henry Dunster*, p. 200. This was what Backus believed. McLoughlin, however, stated that this may not have been the case--New England Dissent, I, p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

commission to his apostles, first to preach to make them disciples, and then to baptize them, which infants were not capable of; so that I durst not bring forth my child to be a partaker of it; so looking that my child had no right to it, which was in the year 1655, when the Lord was pleased to give me a child; I staid some space of time and said nothing to see what the church would do with me."<sup>1</sup>

After much argument within the church, Gould was suspended from communion, on December 30, 1656. He was also presented before the Court at Cambridge and admonished for refusing to bring his child to baptism.

Gould remained in Charlestown, participating in a land division in 1657/8.<sup>2</sup> In 1665, he joined with eight others to form the First Baptist Church of Boston, with him as its first minister. Harassed and even ordered banished, Gould and his colleagues remained as an overt dissenting sect within a colony which called for orthodoxy. Congregational Massachusetts was like a man who, between fits of coughing, proclaimed his health.

#### Concluding Remarks

Arising without a power base in England, the Baptists were, nevertheless, a more serious threat to the Massachusetts Bay Colony than either Anglicanism or Presbyterianism, for they struck at the very skeleton of the body politic. Winthrop could claim to be building a city on a hill for all

<sup>1</sup> Wood, First Baptist Church, pp. 42-43.

<sup>2</sup> Charlestown Land Records, p. 80.

the world to watch, because he and his brethren were covenanted with God. This covenant, like that of Abraham, had to extend to their seed in order for it to have any meaning. But was this really voluntarism, upon which Congregationalism was supposedly based? This question split the religious population of the colony between those who, like Winthrop, hitched their collective conscience to the rising star of a prosperous and successful Massachusetts, and those who, like Witter and Dunster, would let nothing stand between their intimacy with God. The authorities disapproved of this division, and the philosophy upon which Massachusetts was founded seemed to demand that the schismatics be punished.

Yet, there were other factors. The colony and its church were secure from external danger. A time of peace and growth is not the time for a church to aggravate an internal disturbance. Secondly, the overwhelming majority of these Baptists were residents of the colony, and many were church members and freemen who followed the Cambridge Platform in all matters of doctrine save only one. It would not have been easy to punish neighbors and friends for a single divergence, especially since the question of baptism could not be resolved even among the elders. Finally, from the continuous jeremiads of the ministers and magistrates, one wonders whether the government could have stemmed this sect, even if it had vehemently tried. It must have, indeed, been frustrating to whip a man like Obadiah Holmes, only to have

him state that the blows were as falling rose petals.

Consequently, the elders and magistrates relied upon the same formula they used against the Anglicans and Presbyterians--calling for orthodoxy while striking at dissent only when it threatened social order. At least the Baptists were Calvinists and gathered together in a congregational way. Far different was the next outbreak of schism. Quakerism not only threatened the social order and covenant theology, but it denied the foundation of New England Puritanism--determinism. This was to be the last and greatest of the early attacks upon the Massachusetts Church and State and would test just how far they could be pushed.

## CHAPTER V

### THE QUAKERS

#### The Light Within

A difference of opinion is relative to the parties involved. The chasm which appeared to yawn between the Congregationalists and the Baptists of New England proved to narrow considerably when both groups had to contend with the rise of Quakerism. Henry Dunster, who bravely and defiantly denounced the ordinance of infant baptism, wrote in his Confession of Faith and Christian Experience,

"I hold no fayth which is not grounded on the revealed Word of Ged in the worlde, the only rule of fayth and manners, so that they are not to be heard though they came as angels from heaven; . . ."

he later added, ". . . give not eare to them that looke only to be fed by heaven castinge off ordinances."<sup>1</sup> The "them" to which Dunster referred were the Quakers, and in this attitude he was in complete agreement with his own persecutors.

The essence of Quakerism is the belief that there is a heavenly light within the soul of every man. This light is

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<sup>1</sup>Chaplin, Life of Henry Dunster, pp. 257, 259.

a ray emanating from the Lord, which, if followed, would always lead man to truth, and to the performance of God's will. George Fox, the great organizer of Quakerism, saw dramatically,

" . . . that every man was enlightened by the Divine Light of Christ, and I saw it shine through all, and that they believed in it came out of condemnation and came to the Light of Life, and became the children of it; but they that hated it, and did not believe in it, were condemned by it, though they made a profession of Christ. This I saw in the pure openings of the light, without the help of any man, neither did I then know where to find it in the scriptures, though afterwards searching the scriptures, I found it."<sup>1</sup>

The Quakers had a Protestant heritage, and they and the Congregationalists shared many traditions and beliefs: inspiration drawn from the martyrs under Queen Mary, opposition to ritual, simplicity of life-style, respect for lay leadership, weekday meetings, the desire to build a city of God, and the belief that one must be diligent in worldly business and yet dead to the world. There were even several doctrinal similarities: the dependence of man upon God for righteousness and salvation, an inward conversion, and the need for constant effort by every true Christian.<sup>2</sup> Even the Quakers' belief in a divine light was shared with a

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<sup>1</sup> W. G. Braithwaite, The Beginnings of Quakerism (2 vols.; London: Macmillan and Co., 1912), I, p. 36; quoted from Fox's Journal (London, 1891), p. 34. cf. Rufus Jones, Isaac Sharpless, and Amelia Gummere, The Quakers in the American Colonies (London: Macmillan and Co., 1923), pp. xvi-xvii.

<sup>2</sup> Hugh Barbour, The Quakers in Puritan England (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1964), Chapter I; p. 135.



predecessor; in his Drag-net, written two years before Fox began preaching, the Baptist Denne stated:

"Now God is light, and God is spirit. If then Christ lighteth every man, God lighteth every man. The Spirit lighteth every man that cometh into the world."<sup>1</sup>

There were, however, severe doctrinal differences. Puritan ministers asserted that even the regenerate were capable of, and could not refrain from engaging in, sin; Quakers held that those saved by Christ were totally cured. Paradoxically, Quakers charged Puritans with allowing men too much self-importance, by stressing the need for self-discipline and the doctrine of election, in which some men would be saved no matter what they did. "To Fox this sounded immoral as well as snobbish."<sup>2</sup> The Quakers gave God all the credit; man should keep himself open to the light, but the light was from God, and the deeds a man did were due to his following the Spirit. They felt that the Puritan pastor oversimplified conversion, making obedience dependent upon biblical commandments. Instead, each man should find God for himself, and only from within.<sup>3</sup>

In clarifying these differences, the sociologist Thomas Hoult cites Tawney as identifying two conflicting tendencies which grew from Calvinism:

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<sup>1</sup>Jones, Mystical Religion, pp. 422-423; quoted from Denne's Drag-net, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>Barbour, Quakers in Puritan England, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 135-143.

One was an individualistic spirit, to which democracy owes a great deal--the idea that man is beholden to none other than God. This spirit saw its logical consequences in the Quaker refusal to bow down, doff the hat, or use titles for any person, no matter what his social status might be. The other strain was a compelling authoritarianism, which was carried to its logical conclusion in Calvin's Genevan theocracy and in the Puritan settlements of New England.<sup>1</sup>

This spirit of individualism led Quakers to denounce the need for church ordinances, such as baptism, communion, and the marriage ceremony performed by clergy. They opposed flattery and any distinctions which would place one man over another (they did see the need for civil magistrates, but only to stop evil-doers). A Quaker meeting was a simple service--silent meditation with, perhaps, a short prayer or exhortation by a person whom the Spirit moved. No minister presided. In fact, the Quakers denounced university learning in general, and the minister specifically, as superfluous and misleading. Fox challenged the clergy:

"Have any of you ever had a command or word immediately from the Lord, or do you speak of other man's experiences? To receive and go with a message, and to have a word from the Lord, as the prophets and apostles did, and as I have done, is quite another thing."<sup>2</sup>

John Nicholson, who journeyed to New England, bitterly attacked its clergy:

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<sup>1</sup> Hault, Sociology of Religion, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Braithwaite, Quakerism, I, pp. xxxix-xl; quoted from Fox's Journal, pp. 126-127.

