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*NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE NORTHAMPTON COMMUNION
CONTROVERSY III:
COUNT VAVASOR'S TIRADE & THE SECOND COUNCIL, 1751*

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Abstract

Jonathan Edwards' fateful decision to repudiate the church admission practices of his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, provoked a bitter dispute with his parishioners that led to his dismissal in 1750. Scholars have long debated the meaning of this crucial turning point in Edwards' pastoral career. For early biographers, the Northampton communion controversy served as an index of eighteenth-century religious decline. More recent studies situate Edwards' dismissal within a series of local quarrels over his salary, the "Bad Book" affair, conflicts with the Williams family, and the paternity case of Elisha Hawley. This essay is the first in a series that reexamines the tangled religious context of the communion controversy through newly discovered historical documents. This is the third installment.¹

"Count Vavasor" could scarcely contain his rage. The date was May 18, 1751, and the circumstances precipitating his furious, pseudonymous epistle to the "Venerable Elders" gathered in Northampton were highly unusual. Two days earlier, a council of leading clergymen from eastern Massachusetts had convened to reassess the Northampton church members' recent decision to dismiss Jonathan Edwards from their pulpit. The delegation came at the invitation of Edwards and Timothy Dwight, a prominent local merchant, magistrate, and militia colonel. By the spring of 1751, Dwight and a small group of supporters were scheming to organize a separate church in Northampton with Edwards reinstated as their pastor. Although the council encouraged Edwards to accept a new position at the Stockbridge, Massachusetts, Indian mission, the assembled clergymen also vindicated his church membership principles, condemned the Northampton church for heaping "Calumnies and Reproaches" upon their minister, and urged the Dwight faction to maintain their resistance until such a time as their numbers warranted the formation of "distinct Society or Church." Written by an embittered Northampton parishioner posing as an English aristocrat, Vavasor's letter virulently denounced the *ex parte* council. He branded Dwight the "Son of a Tapster" and the "firebrand and ringleader of A few benighted Witlings better qualified to be employed in dragging Garbage to tygers." Acting without the

The author wishes to thank Jeff Cooper, Ken Minkema, and Rachel Wheeler for their helpful comments on preliminary drafts of this essay.

¹ For the series introduction and the first installment please consult the *Jonathan Edwards Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2013): 282-94. For the second installment please consult the *Jonathan Edwards Studies* vol. 4, no. 1 (2014): 109-142.

sanction of the Hampshire County ministerial association, the rogue council had ignited a “Conflagration.” That a group of interloping clergymen would foment schism in Northampton was “insuperable,” Vavator fulminated. The council had “brought forth A monster.”²

The bitter climax of the Northampton communion controversy seldom receives more than passing attention in most studies of Edwards’s life and pastoral career. Nearly all accounts of “this sorrowful, strange, surprising” stage of the conflict trace the narrative contours originally outlined by Edwards’s first biographer, the New Divinity clergyman Samuel Hopkins. “Mr. Edwards could not see it to be his duty” to remain in Northampton, Hopkins explained, “as this would probably be the means of perpetuating an unhappy division in the town.” Modern scholars have also attempted to exonerate Edwards of the charges of schism that opponents levelled against him during the months following his dismissal. Edwards’s unwavering commitment to principle impelled him to press his case during the communion controversy, and yet he remained equally committed ecclesiastical order. For this reason, most scholars have assumed that he resisted Dwight’s scheme to gather a separate church in Northampton and quietly resigned himself to exile on the New England frontier.³

This essay presents several important documents from the second Northampton council, including the published *Result*, Vavator’s heated epistle, and a satirical newspaper editorial written by a second anonymous figure known as “T. Separatist.” When combined with a detailed chronology of events during the year following Edwards’s dismissal, they reveal a far more tangled and important story. To be sure, Edwards firmly opposed the militant separatists that had broken apart more than a dozen established churches in eastern

² Count Vavator to the Northampton Council, May 18, 1751, ser. 9, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, 1501-1866, Peter Force Papers, Library of Congress; *Boston Gazette*, June 11, 1751.

³ Samuel Hopkins, *The Life and Character of the Late Reverend, Learned, and Pious Mr. Jonathan Edwards* (Northampton, Mass.: Andrew Wright, 1804), 71-72. Studies that build upon Hopkins’s interpretation include Sereno Dwight, ed., *The Works of President Edwards, in Eight Volumes* (Worcester, Mass.: Isaiah Thomas, 1808), 1:72-73; Ola Elizabeth Winslow, *Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758: A Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1940), 261-67; Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards, American Men of Letters* ([New York]: William Sloane Associates, 1949), 231-33; Patricia J. Tracy, *Jonathan Edwards, Pastor: Religion and Society in Eighteenth-Century Northampton*, *American Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979), 181-82; George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 362-65; and Philip F. Gura, *Jonathan Edwards: America’s Evangelical* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 160-64. The most detailed accounts of Edwards’s activities in Northampton following his dismissal may be found in Kenneth Pieter Minkema, “The Edwardses: A Ministerial Family in Eighteenth-Century New England” (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 1988), 343-46; and Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 353-70. For arguments similar to the one that I present in this essay, see Kevin Michael Sweeney, “River Gods and Related Minor Deities: The Williams Family and the Connecticut River Valley, 1637-1790” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1986), 449-51; and James F. Cooper Jr., *Tenacious of Their Liberties: The Congregationalists in Colonial Massachusetts*, *Religion in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 215.

Connecticut and central Massachusetts during the decade following the Whitefieldian revivals of the early 1740s.⁴ But he was more invested in the prospect of gathering a separate church in Northampton than previous studies acknowledge. For a brief moment, he may even have considered affiliating the proposed breakaway church with New England's scattered network of Scots-Irish Presbyterians. More important, the *ex parte* "anticouncil" that Edwards and Dwight jointly planned in Northampton produced an astounding judgment by eighteenth-century standards.⁵ Most Congregational church councils—even partisan meetings called solely by aggrieved factions—typically culminated in a written statement in which the assembled ministers encouraged the contending parties to reconcile their differences. The second Northampton council, by contrast, exhorted the Dwight faction to expand the conflict in order to gather enough supporters to form a separate church. The published *Result* may have put a final end to Edwards's pastoral career in Northampton, but the ecclesiastical turmoil that he and Dwight fomented during the spring of 1751 continued to reverberate across New England for decades.

The state of religious affairs in Northampton steadily deteriorated in the wake of Edwards's dismissal. Less than two weeks after the first council on June 22, 1750, Edwards delivered his stinging *Farewel-Sermon*, in which he excoriated his parishioners and vindicated his church membership standards. Even as he stood firm on his theological principles, however, Edwards recognized that his financial situation was precarious, and he feared that he would struggle to secure another pastorate. "I am now as it were thrown upon the wide ocean of the world," he famously wrote to a Scottish colleague, "and know not what will become of me and my numerous and chargeable family." Clearly, the Edwardses were struggling to make ends meet. Jonathan sold his landholdings in a neighboring town to rival members of the Hawley family who had been instrumental in his removal. Sarah and their children continued producing paper fans for sale in Boston. Friends in eastern Massachusetts and in Scotland collected charitable donations. To make matters worse, financial woes compelled Edwards to earn a few shillings each week by supplying the very pulpit he had been forced to vacate, although he did so with "much reluctance." All the while, his belligerent parishioners continually harassed and insulted him. "It would be well if his head was seven feet underground" although "he thought six would do his turn," one man jeered in public. "Mr. Edwards was just like his old cow lowing after a good mess." "I durst not say what I think is really true with respect to the Spirit & Temper of the people of

⁴ The classic study of this movement is C. C. Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740-1800: Strict Congregationalists and Separate Baptists in the Great Awakening*, second ed. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1987).