Now people consider, the Scripture was not given for men to talk of, or make trade of, or for men to get money by, as your hireling teachers of this world do, who have so much a year for preaching, and talking of the Scriptures, of things made ready to their hands, other mens conditions, saying in such a Chapter, and such a verse, to the Word of God, as it is written for your instruction, when truly people the Lord never spoke unto them. . . . .<sup>1</sup>

Just as the Quakers would deemphasize the ministry, so would they exult the individual. "He that has the same spirit that raised up Jesus Christ is equal with God," Fox once stated.<sup>2</sup> The social ramifications of such a belief are manifest. All Calvinists admitted in theory that whatever interferred between the individual believer and God was false and should be denied. Yet, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and even Baptists would assert that a minister could serve the function of a guide. The Quakers refuted all such external support, and in doing so, raised the individual to major importance. It is no wonder that Winstanley, the Digger and proto-Communist, was a spiritual predecessor of the Quakers, or that John Lilbourne, the leading Leveller and champion of individual rights, converted to Quakerism. Long after the Congregationalists of New England had compromised their city on a hill, the Quakers, arising essentially from the trading and yeoman classes, actively crusaded to transform their fellows and, through them, the

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Nicholson, The Standard of the Lord Lifted up in New England (London, 1660), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Stark, Sociology of Religion, II, p. 106.

world, so that the will of man might be harmonized with that of God. The end of these early Quakers, which they kept passionately alive, was to create an earthly society in the likeness of the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>1</sup>

### Early Reaction to Quakerism

"Having heard of the great things done by the mighty power of God in many nations beyond the seas, whether He hath called forth many of our dear brethren and sisters to preach the everlasting gospel . . . our bowels yearn for them and our hearts are filled with tender love to those precious ones of God who so freely have given up for the Seed's sake their friends, their near relations, their country and worldly estates, yea, and their lives also. We therefore, with one consent freely and liberally offer up our earthly substance, according as God hath blessed every one--to be speedily sent up to London as a freewill offering for the Seed's sake."<sup>2</sup>

The Quakers differed from other Puritan churches and Protestant sects in their actual dedicated and energetic drive to proselytize, not merely England, but the entire world. Since the divine light was within every man, every man could be saved. Hence, the English "seed" blew on the winds of faith as far east as Turkey and as far west as the colonies of New England.

The first English Quakers arrived in New England in 1656, but the magistrates and ministers of Massachusetts had

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<sup>1</sup> Braithwaite, Quakerism, I, p. xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Jones, Quakers in the American Colonies, p. xiii; quoted from a letter issued by a Quaker meeting held at Scalehouse, near Skipton, England, in 1658; Devonshire House, London, in Portfolio, 16-1.

already received unfavorable reports from England and the Barbadoes.<sup>1</sup> Several New England ministers, then in England, wrote home to their brethren and denounced the new sect; one such was Thomas Welde, a leading decrier of the Hutchinson schism, who co-authored, in 1653, The Perfect Pharise under Monkish Holines. But even before receiving this information, a number of the Massachusetts clergy were familiar with the practices of Quakerism. As early as 1648, Reverend Thomas Parker wrote to his sister, living in England, chastising her for becoming a Quaker. Cotton, Wilson, and Noyes had already tried to convince her of her errors, but to no avail. Parker wrote:

"You will not join in private prayer with your own husband, but onely to condescend to his infirmities, for you say, you are above ordinances, above the Word and Sacraments, yea, above the blood of Christ himself, living as a glorified saint and taught immediately by the Spirit."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, Congregationalists and Presbyterians were alike in fearing and denouncing this dangerous sect, which led a wife to disobey her husband, her minister, and to speak blasphemy. Cotton Mather, whose Magnalia Christi Americana tends to ameliorate or ignore controversies among the first generation of New England, penned his bitterest vindictives against Quakerism, which he called ". . . the sink of all heresies . . .";

<sup>1</sup>George Bishop, New England Judged By the Spirit of the Lord (London: T. Sowle, 1703), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Felt, Ecclesiastical History, II, p. 20.

. . . we see the vomit cast out in the by-past ages, by whose kennels of seducers, lick'd up again for a new digestion, and once more exposed for the poisoning of mankind. . . . they have been the most venomous of all to the churches of America.<sup>1</sup>

Mather may have had a two-fold reason for this bitterness. The first was that, although Quakerism seemed the antithesis of, not only Congregationalism, but Calvinistic Puritanism, this sect spread throughout much of New England, including a large portion of Massachusetts. The second reason was the irksome fact that, despite the influx of Quaker missionaries from England, the overwhelming majority of quakers in the colony were residents.<sup>2</sup>

### Sandwich

Although the threat of Quakerism to New England was dramatically manifested by the arrival of two women missionaries in Boston harbor in 1656, this movement may have had its inception in 1637, as an exodus of fifty-five men who, with their families, departed from Lynn to build Sandwich, in New Plymouth. Two years later, the Plymouth General Court heard a complaint, probably from the minister, William Leverich, that the town's commissioners had been

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<sup>1</sup>Mather, Magnalia, II, p. 522.

<sup>2</sup>Hallowell, Quaker Invasion of Massachusetts, p. 71, estimated that four-fifths of the Quakers in Massachusetts were residents. cf. Jones, Quakers in the American Colonies, p. xix-- "The Quaker missionaries simply gave positive direction to tendencies already powerfully underway."

. . . receiving into the said town divers persons unfitt for church societie, which should have beene their chiefe care in the first, and have disposed the greatest part of the lands there already, and to very few that are in church societie or fitt for the same, so that without speedy remedy our chiefest end will be utterly frustrate. . . .

The commissioners at fault were ordered to appear before the Court, and, in the meantime, not to dispose of any more land. The Court then ordered that no one was to be admitted to the town or assigned land without first obtaining approval from Reverend Leverich and his church.<sup>1</sup>

Religious affairs remained unsettled in Sandwich, for in 1651 Leverich wrote a letter of complaint to Reverend John Wilson, concerning his fellow townsmen:

" . . . divers of them transported with their (though not singular) Fancies, to the rejecting of all Churches and Ordinances, by a new cunning, and I perswade my selfe one of the last but most pernicious plot of the Devil to undermine all Religion and introduce all Atheisme and profaneness. . . ."

Leverich added that he had considered leaving the town, but was ". . . dissuaded by divers our honoured Friends . . . at least for the present."<sup>2</sup> In 1650 the Court decreed against slandering a church or its minister or profaning the Sabbath,

<sup>1</sup> History of Sandwich and Bourne, Plymouth Records. Library of Cape Cod and Genealogy, No. 104 (Yarmouthport, Massachusetts, 1910), p. 2. cf. George Langdon, Jr., Pilgrim Colony: A History of New Plymouth, 1620-1691 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Langdon, Pilgrim Colony, pp. 66-67; quoted from Henry Whitford's Strength out of Weakness (London, 1652), Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, Series III, 4 (Cambridge: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1883), pp. 180-183.

and the next year it required people to attend church. This legislation did not prevent Leverich from actually leaving Sandwich in 1653. From then until 1675 the town remained without a minister.<sup>1</sup>

It was at this point that the difficulties in Sandwich revealed themselves to possess Quaker characteristics. On October 7, 1651, at the Plymouth General Court, ". . . Ralph Allin, Seni of Sandwidg, and Richard Kerbey were summoned to answare for theire deriding, vild speeches of and conserning Gods wörd and ordinances. . . ." At this same Court, the above men with eleven other Sandwich residents, as well as Arthur Howland of Marshfield, were presented ". . . for not frequenting the publick worship of God," contrary to the Court's order.<sup>2</sup> Allin and Kerbey were fined £5 for their bad behavior.

This type of irreverent behavior was identical with what was occurring in England. Men and women not only refused to worship in church; they came to denounce the service and villify the minister. Itinerant quakers would

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<sup>1</sup>This difficulty between town and minister occurred in several other New Plymouth towns. cf. Langdon, Pilgrim Colony, p. 67. In a letter written in 1656, the magistrates of Massachusetts complained to the Commissioners of the United Colonies that, in New Plymouth, there was a lack of ". . . a due acknowledgement of encouragement to the Minnisters of the Gospell;" instead, there seemed to be ". . . a crying downed of minnistry and minnisters. . . ." Jones, Quakers in the American Colonies, pp. 57-58; quoted from Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, II, p. 156.

<sup>2</sup>Shurtleff, Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, II, pp. 172-174.



chastise crowds with dire warnings or brazenly challenge the most erudite Puritan scholar to an open-air debate. James Naylor, one of the most renowned Quaker leaders, even dared to ride a mule into Bristol, while, dancing before him, a group of women shouted, "Holy! Holy! Holy!"

This similarity between English Quakers and these Sandwich dissenters continued. On March 6, 1654/5,

Att this Court, Peter Gaunt, Ralph Allen, Seni<sup>r</sup>, and Gorg Allen, appeared to answere for neglecting to frequent the publick worship of God; and being required to speak to that pticulare, Peter Gaunt affirmed hee knew noe publicke vizable worship now in the world; whereunto the said Ralph Allen assented, but Gorg Allen decented; the case was left to further consideration.<sup>1</sup>

On February 3, 1656/7 Richard Kerbey and others were ordered before the Court, for meeting at the home of William Allin, ". . . att which meetings they used to invey against minnesters and magistrates, to the dishoner of God and contempt of govment. . . ." <sup>2</sup> Nicholas Upsall, formerly of Boston; had also attended the meetings; he was ordered to leave the colony by the end of the month. These were the first of many charged with non-attendance.<sup>3</sup>

The growing number of defendants were now specifically identified as Quakers; they echoed the practices of their English brethren. In March of 1657/8 several Quakers were fined ". . . for theire unreverent carrying

<sup>1</sup> Shurtleff, Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, III, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 130, 147, 200.

themselves before the Court, coming in before them with their hats on. . . .<sup>1</sup> The previous year, Sarah Kerbey, having ignored the Court's admonition against disturbing public worship, was whipped. Jane Launder was warned to desist such disturbance, or she would suffer the same punishment.<sup>2</sup> Of course, none of those arrested in Sandwich for Quakerism were on a list of subscribers who pledged money towards a minister's salary, although many did contribute towards the construction of a new meeting house.<sup>3</sup>

In an attempt to silence these Quakers, the Court invoked a twenty year old order and declared, on October 2, 1658, that nine Sandwich men, most of whom were known Quakers, were non-legal inhabitants, since they had never been approved by the church. Therefore, they were denied any power in the town meeting, until they produced evidence of their legal admittance. At this same Court, six of the nine, as well as five others, were fined £5 each for refusing to take the oath of loyalty.<sup>4</sup>

These admonitions, fines, and whippings seemed only to intensify the fire, rather than drown it. In 1658 James Cudworth of Plymouth wrote, concerning the Quakers,

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<sup>1</sup> Shurtleff, Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, III, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>3</sup> History of Sandwich, pp. 10-11.

<sup>4</sup> Shurtleff, Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, III, pp. 153-154.

"They have many Meetings, and many Adherents, almost the whole Town of Sandwich is adhering towards them. . . . Sandwich-Men may not go to the Bay, lest they be taken up for Quakers.<sup>1</sup>

Cudworth himself lost his magistracy, captaincy, and vote because he had entertained some Quakers.

Yet Sandwich was but an extreme example of what was occurring throughout Plymouth Colony. In 1657 the colony passed a law fining anyone who transported a Quaker there. Heavy fines were issued against refusal to take an oath of fidelity to the government and against meeting without the Court's approval. It was made illegal for a Quaker to ride a horse. When the illegal meetings continued, the Court appointed men to attend these meetings to persuade the Quakers of their error. In June of 1659,

Whereas by an order of Court all freemen of this corporation, as Quakers or such as are manifest encouragers of such and soe judged by the Court, or such as shall contemptuously speake of the lawes thereof, or such as are judged by the Court grossly scandalouse, as lyers drunkards, swearers, &c, they shall lose their freedom of this corporation.<sup>2</sup>

At this Court, therefore, William Newland of Sandwich and Henry Howland of Duxbury, for entertaining and aiding Quakers, lost their right to vote, along with Richard Beare, a common drunkard.

However, the government of New Plymouth was fighting a losing battle. Cudworth was reelected militia captain by

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop, New England Judged, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> Shurtleff, Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, III, p. 167.

his fellow townsmen, despite the Court's disapproval.<sup>1</sup> In 1659/60 a man wrote a letter

. . . tending greatly to the prejudice of this govment, and incurragement of those commonly called Quakers, and thereby lyable (according to the law provided in such case) to disfranchisement, yett wee att present forbear the sensure untill further enquiry be made into thinges.<sup>2</sup>

The Court had reason for hesitancy, for the man so accused was Isaac Robinson, son of the minister to the Scroby congregation and spiritual guide for the settlement of New Plymouth.

#### Proto-Quakers

Massachusetts followed the same pattern as New Plymouth, and what Sandwich was to the latter, so Salem was to the former.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Cotton Mather claimed Salem as the origin of Quakerism:

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<sup>1</sup> Langdon, Pilgrim Colony, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Shurtleff, Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, III, p. 167.

<sup>3</sup> The question arises as to why certain towns seemed to generate more dissent than others. Concerning The Quakers in Puritan England, Hugh Barbour asserts that Quakerism flourished wherever there was no settled and strong Puritan ministry. It is possible that this contention may be extended to New England and offer a partial explanation. In the Hutchinson affair, for example, Dorchester and Cambridge remained highly orthodox; both had strong ministers in Mather and Shepherd. In contrast, the Hutchinson faction grew so strong in Boston largely due to the theological rift between Wilson and Cotton. Salem was highly unorthodox; Williams, a Separatist, exerted great influence over its church, whose minister, Skelton, seemed to be inclined towards much of Williams' thinking. Concerning Sandwich, the key to the dissent may have lain not there, but in Lynn, where most of

I can tell the world that the first Quakers that ever were in the world were certain fanatics here in our town of Salem, who held forth almost all the fancies and whimsies which a few years after were broached by them that were so called in England, with whom yet none of ours had the least communication.<sup>1</sup>

Roger Williams, as a Separatist, offered the first great challenge to New England Congregationalism. Then he and his Salem followers, moving to Providence, established the first Baptist church in New England. Lady Deborah Moody, a member of the Church of Salem, was one of the first persons prosecuted for denying infant baptism. But besides this dissent, there were occurrences in Salem which foreshadowed Quakerism. In 1636, the magistrates sent a message to the constable of Salem:

"Whereas we are credibly informed that divers persons (both of men and women) within your town, do disorderly assemble themselves both on the Lord's days and at other times, contemptuously refusing to come to the solemn meetings of the church there (or being some of them justly cast out) do obstinately refuse to submit themselves, that they might be again received; but do make conventions, and seduce diverse persons of weak capacity, and have already withdrawn some of them from the church, and hereby have caused much (not only disturbance in the church, but also) disorders and damage in the civil state, so as if they be suffered to go on, your town is like to

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the town's inhabitants originated. Lynn's first minister, Stephen Bachelor, generated much dissent within his own church, so much so, that he and his supporters were in the minority. Consequently, he desired to be dismissed from the church. This was in 1636; the following year, a group left the town to settle Sandwich.

<sup>1</sup>Mather, Magnalia, II, p. 523.

be deserted by many of the chief and most useful members, to the great dishonor of God."<sup>1</sup>

The constable was empowered to warn these persons that their conduct would no longer be suffered, and that they must conform to the laws of the colony, or else the magistrates promised personally to reform the evils.