⁵ I borrow the helpful phrase "anticouncil" from Cooper, *Tenacious of Their Liberties*, 187.

his Church & Congregation towards him,” Timothy Dwight complained. “It is become almost Criminal to Appear in his favour or to Say anything on his behalf.”⁶

During the summer of 1750, Edwards also received several supportive letters. Concerned laymen and ministers from across New England condemned the dismissal proceedings and endorsed his restrictive church admission standards. Heartened, Edwards resumed his efforts to vindicate himself in a series of tense epistolary exchanges with members of his extended family, including Connecticut ministers William Russell and Solomon Williams. Later in the summer, Edwards drafted a combative preface to *True Religion Delineated*, a bold theological treatise written by his protégé, the Bethlehem, Connecticut, clergyman Joseph Bellamy. The Northampton communion controversy lurked just below the surface of Edwards’s remarks. He blasted the “great Increase of Stupidity, corrupt Principles, a profane and atheistical Spirit, and the Triumph of the open Enemies of Religion” that had “nipt in the bud” the recent “remarkable Revivals of Religion” in New England. In a thinly veiled attack on his former parishioners, he praised Bellamy for addressing his book to “Persons of vulgar Capacity” who needed constant reminders of the “true Source of the dangerous Errors concerning the terms of God’s Favour and Qualifications for Heaven.”⁷

In Boston, Edwards’s dismissal ignited a print war. In July 1750, four of the ten ministers who had participated in the first Northampton council published a blistering attack on the proceedings. There was “no just Cause” for Edwards’s dismissal, argued David Hall of Sutton, Massachusetts, William Hobby of Reading, Edward Billing of Cold Spring (now Belchertown), and Robert Abercrombie, the Presbyterian minister of Pelham. His “Sentiments” regarding the qualifications for church membership were “strictly conformable to the Practice of the Apostles, and that of the Reformed Churches in general through the World.” Several weeks later, an editorial appearing in the *Boston Gazette* by an anonymous “Gentleman in the Country” condemned the “slender Grounds” upon which “so Ingenious and learned, pious and successful a Minister as the Reverend Mr. EDWARDS” had been “dismiss’d from his pastoral Relation” (see Appendix). Not to be outdone, Robert Breck, Joseph Ashley, Timothy Woodbridge, and Chester Williams—four members of the Hampshire County ministerial association who had voted in favor of Edwards’s dismissal—penned an “impartial and just Relation of that Affair,” reiterating the facts of the case and

⁶ Jonathan Edwards to John Erskine, July 5 and Nov. 15, 1750, *WJE* 16:355, 364; Joseph Hawley to Elisha Hawley, July 31, 1750, no. 20, Joseph Hawley Papers, 1653-1789, New York Public Library, New York; Minkema, “Edwardses,” 344; Timothy Dwight, “Petition of the Northampton Minority,” n.d. [ca. 1751], *WJEO* 38; Dwight to Spencer Phips, Aug. 16, 1750, *WJEO* 32.

⁷ John Owen to Jonathan Edwards, June 2, 1750, Ebenezer Baker to Edwards, June 28, 1750, and Solomon Williams to Edwards, Aug. 20, 1750, *WJEO* 32; Edwards to William Russell, Sept. 14, 1750, *WJE* 16:360-62; Edwards, “Preface,” in Joseph Bellamy, *True Religion Delineated* (Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1750), ii, vii. See also Mark Valeri, *Law & Providence in Joseph Bellamy’s New England: The Origins of the New Divinity in Revolutionary America*, Religion in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 48-54.

rebutting the complaints of the protesting ministers. Hobby responded with a longer “Vindication” of the protest, against which the Hampshire ministers published a second letter of defense. With each publication, the tenor of the debate grew more heated. Hobby accused Edwards’s parishioners of exhibiting a “violent Temper.” Breck and his colleagues shot back, asserting that Hobby had “wrong’d and abus’d” the people of Northampton in an “out-rageous” manner.⁸

As the two warring camps sniped back and forth during the fall of 1750, the fortunes of Edwards and his Northampton opponents diverged. In November, Edwards received an invitation from the New England Company for the Propagation of the Gospel to preach during the winter at the Stockbridge Indian mission. He delivered more than a dozen sermons in the frontier settlement between December and February, for which he received a stipend of ten pounds and thirteen shillings. He also preached on probation in Canaan, a relatively young village that lay astride the Housatonic River in northwestern Connecticut. It is likely, too, that Edwards received the first of several increasingly urgent letters from Samuel Davies imploring him to consider moving south to minister to the growing Presbyterian congregations in central Virginia. Scottish colleagues urged him to cross the Atlantic and resume his pastoral labors in the Kirk. With his fortunes improving, Edwards appeared ready to “settle anywhere in this western part of the country,” as he noted in a letter to Bellamy.⁹

With Edwards engaged in Stockbridge and Canaan, his former parishioners struggled miserably to hire his replacement. In December 1750, the Northampton church committee dispatched Joseph Wright to interview Thomas Arthur for the vacancy; but the New Brunswick, New Jersey, minister died unexpectedly two months later. Daniel Farrand, a recent graduate of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) preached on probation in Northampton for more than seven months during the spring and summer of 1751 before ultimately declining an invitation to settle. Josiah Pierce and James McKinstry fared no better. Appeals to the Hampshire County ministerial association and Harvard

⁸ *The Result of a Council of Nine Churches Met at Northampton, June 22, 1750, with a Protest against the Same* ([Boston, 1750]), 6; *Boston Gazette*, July 31, 1750; *An Account of the Conduct of the Council which Dismissed the Rev. Mr. Edwards from the Pastoral Care of the First Church at Northampton* ([Boston, 1750]), 1; William Hobby, *A Vindication of the Protest against the Result of the Northampton-Council* (Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1750), 17; *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. Hobby* (Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1751), 25.

⁹ New England Company, minute book, 1748-1771, Nov. 21, 1751, and account book, 1741-1771, Feb. 22, 1751, Papers of the Corporation for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England and Parts Adjacent in America, 1685-1787, Mss B C40, New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston; Jonathan Edwards to Joseph Bellamy, Nov. 5, 1750, *WJE* 16:363; Wilson H. Kinnach, “Appendix: Sermons and Sermon Fragments,” *WJE* 25:738-41. For Davies’s appeals from Virginia, see his 1750-1751 letters in *WJEO* 32. On attempts to recruit Edwards in Scotland, see Christopher W. Mitchell, “Jonathan Edwards’s Scottish Connection,” in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons*, ed. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 236-39.