The dissent in Salem, which the letter described, fit the Quakers far more than any other group, such as the Baptists (no specific mention of Anabaptism is made). The emphasis that women were deeply involved would tend to substantiate this, for in no other sect were women so elevated; the doctrine that the divine light was within all would naturally help the female. The adverbs "disorderly," "contemptuously," and "obstinately" fit the Quakers, who would often denounce ministers and magistrates (in comparison, Baptists were far more sedate). The emphasis placed upon the conversion of several others reflected the Quaker emphasis upon proselytizing.

Shortly after Williams was banished, Massachusetts became embroiled in the Hutchinson controversy. Anne Hutchinson's greatest offense, and the one for which her accusers finally defeated her, was the belief that God spoke directly to her, apart from the Bible:

That her particular revelations about future events are as infallible as any part of the Scripture, and that she is bound as much to

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<sup>1</sup>Baskus, History of New England, p. 62; Felt, Ecclesiastical History, I, p. 257.

believe them, as the Scripture, for the same holy Ghost is the author of them both.<sup>1</sup>

This, of course, could be interpreted as the divine light, and, in fact, several of her followers, including William Coddington and Mary Dyer, became Quakers.

There were other early presages of Quakerism. On November 22, 1646, the Boston Church admonished Mrs. Sarah Keayne for ". . . hir Irregular prophesying in mixt Assemblies and for Refusing ordinarily to heare in the Churches of Christ." She refused to answer the church, and shortly afterwards, ". . . falling into odious, lewd, and scandalous uncleane behaviour . . ." with an excommunicant of Taunton, she herself was excommunicated.<sup>2</sup> In 1651 the church excommunicated Richard Lippincott, having twice admonished him before, because he withdrew from church fellowship. When Lippincott was asked why he acted thusly, his reply was that, ". . . he wanted commission to speake. . . ." <sup>3</sup>—In the same year, the same punishment was dealt to Anne Burden for the same offense,

. . . the cause thereof arose from her withdrawing from the fellowship of the church at the Lords table, and being dealt withall by brethren shee would Give no Reason of it, save only shee was Comanded silence from the Lord and being called before the Church: she refused to Come, and sayd she could not loyae in the church in any thinge.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>J. Winthrop, Journal, I, p. 246.

<sup>2</sup>Records of the First Church in Boston, pp. 46, 49. Mrs. Keayne was the daughter of Thomas Dudley.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 53-54.

At this time, Nicholas Upsall was also excommunicated for withdrawing from church fellowship.

The Massachusetts Commissioners, holding court in Maine, summoned George Barlow before them in 1653. He was ". . . charged with entertaining visionary opinions, and expressing them to the disturbance of the public peace."<sup>1</sup> He was ordered not to preach or prophesize, upon penalty of £10. In the same year, the General Court charged John Baker, resident of Cape Porpus, Wells, with ". . . abusive and opprobrious speeches . . ." against the ministry and for defending private meetings and prophesizing. He promised to cease public prophesizing and was censured.<sup>2</sup> In September of 1653 Henry Bachelor and his wife, of Ipswich, were presented before the Essex County Court for their many absences from public worship ". . . and she for unseemly behavior in the meetings to the disquiet and grief of many."<sup>3</sup>

All this occurred in Massachusetts before the arrival of the first English Quaker missionaries. The incidents were isolated and, except for the activities in Salem, individualized. Punishments were fines and, in the case of erring church members, excommunication. But the latter was a rather empty gesture, since those censured had already separated themselves from the church. And the threat which

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<sup>1</sup> Felt, Ecclesiastical History, II, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, III, p. 160.

<sup>3</sup> Quarterly Courts of Essex County, I, p. 305.



The magistrates made against Salem in 1636 did not seem to have been carried out, for Salem was to be the center of Quakerism in Massachusetts.

### Early Prosecutions

The first Quakers to arrive from England were two women, Mary Fisher and Ann Austin, who came by way of the Barbadoes and arrived in Boston on July 11, 1656. They were immediately cast into prison, where they remained for five weeks and were not permitted to see anyone. Their bodies were examined for marks of a witch. All their books were confiscated and burned. After this imprisonment, Fisher and Austin were placed on a vessel bound for England.

The first anti-Quaker legislation followed a few months later. Any shipmaster who knowingly transported Quakers to Massachusetts was to be fined the enormous sum of £100 and faced imprisonment if he did not return them from whence they came. It was further ordered that any Quakers entering the colony

. . . shalbe forthwith committed to the howse of correctio, & at their entrance to be severely whipt, & by the master thereof to be kept constantly at worke, & none suffred to converse or speake with them dureing the time of their imprisonment, which shalbe no longer than necessity requireth.

Anyone who knowingly imported or kept any such heretical writings would be fined \$5 for each document. And, if any persons within the colony should ". . . take upon them the hereticall opinions of the sd Quakers, or any of their bookes

or papers . . .," they faced a fine of 40s. for the first offense, £4 for the second, and if persisting--banishment.

Finally,

. . . it is hereby ordered, that what pson or pson<sup>s</sup> soever shall revile the office or psons of magistrates or ministers, as is usuall with the Quakers, such pson or psons shall be severely whipt, or pay the some of five pounds.<sup>1</sup>

In weighing the punishment, the legislators appear to have been worried at least as much (perhaps more so) by the threat to social order--represented by the magistrates and ministers--as they were concerned with religious orthodoxy.

Rather than accomplish its desired effect, this anti-Quaker legislation may be said to have had the opposite effect, as was dramatically demonstrated by Nicholas Upsall. Himself an excommunicant, he had tried to see Fisher and Austin in prison, and had paid the jailor 5s. per week for permission to send them food. When the Acts of October, 1656 were read before his inn, Upsall said, ". . . that he did look at it as a sad forerunner of some heavy judgement to fall on the country." The magistrates summoned him the very next day. Upsall cautioned them ". . . to take heed lest ye should be found fighting against God." Endecott, not known for a spirit of amicability, must have taken this as a grave insult, for, disregarding their own laws, the magistrates fined the accused £20 and banished him, Endecott stating,

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<sup>1</sup>Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, III, pp. 415-416.

"I will not bate him one groat."<sup>1</sup> He was ordered to depart within thirty days, and before leaving, was fined an additional three pounds for not attending church.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the magistrates were so harsh, because Upsall himself once held political authority. Having served as a selectman of Dorchester in 1638 and 1642,<sup>2</sup> as well as the town's first bailiff and rater,<sup>3</sup> he was now criticizing the magistracy; he had to be made an example.

Many more Quakers followed Austin and Fisher from England and were dealt with severely. For example, Mary Clarke left her family, sailed to Boston, and publicly condemned the magistrates for their persecution of her fellow Quakers. She herself was severely whipped, imprisoned for three months, and sent back to England.<sup>4</sup>

In October of 1657 laws were passed intensifying previous punishments. Anyone transporting Quakers into Massachusetts was to be fined £100 and imprisoned until it was paid; anyone entertaining or concealing a Quaker was

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<sup>1</sup> Hallowell, Quaker Invasion, pp. 47-48; Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, III, pp. 417-418.