College president Edward Holyoke yielded no successful candidates. The desperate Northampton church members turned to public rituals of fasting and prayer. “Our state is very Malancholly whoever is in the Mistake either Mr Edwards or the people,” admitted Joseph Hawley, one of the principal antagonists during the controversy. “Surely our loss of him and the difficulty that we meet with in endeavouring for a Candidate are tokens of the great Displeasure of the Almighty.”¹⁰

Meanwhile, a small clique of Edwards’s former parishioners began working to reverse the course of events in Northampton. Edwards first took note of the “people here that have adhered to me” during the fall of 1750. The group consisted of roughly twenty families, including many of the “principal men in the parish” and an even larger number of women “whose hearts are broke at what has come to pass.” The emerging leader of the dissenting faction was Timothy Dwight, whose son had recently married Edwards’s daughter. Writing on behalf of the aggrieved faction late in 1750, Dwight dispatched letters to five ministers in eastern Massachusetts requesting advice on “what method is best for them to take under their present difficulties.” Edwards’s adherents held out little hope that the Northampton church would replace their former minister with a candidate who, in their opinion, was “not corrupt in principles” or “tainted with some of the errors that so abound in the land.” They also knew that an accommodation with the majority that supported Solomon Stoddard’s open communion practices was unlikely. Thus, the dissenters specifically inquired of the eastern ministers whether and under what conditions it would be possible to establish a second church in Northampton with Edwards “installed over them or among them as their minister.” If efforts to resolve the widening conflict failed and Edwards was forced to depart from Northampton, Dwight warned, the aggrieved faction would find themselves “without remedy.” “Must we be obliged to attend the holy ordinances [of] the Lord’s Supper with those that don’t profess to know anything about Him,” he wondered, “to keep a feast of love to Christ and one another with those tha[t] are enemies to him and perfectly at enmity with him?”¹¹

Responses to Dwight’s circular letter did little to close the gaping fissures in Northampton. In fact, sympathetic colleagues in Boston and western Massachusetts supported his scheme to gather a separate church. The most outspoken advocate of the plan was Edward Billing. At the time he responded to Dwight’s inquiry, the Cold Spring minister was facing a similar qualifications crisis in his own parish. Not surprisingly, Billing declared

¹⁰ Joseph Hawley to Elisha Hawley, Mar. 11, 1751, and Timothy Dwight to Thomas Foxcroft, Feb. 17, 1751, *WJE* 32; James Russell Trumbull, *History of Northampton, Massachusetts, From Its Settlement in 1654*, 2 vols. (Northampton, Mass.: Gazette Printing Co., 1898-1902), 2:236-37; Jonathan Edwards to Thomas Foxcroft, July 31, 1750, *WJE* 16:360.

¹¹ Jonathan Edwards to John Erskine, Nov. 15, 1750, and Edwards to Joseph Bellamy, n.d. [ca. Apr. 1751], *WJE*, 16:364, 367; “Request for a Council from the Northampton Minority,” n.d. [ca. late 1750-early 1751], *WJE* 38. For biographical information on Dwight and his son, see Benjamin W. Dwight, *The History of the Descendants of John Dwight, of Dedham, Mass.*, 2 vols. (New York: John F. Trow and Son, 1874), 1:113-20, 130-40.

it “not only adviseable but duty to invite mr Edwards to take the pastoral care of their Souls.” Northampton was large enough, he reasoned, to support two churches. More to the point, Billing believed that Edwards had been grievously wronged during the dismissal proceedings. Installing him over a separate church would restore his honor and vindicate the “cause of God.” In addition, Billing recognized that the overheated temperament of Edwards’s former parishioners would irrevocably poison the Northampton church and make it impossible for his former parishioners to hire a suitable replacement. “I never saw people so angry and raving mad against ministers of mr Edwards sentiment as they were” following the dismissal proceedings, Billing concluded ominously. If Edwards departed Northampton, every minister who agreed with his principles on church membership would likely be forced to “move of[f] the stage, and seek some other place for refuge and rest than the County of Hampshire.”¹²

Thomas Foxcroft and Thomas Prince also endorsed the possibility of forming a second religious society in Northampton. The two ministers could look back to the contentious history of their own congregations for a successful model of ecclesiastical separation. Eight decades earlier, the members of Prince’s Old South Church had broken away from Foxcroft’s First Church during a rancorous debate over the extension of baptismal privileges; but the two societies forged close ties during the first half of the eighteenth century, as a “Catholick” ecumenism, or “international Protestant interest,” developed in the increasingly cosmopolitan port town.¹³ “I have seen great Things effected, for the restoring Peace & Union between Minister & People, in several Cases,” Foxcroft counseled Dwight,

by the healing Measures of a moderate discreet Council, when the Case seem’d to be almost desperate. And I must add, I have seen very good Events arising upon a Part of a Church their going into a distinct Society under the Countenance of a Council, when all Expedients used for an Accommodation failed. These are certainly to be used in the first place, and the Success waited for. Yet when after a full Time of Trial the Measures for an Accommodation are found unsuccessful, and no Room left for Hope of its being accomplish’d, I think, your Case will admit of

¹² Edward Billing to Timothy Dwight, n.d. [winter 1751], *WJE0* 32.

¹³ For these developments, see Mark A. Peterson, *The Price of Redemption: The Spiritual Economy of Puritan New England* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997); John Corrigan, *The Prism of Piety: Catholick Congregational Clergy at the Beginning of the Enlightenment*, Religion in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Thomas S. Kidd, *The Protestant Interest: New England after Puritanism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004).

Relief, in the other Way, and you be clear of the Charge of
Schism, especially while you do but adhere to your own Pastor.

Prince responded to Dwight's inquiries in a similar fashion. He initially believed that the conflict in Northampton could be easily resolved, if only both sides would agree upon a "common Principle" in the matter of church membership. As the conflict deepened, Prince struggled to understand why the Northampton majority remained "separate in this General article from all other Protestant Churches I know of in the world." Writing to Dwight during the winter of 1751, he reluctantly concluded that the ecclesiastical impasse might "necessitate the Dividing into Two Churches, that each Party may uninterruptedly enjoy their several Principles."¹⁴

Dwight collected the responses from Foxcroft and Prince, along with an additional letter from Salem Village minister Peter Clark, and delivered them to Major Seth Pomeroy, one of Northampton's most prominent residents and Edwards's most ardent opposers. The aggrieved faction hoped that the letters would "Reconcile more people to Mr Edwards," but Pomeroy refused to read them in public. Both sides grew increasingly bitter as the dispute deepened throughout the winter. By March, Dwight was making increasingly "Violent Efforts" to sabotage the church committee's efforts to hire a successor. "Let Northampton sink or swim," he boldly declared, "Mr. Edwards should be settled" over a separate church. For his part, Edwards added fuel to the fire by preaching privately in the homes of his adherents. Longmeadow, Massachusetts, minister Stephen Williams was "Greatly Grieved" at the state of affairs in Northampton. "Both parties," he noted in his diary, "cary things to Extremities, & I cant See any prospect of peace, and unity." At some point during the winter or early spring of 1751, members of the Dwight faction withdrew from communion in the Northampton church altogether.¹⁵

Edwards's opponents also countenanced separatism, albeit in ways that few members of the Northampton's majority party could have realized at the time. After early efforts to procure suitable ministerial candidates from New Jersey failed, the church committee turned to Thomas Frink, who preached in Northampton for two months during the winter of 1751. Known as a "very good Preacher, An Excellent Scholar, of Great Reading & Strong Powers, though of a pretty high Temper," Frink was an intriguing choice to replace Edwards. In 1743, the former minister of Rutland, Massachusetts, had been called by a group of angry parishioners in Plymouth's venerable First Church to serve as the founding

¹⁴ Thomas Foxcroft to Timothy Dwight, fragment, n.d. [ca. early winter 1751], no. 33, Hawley Papers; Thomas Prince to Timothy Dwight and the Northampton Minority, n.d. [ca. early winter 1751], *WJE* 32.

¹⁵ Dwight to Foxcroft, Feb. 17, 1751; Dwight, "Notes for the Petition of the Northampton Minority," n.d. [ca. 1751], and Ebenezer Pomeroy, "Northampton Church Committee on the Petition of the Minority," Mar. 5, 1752, *WJE* 38; Stephen Williams, diaries, 1716-1782, 10 vols., typescript, Storrs Library, Longmeadow, Mass., 4:132 (available online at <http://longmeadowlibrary.wordpress.com/>).

minister of a breakaway “Old Light” religious society. Boston’s vocal revival opposer, Charles Chauncy, preached his ordination sermon. From its inception, Plymouth’s so-called “Third” church emphasized ecclesiastical order and sacramental theology. Frink’s liberalized church admission practices siphoned scores of disaffected parishioners—including many prominent church members and lay leaders—away from the town’s fervently pro-revival First Church. He served the Plymouth separatists for several years before departing town in the wake of a salary dispute. At the time the Northampton committee hired him to supply Edwards’s vacant pulpit, Frink had returned to Rutland, where he eventually was ordained in an outlying district that became the town of Barre.¹⁶

Even Edwards was not categorically opposed to separatism. He remained a strident opponent of the “wild and extravagant” schismatics who had fomented bitter church divisions across New England—radicals such as the notorious lay preacher Elisha Paine or the infamous book burning radicals of the “Shepherd’s Tent” in New London, Connecticut. But when it came to earnest matters of conscience, Edwards remained circumspect. He appears to have defended students at Yale College who elected to worship in the town’s renegade “White Haven” church. In 1744, moreover, the Northampton minister sent a long letter to Elnathan Whitman, his first cousin and the minister of the Second Church in Hartford. Whitman’s opposition to the Whitefieldian revivals had angered many of his parishioners, a few of whom began attending sabbath meetings in neighboring towns. Upon learning of the growing schism, Edwards urged his kinsman to avoid using “coercive methods” to bring his wayward parishioners back into the fold. He understood that “common people” were easily seduced by “diversities of opinions among ministers.” Although many separatists were animated by “censoriousness,” “pernicious principles,” and a “contentious, forward spirit,” Edwards nonetheless maintained that “each man ought to be left to his own conscience, in what he judges will be most acceptable to God, or what he supposes is the will of God, as to the kind or manner or means of worship, or the society of worshippers he should join with in worship.” No church covenant, he concluded in his letter to Whitman, should “exclude all reserves of liberty in case of an alteration of the judgment in the affairs of conscience and religion.”¹⁷

¹⁶ Hawley to Hawley, Mar. 11, 1751; Josiah Cotton, “Account of the Cotton Family,” 1727-1755, Ms Am 1185, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 351. On Frink’s stormy career, see Clifford K. Shipton, *Biographical Sketches of Those Who Attended Harvard College in the Classes 1722-1725, with Bibliographical and Other Notes*, vol. 7, *Sibley’s Harvard Graduates* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1945), 69-75 (hereafter *SHG*). For a more detailed discussion of the formation of Plymouth’s Third Church, see Douglas Leo Winiarski, “All Manner of Error and Delusion: Josiah Cotton and the Religious Transformation of Southeastern New England, 1700-1770” (Ph. D. diss., Indiana University, 2000), 260-64.

¹⁷ Jonathan Edwards to Elnathan Whitman, Feb. 9, 1744, Edwards to Stephen Williams, Jan. 1, 1745, and Edwards to Friends in Scotland, n.d. [ca. 1745], *WJE* 16:128-130, 133, 152-53, 178. On the schisms in New Haven and New London and the career of Elisha Paine, see David W. Stowe, “‘The Opposers Are Very Much Enraged’: Religious Conflict and Separation in New Haven During the Great Awakening, 1741-1760,” *Bulletin of the Connecticut Historical Society* 56 (1991): 210-35; Harry S. Stout and Peter Onuf, “James Davenport and the

Then, in April 1751, Edwards made a fateful decision. He and Dwight set off for Boston carrying new letters and petitions for Foxcroft, Prince, and several other supportive ministers in eastern Massachusetts. Written in Edwards's hand, the Dwight faction's missive was bold and direct. After rehearsing a long series of grievances, the petition urged the ministers to gather in Northampton the following month for a second ecclesiastical council to "reconsider the controversy" and determine whether they might be "embodied, with others that are willing to join with us, as a distinct Church: and accordingly to incorporate us, if you think it best, and to appoint over us the Rev. Mr. Edwards to be our Pastor." Although he was careful to distinguish his actions from the "Conduct of many enthusiastical People of late, who have suddenly & rashly broke off & separated from the Church they belonged to, without proper Advice," Dwight remained firm in his demands. The aggrieved brethren sought "Communion" at the Lord's table in a "purer manner, with a society of the visible and professed Friends of our blessed Redeemer."¹⁸

How Edwards felt about Dwight's scheme at this point remains unclear. Documents composed by the Northampton majority later in the summer of 1751 accused him of scheming to be "settled over a few to the destruction of the whole." His opponents, Edwards explained in a long rebuttal and later reiterated in a letter to Joseph Hawley, firmly believed "that I had a great inclination to continue at Northampton as a minister at the expense of the peace and prosperity of the greater part of the town, yea, that I was greatly engaged for it." A few of his opponents even accused him of declaring that he was "de jure and de facto still the pastor" of their church. The letter that Edwards delivered along with Dwight's petition to the potential council ministers, however, was far more ambivalent. "My settlement in the pastoral office, over so small a number, under their circumstances," he admitted in his note to Old South Church clergymen Thomas Prince and Joseph Sewall, "appears to me to be a thing attended with great difficulty and darkness." And yet, Edwards also harbored misgivings about the Stockbridge mission. He met with the commissioners of the New England Company during his trip to Boston but did not formally accept their offer until June 1751. Nor did he receive a formal call from the people in Canaan, Connecticut, prior to the second Northampton council. In short, Edwards appears to have been keeping all of his options open during his trip to Boston. "He and Colonel Timothy Dwight have been endeavouring to have a Council to sit at Northampton next week," Westborough,

Great Awakening in New London," *Journal of American History* 70 (1983): 556-78; and Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism in New England*, 115-23.

¹⁸ Hamilton Andrews Hill, *History of the Old South Church (Third Church) Boston, 1669-1884*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1890), 2:3-4; James F. Cooper Jr. and Kenneth P. Minkema, eds., *The Colonial Church Records of the First Church of Reading (Wakefield) and the First Church of Rumney Marsh (Revere)*, vol. 72, *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 2006), 194; "Northampton Minority to William Hobby," n.d. [ca. April 1751], *WJE0*_32. Evidence that Edwards and Dwight delivered their letters in person may be found in Peter Clark to Timothy Dwight, Apr. 16, 1752, *WJE0* 32.