<sup>2</sup> Dorchester Town Records. Fourth Report of the Record Commissioners, 1880 (Boston, 1880), IV, pp. 35, 40.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine Jones, "Nicholas Upsall," New-England Historical and Genealogical Register, XXXIV (January, 1880),

<sup>4</sup> William Sewell, The History of the Rise, Increase, and Progress, of the Christian People Called Quakers (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Uriah Hunt, 1832), I, p. 193. For other examples of punishments of foreign Quakers, see pp. 194, 216-220.

fined 40s. per hour of such entertainment or concealment, and imprisoned until paid. Any foreign Quaker who returned after having been punished was, for his first offense, to lose one ear and kept at work in prison until he could be sent away, at his own expense; for a second offense, he was to lose his other ear, etc. (a woman Quaker was to be severely whipped instead). A Quaker, man or woman, found guilty of a third offense, was to have his tongue bored through with a hot iron, etc. The law significantly added,

And it is further ordered, that all and every Quaker arising from amongst ourselves shall be dealt w<sup>th</sup> & suffer the like punishment as the law provides against forreigne Quakers.<sup>1</sup>

The following year, in May of 1658, the General Court passed more anti-Quaker legislation. This law not only lumped together foreign Quakers ". . . and such accursed hereticques arising amongst ourselves . . .," it aimed at punishing

. . . every such person or persons professing any of their pernicious waies, by speaking, writting, or by meetings on the Lords day, or any other time, to strengthen themselves or seduce others to their diabollicall doctrine. . . .<sup>2</sup>

The word "professing" is of key importance; it is reminiscent of the famous anti-Baptist ordinance of 1644, which ordered the punishment only of those who ". . . shall either openly condemne or oppose . . ." the Congregational

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<sup>1</sup>Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, IV, Pt. 1, pp. 308-309.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Way. In other words, one could be a Quaker and remain unmo-  
 lested, as long as he kept his opinions to himself and did  
 not, in any way, contest the authority of the magistrate or  
 minister. The law provided a penalty of 10s. for anyone  
 attending an illegal meeting and £5 for anyone speaking there.  
 If any such person had already been whipped for a like  
 offense, he was to be kept at work in prison until security  
 was given that he would no longer continue in this heresy.  
 Otherwise, he was to be banished, and upon returning, such  
 person would face the same penalties as a foreign Quaker.

Punishments against Quakers and their sympathizers  
 steadily increased after Upsall's banishment. On October 23,  
 1657 William Marston humbly petitioned the General Court for  
 a remittance of the £15 imposed upon him by the Hampton  
 County Court for keeping two Quaker books and one such paper.  
 Admitting he had broken the law, Marston was remitted one-  
 third of his fine; he promptly paid the other £10.<sup>1</sup>

Not many of those arrested were as apologetic as  
 Marston. The County Courts held at Ipswich and Salem alone  
 reveal that, between 1658-1661, there were 138 convictions  
 for attending Quaker meetings and absence from public wor-  
 ship.<sup>2</sup> In July of 1657, Cassandra Southwick of Salem was  
 admonished for absence from public worship. This was the

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<sup>1</sup> Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, IV, Pt. 1,  
 pp. 308-309.

<sup>2</sup> Hallowell, Quaker Invasion, p. 127.

first of many such prosecutions against her and her family. She and her husband, Lawrence, were both members of the Church of Salem, and he was a freeman. A glassblower by trade, he once operated a glassworks at Salem with Obediah Holmes, who became an important Baptist leader.<sup>1</sup>

On May 10, 1658 nearly two dozen persons (including six Southwicks) were presented before the County Court for holding a ". . . Disorderly meeting at the house of one Nicholas Phelps of Salem on the Lord's day in time of the public worship."

Two foreign Quakers, William Brend and William Leddra, were also present, and were imprisoned. When they refused to work, the jailor whipped the two Englishmen. He was especially severe with Brend, who was an old man. Brend was beaten so savagely, that the magistrates had to promise to punish the turnkey to appease the angry populace. Significantly, Reverend John Norton held no such sympathy for the Quaker:

"William Brend attempted to beat our gospel ordinances black and blue, if he then be beaten black and blue, it is but just upon him, and I will appear in his behalf that did so."<sup>2</sup>

The magistrates did not discipline the jailor, other than insisting that two witnesses be present at future whippings.

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<sup>1</sup>Perley, History of Salem, II, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>Sewell, History of . . . Quakers, I, p. 219.

( Many of those charged with attending this illegal meeting stood before the Court with their hats on. Almost half of the accused repented and were released. The remainder admitted that they were Quakers and were either fined or imprisoned. Phelps, owner of the house, was fined 40s. He was also fined for defending a Quaker's writing and jailed for professing himself to be of that faith. Lawrence, Cassandra, and their son Josiah Southwick, already imprisoned once for Quakerism, reiterated their faith and were returned to jail. They were also fined, as were three others, 25s. each for absenting themselves from public worship. Four more persons of Salem were presented for this same offense. This Court prosecuted several other Quakers, and in one such case, the Southwicks' daughter Provided was ordered ". . . to be set by the heels in the stocks an hour for calling the court persecutors."<sup>1</sup>

For a clearer perspective of the types of persons being punished, one should take a closer examination of the Quakers who had been, or would soon become, arrested. The magistrates and clergy portrayed them as wild animals. That Quakerism was destructive to the New England Way is certain, but its adherents were far from being vicious revolutionaries.

Like their Baptist counterparts, many of these New England Quakers were well-to-do. For example, probate

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<sup>1</sup> Essex Quarterly Court Records, I, pp. 103-107.

records reveal that Lawrence Southwick had an estate valued at nearly £200, even after fines and imprisonment.<sup>1</sup> And Nicholas Upsall was valued at £543.<sup>2</sup>

The occupations of both these sects varied greatly. While John Small came to Massachusetts as a servant, Henry Bachelor arrived with four servants. Most sectarians were of middling stature--either yeoman farmers, such as Samuel Gaskill and Thomas Arnold, or artisans. Bachelor was a brewer, Joshua Buffum a ship-builder and carpenter, Edward Wharton a glazier, Lawrence Southwick a glassblower, Edward Harnet and Michael Shafflen tailors, Edward Drinker a potter, Thomas Gould a wagonmaker, Joseph Redknap and William King coopers, and Nicholas Upsall an innkeeper. John Kitchen, Thomas Olney, Samuel Shattock, and the husbands of Ann Burden, Elizabeth Leag, and Catherine Scott were all shoemakers.

As was the case economically, so too did the political influence amongst these men vary greatly. Many were freemen (e.g., Townsend Bishop, Thomas Gould, William King, Samuel Shattock, and Lawrence Southwick). Several also served on grand and trial juries (e.g., Bishop, George Gardner, King, John Kitchen, Joseph Pope, and James Redknap). John Kitchen and Michael Shafflen were even constables of Salem. Joseph Flood was once bailiff of Dorchester. Ezekial

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<sup>1</sup>Probate Records of Essex County, I, p. 319.

<sup>2</sup>A. Jones, "Nicholas Upsall," p. 28.



Holliman, Townshend Bishop, and Nicholas Upsall had been selectmen of their respective towns. Edward Starbuck had even served as Dover's Deputy to the General Court.

### Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

In July of 1658 the three Southwicks, with Samuel Shattock and Joshua Buffum, wrote from prison to the magistrates of the Salem Court. Refusing to admit having done anything which necessitated imprisonment, they asked that, since they had suffered as the law declared (four of them had been whipped, including Cassandra Southwick), they might now be released:

Friends let it not be a smal thing in you<sup>r</sup> Eyes.  
ye Expossing as much as in yo<sup>w</sup> y<sup>e</sup> season & time  
of y<sup>e</sup> yeare. . . . we know if y<sup>e</sup> spirit of  
Christ did dwell & Rule in you these things  
would take impression upon you<sup>r</sup> harts.

They proceeded to place the blame for much of their suffering on ". . . false Reports & ungrounded Jealousie of heresie and sedition . . .," but concluded that, if need be, they were willing to die in the service of God.<sup>1</sup>

The following October, the Court did release the prisoners, only to further order them to depart from Massachusetts, which, if refused, meant banishment upon pain of death. They left, but Joshua Buffum sailed to England and returned with a security against the order.<sup>2</sup> Samuel Shattock

<sup>1</sup> Essex Quarterly Court Records, I, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, I, p. 289.

must also have returned, for his name appears on the list of Salem jurymen in 1684.<sup>1</sup>

The General Court then reiterated the reasons it considered the Quakers dangerous:

Whereas there is a pernicious sect, comonly called Quakers, lately risen, who, by word & writing, have published & maintayned many dangerous & horrid tennetts, and doe take upon them to chainge and alter the received laudable customes of our nation in giving civill respect to aequalls or reverence to superiors, whose actions tend to undermine the authority of civill government, as also to destroy the order of the churches, by denying all established forms of worship, and by withdrawing from the orderly church assemblies allowed & approved by all orthodox professors of the truth, and instead thereof, and in opposition thereunto. . . .<sup>2</sup>

The emphasis here was clearly upon physical manifestations of civil and religious disobedience--writing heresy, acting with disrespect towards superiors, and withdrawing from proper church assemblies. As Endecott told three English Quakers before ordering their right ears cropped, "You are greater enemies to us than those that come openly; since under pretence of peace, you come to poison the people."<sup>3</sup>

In consequence, punishments were again stiffened. Any foreign Quaker discovered in the colony was to be jailed

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<sup>1</sup> Perley, History of Salem, II, p. 9. Shattook had been imprisoned in 1657 for interfering with the silencing of the English Quaker Holder, who tried to speak in the Salem Church--Sewell, History of . . . Quakers, I, p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, IV, Pt. 1, pp. 345-346.