Massachusetts, minister Ebenezer Parkman reported in his diary after entertaining the two travelers as they headed home, “to advise the small part of people there whether it is best to have Mr. Edwards install’d over them, or not.” If Edwards was as opposed to Dwight’s plan as he later claimed—and as most modern scholars have presumed—he did not share those misgivings with Parkman, one of his closest friends and most supportive colleagues.¹⁹

One additional piece of evidence hints that Edwards may have been keenly interested in Dwight’s plan to gather a separate church in Northampton. After consulting with Prince and Foxcroft and meeting with the commissioners of the New England Company, Edwards and Dwight set off to deliver additional copies of their council request to colleagues in Essex County. Edwards preached in Salem Village (now Danvers) and Ipswich Hamlet (now Hamilton), two parishes that sent delegations to the May 1751 council. It is likely that he also delivered a copy to William Hobby of Reading during his travels; and he may have journeyed as far north as Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to consult with his former parishioner and student, Job Strong, at whose ordination he had preached three years earlier. Edwards also stopped in the town of Newbury. From here, he sent a nervous letter to Foxcroft on April 23 inquiring about reports that his old nemesis, Charles Chauncy, was scheming to undermine his plans for a second ecclesiastical council in Northampton.²⁰

What was Edwards doing in Newbury? None of the town’s four Congregational ministers appear to have supported him during the communion controversy. During the Whitefieldian revivals several years earlier, moreover, Newbury had witnessed some of the wildest acts of religious enthusiasm in the American colonies, including riotous protracted revival meetings, powerful itinerant preaching, and extraordinary outpourings of the Holy Spirit through exercised bodies and visionary phenomena. Scores of disaffected men and women withdrew from communion in Newbury’s two largest churches. They built a meetinghouse in 1743 and proceeded to ordain a notorious rabble rouser, Jonathan Parsons of Lyme, Connecticut. In a surprising turn of events during the winter of 1747, Parsons attempted to form a “Presbittery” among similar breakaway Congregational churches in Chebacco (now Essex), Massachusetts, Exeter, and Stratham, New Hampshire. The plan

¹⁹ Jonathan Edwards, “Notes on the Remonstrance of a Committee of the Northampton Church against the Proceedings of the Council, May 1751,” n.d. [summer 1751], and “Vindication from the Church’s Accusation,” n.d. [1751], *WJE* 38; Edwards to Joseph Sewall and Thomas Prince, and Edwards to Joseph Hawley, Nov. 18, 1754, *WJE* 16:369, 651; New England Company, minute book, Apr. 1, 1751; Ephraim Williams to Jonathan Ashley, May 2, 1751, *WJE* 32; Francis G. Walett, ed., *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703–1782* (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1974), 236. The earliest evidence of Edwards’s official appointment to Stockbridge appears in a June 8, 1751, notation in the New England Company’s account book, in which he received 25 pounds for “Advance Salary per vote 6 Instant.” For a detailed analysis of Edwards’s first months in Stockbridge, see Rachel Wheeler, *To Live upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008), 175–86, 206–9.

²⁰ Jonathan Edwards to Thomas Foxcroft, Apr. 23, 1751, *WJE* 16:370. For Edwards’s Essex County itinerary, see Kinnach, “Appendix,” 738.

failed, but the Newbury dissenters completed their split with the Congregational establishment one year later by uniting with the Scots-Irish Presbytery of Londonderry, New Hampshire. By 1751, nearly half of the population of Newbury had affiliated with the newly organized First Presbyterian Church, which would blossom into one of New England's largest and most distinguished religious institutions during the decades that followed.²¹

Although the evidence is circumstantial, it is possible that Edwards met with Parsons, who had once courted his sister, to discuss the recent and dramatic ecclesiastical reshuffling in Newbury. As Edwards explained to John Erskine shortly after his dismissal, he had come to believe that the "Presbyterian way" was "most agreeable to the Word of God." He knew that he would never cross the Atlantic with his family, as his Scottish supporters earnestly desired. Organizing a Presbyterian church in Northampton, on the other hand, provided an alternative solution to the communion controversy that had the potential to satisfy all of the contending parties. The ecclesiastical and disciplinary mechanisms of the Londonderry Presbytery would have served as an appropriate forum for debating his principles regarding the qualifications for the Lord's Supper; and the denominational solidity of the Scottish churches in New England would have insulated Edwards against the attacks of enthusiasm and separatism that he suffered repeatedly throughout the conflict.²²

Edwards's familiarity with Presbyterianism extended back to his earliest days as a supply preacher in New York, and he had experimented with hierarchical forms of church governance during the years leading up to the Northampton communion controversy. He had developed a robust correspondence with Scottish colleagues through his scheme to promote a concert of prayer several years later. Closer to home, Edwards maintained cordial relations with Robert Abercrombie and his Scottish parishioners in the neighboring town of Pelham; he had counseled Jonathan Dickinson, a leading Presbyterian clergyman from New Jersey and a powerful advocate of moderate revivalism; and he even preached at James

²¹ Daniel Giddings, church meeting minutes, Jan. 23, 1747, box 2, John Cleaveland Papers, 1742-1881, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass.; Alexander Blaikie, *A History of Presbyterianism in New England: Its Introduction, Growth, Decay, Revival and Present Mission* (Boston: Alexander Moore, 1881), 111-12. For a more detailed account of these events, see Douglas L. Winiarski, "The Newbury Prayer Bill Hoax: Devotion and Deception in New England's Era of Great Awakenings," *Massachusetts Historical Review* 14 (2012): 62-71. On the schisms in Chebacco and Exeter, see Christopher M. Jedrey, *The World of John Cleaveland: Family and Community in Eighteenth-Century New England* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1979), 46-57; and Douglas K. Fidler, "John Odlin of Exeter and the Threat to Congregational Peace and Order in Northern New England," *New Hampshire History* 55 (2000): 7-24. The fervently pro-revival Congregational church in Easton, Mass., also affiliated with the Londonderry Presbytery during the early 1750s. See J. M. Bumsted, "Presbyterianism in 18th Century Massachusetts: The Formation of a Church at Easton, 1752," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 46 (1968): 243-53.

²² Edwards to Erskine, July 5, 1750, 355. On Parsons's courtship with Jerusha Edwards, see Kenneth P. Minkema, "Hannah and Her Sisters: Sisterhood, Courtship, and Marriage in the Edwards Family in the Early Eighteenth Century," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 146 (1992): 48-49.

Moorehead's Presbyterian meetinghouse while visiting Boston only a few weeks before the second council. In combination with these earlier experiences, Edwards's visit to Newbury may briefly have revealed a pathway through the maze of contention and schism in Northampton.²³

By the spring of 1751, all of the parties in the conflict—the Dwight faction, the Northampton majority, the eastern ministers, and Edwards himself—seemed poised to break with their opponents rather than to seek compromise or accommodation. For this reason, the outcome of the second Northampton ecclesiastical council that convened on May 16 was anything but assured. Unlike the dismissal proceedings one year earlier, Edwards and Dwight packed their unilateral council with stalwart allies from across New England, including Robert Abercrombie, Peter Clark, David Hall, Thomas Prince, and Samuel Wigglesworth, as well as Joshua Eaton and David Goddard, two combative ministers from the neighboring Worcester County town of Leicester. The assembled ministers opened the council by sending invitations to the Northampton church committee in which they offered to engage in “friendly Conference” to resolve the dispute. The missives were promptly rejected. During the next two days, the council listened to the complaints of the aggrieved brethren, inquired into Edwards's various pastoral options, and carefully considered his conduct and the theological principles that he had advanced during the controversy. Then they rendered their judgment.²⁴

Reprinted below for the first time in nearly three centuries, the council's published *Result* was an extraordinary document. The assembled clergymen began by validating Edwards's church admission standards. The former Northampton minister may have altered his principles during the 1740s, the council asserted, but his new position on the qualifications for admission to the Lord's Supper were consistent with those of the “Reformed Churches in general” and did not differ “from the first Principles of the Church.” The ministers then proceeded to upbraid the Northampton townspeople for their unjust treatment of their esteemed pastor. The church had achieved their objective by dismissing Edwards through the “Works of the flesh”: “Revilings, Reproaches, Variance and Strife.” Acknowledging the grim prospect that Edwards would never regain his parishioners' confidence and good will, the council reluctantly advised him to walk through

²³ Kenneth P. Minkema, “Jonathan Edwards and the Heidelberg Catechism,” *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 5 (2013): 3-6; C. O. Parmenter, *History of Pelham, Mass., from 1738 to 1898, Including the Early History of Prescott* (Amherst, Mass.: Carpenter and Morehouse, 1898), 297-300; Bryan F. LeBeau, *Jonathan Dickinson and the Formative Years of American Presbyterianism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 136; Kimnach, “Appendix,” 738. On the Concert of Prayer and Edwards's developing relationship with Scottish clergymen, see Stephen J. Stein, “Editor's Introduction,” *WJE* 5:29-48; and Nicholas T. Batzig, “Edwards, McLaurin, and the Transatlantic Concert of Prayer,” in *Jonathan Edwards and Scotland*, ed. Kenneth P. Minkema, Adriaan C. Neele, and Kelly Van Andel (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2011), 77-87.

²⁴ *Boston Gazette*, June 11, 1751.

the “Door of Hope” that God had opened and accept the New England Company’s offer to serve the Stockbridge Indian mission.²⁵

The *Result* concluded with a set of highly irregular recommendations for Dwight and the aggrieved brethren. The ministers advised Edwards’s adherents to return to worship in the Northampton church only if they could “do it with a good Conscience.” To disaffected parishioners who were unwilling to make such an accommodation, the council encouraged them to seek an “orderly Dismission” or “occasional Communion with any Neighbour Churches as they shall think most for their Edification.” Indeed, the published *Result* made no attempt to resolve the differences between the minority and majority parties. Instead, the council members exhorted Dwight and his faction to continue pressing their case on Edwards’s qualifications for church membership and labor “with all Meekness to recover their Brethren” from doctrinal error. The *Result* culminated in a stunning endorsement of Dwight’s plan for a final separation. “And when it shall please God so to enlarge their Numbers and increase their Strength, as that they shall be enabled to support the publick Ministry by themselves,” the council concluded, the Dwight faction should “form into a distinct Society or Church founded upon the original Principle and Practice of the first Church of Christ in this Place, under the Influence and Direction of some other Church or Council as they shall see meet.”²⁶

Enter “Count Vavasor.” Two days after the council concluded their deliberations and offered their advice, the anonymous Northampton resident penned his scathing letter to Dwight. The purported author, John Baker, was a prominent church member who served on the committee that had blocked Edwards’s attempts to implement more restrictive church admission practices. His strange pseudonym may have alluded to the “King’s Vavasour,” a feudal title ranking just below that of a baron; or he may have been referring to the eminent English family that derived their name from that office.²⁷ Either way, Vavasor appears to have been mobilizing the forces of rank, tradition, and nobility to support his assault on Dwight and the council. Laced with ad hominem attacks and larded with obscure cultural references, Vavasor’s tirade provides a rare layman’s perspective on the state of affairs in Northampton. It is also an exceptional example of the kind of overblown, Grub Street-style gossip and vicious satire that increasingly dominated local politics in the colonies during the middle decades of the eighteenth century and especially in the wake of the Whitefieldian

²⁵ *Boston Gazette*, June 11, 1751.

²⁶ *Boston Gazette*, June 11, 1751.

²⁷ For the derivation of “Count Vavasor,” see the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “vavours” (hereafter *OED*); and Thomas Wotton, *The English Baronetage: Containing a Genealogical and Historical Account of All the English Baronets, Now Existing*, 5 vols. (London: Published by the Author, 1741), 2:130. On Baker, see Nelson M. Baker, *A Genealogy of the Descendants of Edward Baker of Lynn, Mass., 1630* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Journal Office, 1867), 12-13; Solomon Clark, *Historical Catalogue of the Northampton First Church, 1661-1891* (Northampton, Mass.: Gazette Publishing Co., 1891), 25; and Jonathan Edwards, “Narrative of the Communion Controversy,” *WJE* 12:520.

revivals. Vavator extoled the “Ever blessed” and “Celebrated” Solomon Stoddard, while castigating Edwards, his “Successor & Nepos,” for attempting to “Enterr” his grandfather “twenty years Since his demise.” “Yor Errand is insuperable,” Vavator sneered at the “Venerable Stars of the first Magnitude” that had gathered in Northampton. “The woods held a Council,” he concluded, and “brought forth a monster.”²⁸

Vavator’s cryptic postscript makes it unclear what specific “monster” he had in mind. And it is difficult to discern what, if any, impact his letter had on the controversy. It may have been the “paper filled with folly & nonsense” that Dwight forwarded to Edwards shortly after the dismissed minister moved to Stockbridge. But a more likely candidate is a curious editorial penned by the anonymous author “T. Separatist” that appeared in the *Boston Gazette* on July 2, 1751. Posing as a member of the New Light separatist movement, the author wrote to congratulate the council. “We are charm’d with the open and avowed Manner in which you have condemned that Church, which before you took in Hand, was looked upon in the Country a well regulated Church,” T. Separatist proclaimed with subversive glee. Ever since the Whitefieldian revivals, he and other radical dissenters had been struggling to “break the standing Churches to Pieces.” It had been their “known and established Maxim” to “foment and propagate Contentions and Strifes,” and thus the anonymous author noted “with Pleasure” that the council had advised Dwight and the aggrieved brethren to “maintain their Disputes with the Church of *Northampton*, and to keep up the Contention which has flung that Church into so much Confusion already.” T. Separatist took particular satisfaction with the provision of the *Result* that encouraged the Northampton minority to eventually form a “distinct Society.” And he relished the prospect of reminding his readers that separatists across New England had experienced the same “barbarous Treatment” as the Dwight faction had received at the hands of the Northampton majority. No one could have done more to advance their cause, he concluded. Convened at the request of Edwards and Dwight, the council and its published *Result* had succeeded admirably in conveying “many singular Advantages” to proponents of the “Separate Interest.”²⁹

Although Edwards abhorred religious enthusiasm and ecclesiastical disorder, he, too, contributed to the “Conflagration” by clinging doggedly to his principles and encouraging his adherents to continue the fight in his absence. “I beseech you not to patch up a mock reconciliation with the church,” he counseled Dwight during the winter of 1752, “accepting of something from them that is nothing but a mere sham.” Only “Christian satisfaction” would end the conflict. “And I desire you never would consent to the settlement of a minister that is of principles contrary to yours.” Secretly, Edwards hoped that the “small company that adhered to me” would eventually triumph over his former adversaries. “I

²⁸ Vavator to the Northampton Council, May 18, 1751. For examples of religious satire during the Whitefieldian revivals, see Winiarski, “Newbury Prayer Bill Hoax,” 75-76.