<sup>3</sup> Sewell, History of . . . Quakers, I, p. 220.

without bail until the next Court of Assistants, where he would be tried by a jury. If convicted, he was banished upon pain of death. Any inhabitant becoming a Quaker or defending them, upon conviction, was imprisoned for a month (unless he voluntarily left the colony's jurisdiction). If such person, having been bound over until the next Court, remained obstinate, he was banished upon pain of death.

This Court may well have been persuaded to pass such a severe law by a petition it received that same month from twenty-five of the colony's leading citizens. This petition asked for the penalty of banishment upon pain of death for three reasons: the Quakers malign civil government; they subvert both religion and the church institution; and it was feared that ". . . the increase and strengthening of their obduracy, perversity, and malignity" gives reason ". . . for apprehending a renewal of the spirit of Muncer, or John of Leyden. . . ." <sup>1</sup> Clearly, it was the fear of social upheaval, and not the purity of religious tenets, which most worried these citizens.

But arrests for Quakerism continued. In November of 1658 the wife of the banished Samuel Shattock, as well as the Southwick's daughter, Provided, their son, David, their daughter-in-law, and the mother of the banished Joshua Buffum were fined for absenting themselves from public worship. But there were new names--John Small, Thomas Bracket, and the

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<sup>1</sup>Ellis, Puritan Age, pp. 448-449.

wives of Henry Traske, Anthony Needham, John Kitchen, and George Gardner. Many of these were again presented before the Court a year later for the same offense.<sup>1</sup> Soon after, Small moved to Rhode Island,<sup>2</sup> but there is no evidence that the others left the colony at this time, although Gardner did move to Nantucket in 1668.<sup>3</sup>

These were residents of Salem, but, like an epidemic, Quakerism was beginning to spread throughout the colony. Thomas Pitman, constable of Marblehead, complained to the General Court in March of 1659 that James Smith and his wife, "... who are adhering to the Quakers and an evile example to others," had been absenting themselves from public worship.<sup>4</sup> In November of that year, James Rawlings of Dover was admonished for entertaining Quakers. Thomas Spencer of Saco and Richard Nason of Kittery were fined £5 and disfranchised. Richard Swayne of Rowley was fined £3 and disfranchised for the same offense; Zacheus Gould was also fined £3. Thomas Macy of Salisbury was fined 30s. and admonished by the Governor.<sup>5</sup> Yet, although the fines were stiff, and several men lost their right to vote, the convicted were not

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<sup>1</sup> Essex Quarterly Court Records, II, pp. 134, 193.

<sup>2</sup> Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, IV, p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> Perley, History of Salem, II, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> Essex Quarterly Court Records, II, p. 163.

<sup>5</sup> Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, IV, Pt. 1, pp. 406-407.

imprisoned or banished, which was the law.

This last point should be emphasized. For native Quakers and Quaker sympathizers were, in fact, often tolerated within Massachusetts. This was especially true when they caused no open disturbance. The above-mentioned Richard Nason, although fined, resided in Kittery until his death (his will was probated in 1694). His fellow townsman, Anthony Emery, another Quaker sympathizer, was elected constable in 1658, and although disfranchised the following year, served as the town's representative in 1680.<sup>1</sup> It has already been mentioned that Edward Starbuck, elder and former deputy of Dover, who moved from Baptism to Quakerism, stayed in Dover until 1669, in spite of a petition forwarded by several of the town's residents in 1662, ". . . ag<sup>t</sup> the spreading, &c, the wicked errors of the Quakers amongst them. . . ." <sup>2</sup> And in remote Marblehead, James Smith and his wife, whom the constable had complained against, remained in that town at least until 1674.<sup>3</sup>

In Massachusetts proper, Quakers were also tolerated. This was especially true of Salem. It was previously noted that Samuel Shattock served on a Salem jury in 1684. His fellow Quaker, Joshua Buffum, who returned from England with

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<sup>1</sup> Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, III, p. 213; II, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, IV, Pt. 2, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, IV, p. 117.

security against his banishment, married Damaris Page in 1663 and was granted, in his father's will, a share of land in Salem in 1669 (although the will was not probated ". . . because the witnesses would not swear but only affirm . . ."<sup>1</sup>). Samuel Gaskill, punished for absence from church and for attending a Quaker meeting, also remained in Salem, marrying Provided Southwick in 1662; a later wife had one of his children as late as 1688.<sup>2</sup> In 1658 Anthony Needham and his wife Ann were brought before the Quarterly Court for attending a Quaker meeting (and she for non-attendance at church); he repented, but she was fined then and punished afterwards, culminating in a whipping in 1660. However, they spent their remaining lives, approximately forty years, in Salem.<sup>3</sup>

In November of 1659, Zacheus Gould was admonished by the County Court for his disrespectful behavior at the Sabbath worship. "The deposition against Gould follows in full, because it is a detailed example of why these Quakers caused the magistrates and ministers of both England and New England such anger, fear, and utter frustration:

" . . . Zacheus Gould in time of singing y<sup>e</sup> psalm one Sabbath day in y<sup>e</sup> afternoone, sate him downe upon y<sup>e</sup> end of y<sup>e</sup> Table (about w<sup>ch</sup> y<sup>e</sup> minister & cheife of y<sup>e</sup> people sit) w<sup>th</sup> his hatt fully on his head, & his

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<sup>1</sup>Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, I, p. 289. (

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, p. 234; Perley, History of Salem, I, p. 391.

<sup>3</sup>Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, III, p. 265.

back toward all y<sup>e</sup> rest of y<sup>m</sup> y<sup>t</sup> sate about y<sup>e</sup> Table & though spoken to by y<sup>e</sup> minister & 2 others, ether to shew reverence to y<sup>e</sup> Ordinance, or to w<sup>t</sup>drawe, yet altered not his posture & y<sup>e</sup> Sabbath following, after that the Congregation was dismissed in y<sup>e</sup> afternoone, desired y<sup>e</sup> Congregation to stay & thereupon spake saying y<sup>t</sup> hee had bin informed how y<sup>t</sup> y<sup>e</sup> last Sabbath day hee had bin commanded out of the meeting house, but it was not for want of age, nether had hee anything to doe y<sup>t</sup> commanded him, for y<sup>e</sup> house was non of his--also he sd that he had heard much speech of y<sup>e</sup> ministers of Christ, & hee confest also, that they could not bee too much honored, but sd hee we knowe y<sup>t</sup> there bee a Company of hirelings who if they fre not their mouthes they prepare warre agst y<sup>u</sup> such Micah speakes of Chapt. 3<sup>d</sup> v. 7<sup>th</sup>--see John 10<sup>th</sup>--wh<sup>ch</sup> hee sd hee would not reade but they might read at their leisure--also hee added that hee had bin informed what a learned speech y<sup>e</sup> goodma Coms made, but he was told by some or one, y<sup>t</sup> was now mor nearly Related to him, y<sup>n</sup> himsele y<sup>t</sup> hee was a proud probmatial, base, beggarly, pick thank fellowe, where--upon hee was desired to hold his peace, but hee replied y<sup>t</sup> they had nothing to doe to injoyne him silence, y<sup>e</sup> house was none of theirs who did injoyne him, whereupon hee was told y<sup>t</sup> hee would find y<sup>e</sup> contrary, whereupon hee oft dared us to do our worst.<sup>1</sup>

It should be added that, despite the troublesome type of fellow Gould seemed to be, the General Court remitted the £3 he owed the colony, for a fire had destroyed much of his property.<sup>2</sup>

Whippings, formerly used upon foreigners, like William Brend, were now applied more liberally to the backs of colonial Quakers. Along with several Rhode Island Quakers, Provided Southwick, Mary Traske, and William King of

<sup>1</sup> Essex Quarterly Court Records, II, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, IV, Pt. 1, p. 426.