²⁹ Timothy Dwight to Jonathan Edwards, July 10, 1751, *WJE* 32; *Boston Gazette*, July 2, 1751.

believe there will be two societies” in Northampton, he prognosticated in his letter to Dwight. “Yours may be smallest at first, but if you are steadfast, and act prudently, I believe at last they will be the biggest and will get the meetinghouse.”³⁰

In the end, events did not unfold as Edwards had hoped. Dwight and the other members of the aggrieved faction made one final attempt at vindication. In a strident petition, the aggrieved brethren declared that the “rash and hot-headed” members of the Northampton majority had “prostituted and profaned” the “sacred ordinances of Christ,” sneered at their opponent’s attempts at accommodation, and defamed Edwards’s character. “When a church is so infected and corrupted in its very constitution with so fatal and incurable a disease,” Dwight proclaimed, “Zion’s friends” were entirely justified in withdrawing. Despite the strident claims of this final petition, members of the disaffected group eventually gave up their fight. Soon, many began trickling back into the Northampton meetinghouse—Dwight included. Ordained in 1754, Thomas Hooker, Edwards’s successor, eventually righted the Northampton ship and presided over an unusually successful and quiescent church for nearly a quarter of a century.³¹

Vavator’s tirade and T. Separatist’s editorial serve as important reminders that the Northampton communion controversy was much more than a dark chapter in Edwards’s biography or a mere prelude to his extraordinary years in Stockbridge. The broader ecclesiastical conflict that exploded in the wake of his dismissal was, instead, an ominous sign of things to come. What began with a debate over the qualifications for church membership erupted into a protracted print war and culminated in an anticouncil that sanctioned contention and schism. During the decades that followed, villages across western Massachusetts and all along the northern New England frontier were wracked by many of the same forces that had nearly torn the Northampton church apart: theological controversies, ministerial dismissals and vacancies, ceaseless and often fruitless church councils, and a rising tide of insurgent sectarian dissent. Vavator’s ecclesiastical monster of dissent, strife, and schism was as much the legacy of Edwards’s Northampton pastorate as were the theological contributions of the New Divinity connection of ministers who would one day bear his name.³²

³⁰ Vavator to the Northampton Council, May 18, 1751; Jonathan Edwards to Timothy Dwight, Feb. 27, 1752, *WJE* 16:448.

³¹ Dwight, “Petition of the Northampton Minority.”

³² On the ecclesiastical divisions that plagued established Congregational churches in western Massachusetts and elsewhere in New England during the second half of the eighteenth century, see Stephen A. Marini, *Radical Sects of Revolutionary New England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982); Gregory H. Nobles, *Divisions Throughout the Whole: Politics and Society in Hampshire County, Massachusetts, 1740–1775* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 75–106; Marini, “Religious Revolution in the District of Maine, 1780–1820,” in *Maine in the Early Republic: From Revolution to Statehood*, ed. Charles E. Clark, James S. Leamon, and Karen Bowden (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1988), 118–45; Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement of the Maine Frontier, 1760–1820* (Chapel Hill:

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Count Vavasor's letter is published with the permission of the Library of Congress. Transcriptions follow the expanded method described in Mary-Jo Kline, *A Guide to Documentary Editing*, 2d ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 157-58, 161-64, and Samuel Eliot Morison, "Care and Editing of Manuscripts," in *The Harvard Guide to American History*, ed. Frank Freidel, 2 vols., rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), 1:28-31. Conjectural readings and missing words appear in square brackets. The 1751 council result and editorial by "T. Separatist" appear as originally published in the *Boston Gazette* with minor corrections.

University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 123-53; John L. Brooke, "A Deacon's Orthodoxy: Religion, Class, and the Moral Economy of Shays's Rebellion," and Marini, "The Religious World of Daniel Shays," in *In Debt to Shays: The Bicentennial of an Agrarian Rebellion*, ed. Robert A. Gross, vol. 65, *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 205-277; David Jaffee, *People of the Wachusett: Greater New England in History & Memory, 1630-1860* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 139-46; Elizabeth Mancke, *The Fault Lines of Empire: Political Differentiation in Massachusetts and Nova Scotia, ca. 1760-1830*, *New World in the Atlantic World* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 109-37; and, most recently, Shelby M. Balik, *Rally the Scattered Believers: Northern New England's Religious Geography*, *Religion in North America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

NEW-ENGLAND, No. 1830.

THE
Boston Gazette,
 OR
Weekly JOURNAL

TUESDAY JUNE 11. 1751.

At a Council of Eight Churches—present by their Messengers, viz.

- | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| The South Church in Boston. | Mr. THOMAS PRINCE, Pastor. | Capt. Joseph Jackson, and Mr. Job Kestland, Messengers. |
| Third Church in Ipswich. | The PASTOR not well, absent. | Mr. Matthew Whipple, and Mr. Joseph Gannings, Messengers. |
| Second Church in Salem. | Mr. PETER CLARK, Pastor. | And Capt. Thomas Flint, Messenger. |
| First Church in Andover. | Mr. DAVID HALL, Pastor. | And Mr. Ebenezer Pierce, Messenger. |
| First Church in Reading. | Mr. WILLIAM HOSER, Pastor. | Capt. Roger Brown, and Mr. Seman Bourne, Messengers. |
| First Church in Leicester. | Mr. DAVID GODDARD, Pastor. | Mr. Rich. Southey, and Mr. Nathaniel Upham, Messengers. |
| First Church in Leitchfield. | Mr. JESSE HATTON, Pastor. | And Mr. John Webster, Messenger. |
| First Church in Colchester. | Mr. JOHN AINSWORTH, Pastor. | And Mr. John Gray, Messenger. |

CONVENED at Newmarket June 10. 1751.
 At the Desire by Letters published at the
 Request of the Brethren, to our former Council
 their Agreement with the Rev. Mr. Ed-
 wards in judging that some ought to be ad-
 mitted to full Communion in the Christian Church
 that he has been labouring to impose himself
 upon a People from whom he has been dis-
 tinctly separated; that this is agreeable to the original
 Constitution of their Church, which was never
 altered by any Vote of the Church, nor they
 expressly sworn from it; that the Rev. Mr.
 Edwards having been their faithful Pastor for
 many Years, whom the most of them think them-
 selves obliged to esteem and love as their spiri-
 tual Father; his Dissolution from them, mostly
 on the Account of said Principles very grievous
 to them, and has brought them into a divided
 State; namely desiring to continue under his
 Ministry, and that we would interpose there,
 if we should think it best, into a distinct Church,
 and appoint him Pastor over them; but if we
 should think this not expedient, then to direct
 them what to do in their extreme difficult
 Circumstances.—The Rev. Mr. Edwards also by
 Letters sent at the same Time to our several
 Churches, representing his complying with their
 Desire to be received with great Difficulty and
 Pain, and desiring the Opportunity to lay his
 own Case before us; to ask our Judgment of it;
 and expressing his Willingness to resign himself
 to this Affair in our Discretion.

By which it is suggested, that
 requires the highest Degree of Evidence
 in admitting Persons to the Table of
 the Lord; that he has acted a dishonest Part
 in imposing himself upon a People from whom
 he has been distinctly separated; and in
 ever pretending to rest in the
 Constitution of their Church, which was never
 altered by any Vote of the Church, nor they
 expressly sworn from it; that the Rev. Mr.
 Edwards having been their faithful Pastor for
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 own Case before us; to ask our Judgment of it;
 and expressing his Willingness to resign himself
 to this Affair in our Discretion.

After humble Application to the God of Light,
 Grace and Peace, in the Name of Christ, we pro-
 ceeded to enquire into their Differences; and in the
 Exercise of Justice and Christian Charity, first
 laboured to treat with the Church for a Reconcili-
 ation, by sending several Letters and Missives
 in the private Modesty and Composure of the
 Church, to call the Church together, that we might
 have a friendly Conference with them for this
 happy Purpose. But we are grieved to find them
 still irreconcilable, by refusing absolutely to
 call the Church together or enter into any Treaty
 with us, nor we offered to adjourn ourselves and
 treat only as a Number of Christian Brethren, deeply
 concerned for the Religion of their Peace and
 Union.