Salem were ordered whipped by the General Court.<sup>1</sup>

The same Court ordered Edward Wharton, also of Salem, whipped with twenty stripes and jailed, for he had ". . . accompanied the Quakers & pillaged them from one place to another. . . ." <sup>2</sup> He had already been fined £5 and 10s. by the County Court for absenting himself from public worship and for his refusal to assist the Salem constables apprehend some Quakers. <sup>3</sup> Wharton was later ordered banished for assisting in the burial of William Leddra, the English Quaker, whom the authorities had hanged. He refused to leave Salem, however, and died there in 1678. <sup>4</sup>

The climax of the Quaker prosecutions (or persecutions) was the execution of the Englishmen--William Robinson, Marmaduke Stephenson, and later, William Leddra--and Mary Dyer, former resident of Boston and friend of Anne Hutchinson. All were foreign Quakers (Dyer living in Rhode Island), all had been banished upon pain of death, and all had returned to the colony. Robinson, Stephenson, and Dyer were sentenced to die together in Boston in 1659, and the three of them marched to the scaffold, accompanied by a large armed guard; the authorities were obviously fearful that the

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<sup>1</sup> Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, IV, Pt. I, p. 426.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 407.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Felt, The Annals of Salem, From Its First Settlement (Salem: W. and S. B. Ives, 1827), p. 200.

<sup>4</sup> Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, IV, p. 494.



condemned would arouse the sympathies of the onlookers.

Through the intercession of her family, Dyer was spared and sent back to Rhode Island. Soon, she returned to Boston and was executed. Leddra shared her fate in 1661.

To take these executions, extreme as they were, as evidence of a demand for religious orthodoxy, is to misread the intentions of the magistrates. For they punished the Quakers as criminals, who defied and displayed contempt for the civil law--the crime of sedition far overshadowed that of heresy. In an apology to the King, the General Court blamed the Quakers themselves for the executions:

The Quakers died, not because of their other crimes, how capitoll soever, but upon their superadded presumptions & incorrigible contempt of authority; breaking in upon us, notwithstanding their sentence of bannishment made knowne to them. Had they not binn restrained, so farr as appeared, there was too much cause to feare that wee ourselves must quickly have died, or worse; and such was their insolency, that they would not be restrained but by death; nay, had they at last but promised to depart the jurisdiction, & not to returned without leave from authority, we should have binn glad of such an oppertunity to have sayd they should not dye.<sup>1</sup>

To attempt to convince the King was not enough; two similar appeals were written and sent to the towns of Massachusetts. The first, while stating that the executions needed no justification, proceeded to justify them. Remembering the first English Quakers to arrive in Massachusetts, the appeal applauded the authorities' wondrous restraint, for Austin and

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<sup>1</sup>Shurtleff, Massachusetts Bay Records, IV, Pt. 1, p. 451.

## Fisher

" . . . were only secured to be sent away by the first opportunity, without censure or punishment, altho' their professed tenets, turbulent and contemptuous behaviour to authority, would have justified a severe animadversion, yet the prudence of this Court was exercised only in making provision to secure the peace and order here established against their attempts, whose design (we were well assured by our own experience as well as by the example of their predecessors in Munster) was to undermine and ruin the same. . . ."

The anti-Quaker ordinances were then catalogued, and it was demonstrated that those executed had clearly broken the law. Of course, the government's initial leniency towards Mary Dyer was emphasized; all which went to prove, " . . . that we desire their life absent rather than their death present."<sup>1</sup>

The second document added reasons why the executions were justified. Quakerism threatened the fundamentals of true religion as well as the magistracy. The colony was compared to a house; just as a man may lawfully defend himself against unwelcome intruders, be it " . . . a thief or an usurper . . . , " so too did the magistrates have a right to defend their charge, Massachusetts, against those who threatened its peace and security.<sup>2</sup>

Concluding Remarks

Not against the Anglicans, nor the Presbyterians, nor even the Baptists had the government of Massachusetts taken

<sup>1</sup> Felt, Ecclesiastical History, II, pp. 213-214.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 214-215.

such drastic measures. It is significant that the Quakers were the first element of heterodoxy which so alarmed the civil authorities of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, that punishments were inflicted upon the name "Quaker," without the necessity of proving any more specific charge (note how Ann Austin and Mary Fisher fared upon their arrival in Boston). As Charles Chauncy (himself a dissenter upon the subject of baptism) wrote, in reference to Quakerism,

" . . . suppose you should catch six wolves in a trap, and ye cannot prove that they killed either sheep or lambs; and now you have them they will neither bark nor bite: yet they have the plain mark of wolves. and therefore ye knock them down."<sup>1</sup>

To the magistrates and ministers, the Quakers were wolves; they roamed the countryside, breaking into churches, defying the shepherds of Christ's flocks, devouring true religion, and howling at others to join their pack. One does not reason with such dangerous animals.

For never was the New England Way more threatened, and the fear of this threat is manifest in the numerous and severe punishments inflicted upon this particular brand of heresy. Whippings had occasionally been used previously against very poor (e.g., Thomas Painter) or very obstinate (e.g., Obediah Holmes) Baptists. With the Quakers, however, this punishment was becoming far more commonplace. Moreover, the death penalty, which had previously been issued solely

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<sup>1</sup> Sewell, History of . . . Quakers, I, p. 220.

against convicted murderers and sexual deviates, was now invoked against a religious heresy.

Yet, the punishments proved uneven. Foreign Quakers, seen by the authorities as instigators, bore the brunt of the suffering--including the four executions. No native Quaker was beaten as severely as William Brend, and none lost his life. It is true that the magistrates ordered the banishment of several Quakers, including residents of Massachusetts. Some of these inhabitants did leave, but others, like Joshua Buffum and Edward Wharton, openly and successfully defied the authorities and remained.

The Anglican, the Presbyterian, and the Baptist--each had been allowed discreetly the privilege of following his conscience, so long as he in no way professed his belief. Unfortunately for the elders and magistrates, many dissenters could not contain the enthusiasm of their beliefs. Such were the Quakers.

The fine line which the government drew between belief and expression of belief, if often smeared in real life, remained the theoretical rule for theocratic purity. The magistrates and ministers had grown heavy with the responsibilities of office, as their behavior demonstrated. Thus, Massachusetts did not forbid Quakerism, but only the socially disruptive manifestations of this sect. However, even this distinction, and the resulting punishments, did not prevent the growth of this threat. Emerging from the same body of Protestantism, a frightened Congregational

Dr. Jeckyll found himself almost helpless against defilement  
by his alter-ego, the Quaker Mr. Hyde.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Navigation between the Scylla of Separation and the Charybdis of corruption was a hazardous undertaking, but the Massachusetts divines were convinced it could be done. They refused to see in Congregationalism any necessary connection with schism, and Cotton was properly incensed that Williams should attempt to prove Separation "out of the Principles and grounds of those holy Saints of God, whom we misnameth Puritans."<sup>1</sup>

It is this delicate balance between "popish" corruption and schism, which the ministers attempted to effect within Massachusetts, that Orthodoxy in Massachusetts proposed and defended. Miller skillfully portrayed the cohesion of the colony's elders and magistrates and their collusion in working to prevent the interference of the English crown and church while, simultaneously, expressing loyalty to both. As proof, they condemned and banished heretics such as Williams and Hutchinson.<sup>2</sup>

But if, in punishing these promoters of schism, the elders were proving something to the Church of England, they

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<sup>1</sup> John Cotton, "A Reply to Mr. Williams," p. 198; quoted in Miller, Orthodoxy, p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> Miller's concept of a nearly complete harmony between ministry and magistrates has come under recent criticism. of, Wall, Massachusetts Bay: The Crucial Decade, p. 47.

were, as well, proving something to their congregations. Men who had been deprived of their livelihoods, interrogated (as though they were criminals) by the Courts of the High Commission, hounded into hiding, and finally forced to flee to a savage land--such men, now free to practice the faith for which they had suffered so much, were not likely to jeopardize this freedom. This meant chaining the greatest threat to their authority--their own church members.

If there was but one true church way, and New England Congregationalism was that way, the syllogism must logically conclude that the New England Way was the one true Church, and, therefore, all other religious beliefs were false. The ministers of Massachusetts were the guardians of what they considered to be the manifest verities of the true Church, and, as such, anyone who disputed a religious question with them and did not acknowledge his error was punished. However, ". . . he is not punished for his conscience, but for sinning against his conscience."<sup>1</sup>

This statement of John Cotton marked the culmination in the metamorphosis of the sect-like non-separating Congregationalists in England--favoring voluntarism in membership and contributions, spiritual (though not physical) separation from corruption, and the desire to be left free to

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<sup>1</sup> Cotton's answer to "Against Persecution in Cause of Conscience"; quoted by Roger Williams, The Bloody Tenent of Persecution, For Cause of Conscience Discussed, ed. by Edward Bean Underhill (London: Hanserd Knollys Society, 1848), p. 24.

worship as they desired--into the Church of New England--with laws demanding church attendance, payments, and punishment for any who dissented from the Congregational Way, as interpreted by the clergy.

This is Miller's view of the clergy's intent. What should be questioned, however, is not whether this was so, but whether the efforts of the ministry (supported by the magistrates) was as effective as Miller would suggest. In the introduction to Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, he wrote:

"I have simply endeavored to demonstrate that the narrative of the Bay Colony's early history can be strung upon the thread of an idea."<sup>1</sup> This thesis has attempted to demonstrate that this "thread" proved to be badly frayed--frayed by the tugging of those who would keep their conscience free from bondage.

In general, dissenters were at least as earnest in their religious convictions as the Congregational ministers and were quite willing to suffer fines and much harsher punishments rather than recant. The Anglican minister Robert Jordan braved both fines and imprisonment for his beliefs. The Presbyterian Hobart, his family, and their neighbors viewed New England as "Canaan"--the Promised Land. Like their Congregational counterparts, they had not crossed the terrible ocean to once again be told how to worship.

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<sup>1</sup>Miller, Orthodoxy, p. xii.



A great number of dissenters had even once been members of Congregational churches. These included the most prominent leaders of sectarianism—Henry Dunster, Thomas Gould, Obadiah Holmes, Samuel Shattock, Lawrence Southwick, and Nicholas Upsall. The growth of schism was really a struggle within the churches of Massachusetts and among the regenerate. As Wilford Cross has written in his "Role and Status of the Unregenerate," concerning Anne Hutchinson's opinions,

These would have been potently disturbing doctrines for the unregenerate, though the fire of them burned mostly in the hearts of church members, particularly in the Boston Church, rather than among the unregenerate.

Cross also stated, "There is nowhere any evidence of success by the Quakers in converting the unregenerate."<sup>1</sup> The fact that the contest was internal was noted by Reverend Peter Bulkley, who, in 1650, wrote to John Cotton to protest the "insolency" of the "multitude." This "insolency," he felt, was caused by too much freedom:

"And I am persuaded that except there be some means used to change the course of things in this past, our churches will grow more corrupt, day by day; and tumult will arise hardly to be stilled. I know not how it can be avoided, unless we make the doors of our church narrower."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Wilford Cross, "The Role and Status of the Unregenerate in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1629-1729" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1957), pp. 422; 451.

<sup>2</sup>Felt, Ecclesiastical History, II, pp. 17-18.

Were, as Bulkley stated, too many troublemakers being allowed into the churches? There are, unfortunately, no thorough confessions, like that of John Winthrop, by which one can delve intently into the attitudes and religious convictions held by these dissenters. Refusing to take communion or withdrawing from the ordinance of infant baptism was a serious step, fraught with mental anguish and physical danger; it was not a step most men would take lightly. If Chaplin's view of Dunster's conversion is correct, it took the President of Harvard much study, after being profoundly shocked by the whipping of Holmes. Thomas Gould became a Baptist shortly after Dunster; he, in turn, may have been moved by Dunster's plight. Two other accounts, which are extant, tend to support this concept of dissent as a reaction to what was conceived as an injustice perpetrated by the established religious order. It has already been noted that Holmes left the Church of Rehoboth because of what he considered an unfair censure passed upon one of the brethren. Thomas Osborne stated that he left the Charlestown Church (he later joined Gould's Baptist church) because (1) he opposed infant baptism, (2) the church only allowed those with human learning to be ministers, and significantly, "3. our severe dealing with those of a contrary judgement from us: and therefore said he should not come to the church."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Records of the Charlestown Church, June 6, 1658;  
 quoted by Wood, First Baptist Church of Boston, p. 41.

The point at which a church member decided to leave his congregation varied. What is surprising is the number of dissenters who began as church members in good standing. Future Baptists such as Dunster, Thomas Gould, and Townsend Bishop all had presented infants for baptism. Lawrence and Cassandra Southwick, who became leading Quakers and defied the authorities countless times, testified, in July of 1644, against a woman who accused their teacher of teaching the people lies.<sup>1</sup> Bishop was one of those selected to report upon those not attending church; Edward Starbuck was even an elder of the Church of Dover.

Faced by this grave internal dissension, the elders of Massachusetts, while loudly denouncing sectarianism, quietly and discreetly followed the advice of John Cotton:

"In things of lesser moment, whether points of doctrine or worship, if a man hold them forth in a spirit of Christian meekness and love, though with zeal and constancy, he is not to be presented, but tolerated, till God may be pleased to manifest his truth to him. . . .

But if a man hold forth, or profess, any error or false way, with a boisterous and arrogant spirit, to the disturbance of civil peace, he may justly be punished according to the quality and measure of the disturbance caused by him."<sup>2</sup>

This, then, was the distinction which governed the nature of orthodoxy in Massachusetts. As has been emphasized throughout, the government of Massachusetts only acted

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<sup>1</sup>Quarterly Courts of Essex County, I, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup>Introduction to Williams, Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, p. 20.


against dissenters who, by speech or other action, threatened the ecclesiastical or political stability of the colony. Samuel Maverick, a known Anglican, was not ordered to move to Boston because of his religion, but because he was suspected of being in collusion with England in a political attack upon the colony. The Presbyterian Peter Hobart was fined for his overbearing attitude before the magistrates and his part in organizing what was considered a sedition petition; his fellow divines, Parker and Noyes, kept their Presbyterianism confined to their congregation and were not harassed, but rather treated with great respect. The anti-Baptist ordinance of 1644 and the anti-Quaker act of May, 1658 punished only those sectarians who professed their beliefs, such as through speeches or meetings. Those who kept their opinions to themselves would remain unmolested.

The ministers and magistrates of Massachusetts adopted this policy because of the pragmatic responsibilities which governed the rulers of a state, and because this was all that they could do. Prosecution (or persecution) bred more dissent, and few guardians of the New England Way could, like Endecott, thrive upon combatting schism. Most were typified by the dying Winthrop, who, when asked to sign more anti-heretic legislation, said that he had done too much of that business already.

These punishments were but grains of sand in the desert, for the Protestant Reformation had done its work too well. Conscience did not, as Hamlet once pondered, make

cowards of us all, but, rather, demanded following one's convictions in spite of authority. This was the legacy which, created heterodoxy in Massachusetts.

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