By which it is suggested, that
 requires the highest Degree of Evidence
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 the Lord; that he has acted a dishonest Part
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 own Case before us; to ask our Judgment of it;
 and expressing his Willingness to resign himself
 to this Affair in our Discretion.

Upon which our several Brethren full
 and before us the weighty and urgent Reasons of
 our Duty of Innocence and Settlement under
 Mr. Edwards; and then the Rev. Mr. Edwards
 laid before us the great Difficulties and Discon-
 veniences which lay in his Way to settle here
 as a Pastor; and his Encouragements here
 as a Minister of the Gospel on the other; which
 he presented to his Brethren he thought it his
 Duty to be obliged to do.

By which it is suggested, that
 requires the highest Degree of Evidence
 in admitting Persons to the Table of
 the Lord; that he has acted a dishonest Part
 in imposing himself upon a People from whom
 he has been distinctly separated; and in
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 them what to do in their extreme difficult
 Circumstances.—The Rev. Mr. Edwards also by
 Letters sent at the same Time to our several
 Churches, representing his complying with their
 Desire to be received with great Difficulty and
 Pain, and desiring the Opportunity to lay his
 own Case before us; to ask our Judgment of it;
 and expressing his Willingness to resign himself
 to this Affair in our Discretion.

By which it is suggested, that
 requires the highest Degree of Evidence
 in admitting Persons to the Table of
 the Lord; that he has acted a dishonest Part
 in imposing himself upon a People from whom
 he has been distinctly separated; and in
 ever pretending to rest in the
 Constitution of their Church, which was never
 altered by any Vote of the Church, nor they
 expressly sworn from it; that the Rev. Mr.
 Edwards having been their faithful Pastor for
 many Years, whom the most of them think them-
 selves obliged to esteem and love as their spiri-
 tual Father; his Dissolution from them, mostly
 on the Account of said Principles very grievous
 to them, and has brought them into a divided
 State; namely desiring to continue under his
 Ministry, and that we would interpose there,
 if we should think it best, into a distinct Church,
 and appoint him Pastor over them; but if we
 should think this not expedient, then to direct
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 own Case before us; to ask our Judgment of it;
 and expressing his Willingness to resign himself
 to this Affair in our Discretion.

II. We find that Mr. Edwards differing from
 our former Sentiments in Points of Qualification for
 a due Admission to the Table of the Lord, the
 said differing from the said Principles of the Church,
 was for this Reason only, dissuaded by the Advice
 of a Council that sit in June 1750, at least inter-
 mitted and contravened, nor with great Impe-
 riousness and Insuperability; which Dissolution we
 do so lament, as judging an awful Sign and
 bad Testimony.

By which it is suggested, that
 requires the highest Degree of Evidence
 in admitting Persons to the Table of
 the Lord; that he has acted a dishonest Part
 in imposing himself upon a People from whom
 he has been distinctly separated; and in
 ever pretending to rest in the
 Constitution of their Church, which was never
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 Edwards having been their faithful Pastor for
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 selves obliged to esteem and love as their spiri-
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 State; namely desiring to continue under his
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 if we should think it best, into a distinct Church,
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 Circumstances.—The Rev. Mr. Edwards also by
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 Desire to be received with great Difficulty and
 Pain, and desiring the Opportunity to lay his
 own Case before us; to ask our Judgment of it;
 and expressing his Willingness to resign himself
 to this Affair in our Discretion.

III. We find that Mr. Edwards since his Dis-

mission as well as before, has been loaded with Re-

proaches, and which we discovered in

Joseph Jackson,
 Job Kestland,
 Matthew Whipple,
 Joseph Gannings,
 Thomas Flint,
 Ebenezer Pierce,
 Benjamin Brown,
 Seman Bourne,
 Nathaniel Upham,
 John Webster,
 John Gray.

Attest.
 Wm. Hobby, Secy.

*Boston Gazette, June 11, 1751**At a Council of Eight Churches—present by their Messengers, viz.*

The South Church in <i>Boston</i> .	Mr. THOMAS PRINCE, Pastor.	Capt. <i>Joseph Jackson</i> , and Mr. <i>John Kneeland</i> , Messengers.
Third Church in <i>Ipswich</i> .	The PASTOR not well, absent	Mr. <i>Mathew Whipple</i> , and Mr. <i>Joseph Cummings</i> , Messengers
Second Church in <i>Salem</i> .	Mr. PETER CLARK, Pastor.	And Capt. <i>Thomas Flint</i> , Messenger.
First Church in <i>Sutton</i> .	Mr. DAVID HALL, Pastor.	And Mr. <i>Ebenezer Pierce</i> , Messenger.
First Church in <i>Reading</i> .	Mr. WILLIAM HOBBY, Pastor.	Capt. <i>Benj. Brown</i> , and Mr. <i>Samuel Bancroft</i> , Messengers.
First Church in <i>Leicester</i> .	Mr. DAVID GODDARD, Pastor.	Mr. <i>Rich. Southgate</i> , and Mr. <i>Nathaniel Upham</i> , Messengers.
Second Church in <i>Leicester</i> .	Mr. JOSHUA EATON, Pastor.	And Mr. <i>John Worster</i> , Messenger.
Church in <i>Pelham</i> .	Mr. ROB. ABERCROMBIE, Pastor.	And Mr. <i>John Gray</i> , Messenger. ³³

³³ For biographical information on the ministers who attended the council, Peter Clark (1694-1768), Joshua Eaton (1714-1772), David Goddard (1706-1753), William Hobby (1707-1765), Thomas Prince (1687-1758), and Samuel Wigglesworth (1689-1768), who was unable to make the trip due to illness, see *SHG*, 5:341-68, 406-12, 616-23, 7:530-37, 9:40-43, 533-38. I examine the career of Sutton minister David Hall (1704-1789) in "New Perspectives on the Northampton Communion Controversy I: David Hall's Diary and Letter to Edward Billing," *JES* 3 (2013): 268-280. For Robert Abercrombie (1711-1786), see Parmenter, *History of Pelham*, 294-319. Genealogical information on the lay delegates to the second council, Samuel Bancroft Jr. (1715-1782), Benjamin Brown (1702-1768), Joseph Cummings (b. 1713), Thomas Flint (1678-1757), John Gray (ca. 1700-1782), Joseph Jackson (1707-1790), John Kneeland (1694-1774), Ebenezer Pierce (1711-1805), Richard Southgate (1671-1758), Nathaniel Upham (b. 1715), Matthew Whipple (1685-1764), and John Worster (1700-1777), may be found in Frank D. Andrews, ed., *Family Record of Dea. Samuel Bancroft, 1715-1782, of Reading, Mass.* (Vineland, N.J.: Published by the Author, 1922); John Dennis Farwell, *The Farwell Family: A History of Henry Farwell and His Wife Olive (Welby) Farwell of Boston, England, and Concord and Chelmsford, Mass., 1605-1927, with Twelve Generations of their Descendants*, 2 vols. ([Orange, Tex.]: F. H. Farwell and F. B. Farwell, 1929), 1:86; George Mooar, comp., *The Cummings Memorial: A Genealogical History of the Descendants of Isaac Cummings, an Early Settler of Topsfield, Massachusetts* (New York: B. F. Cummings,

Convened at *Northampton May 16, 1751*, at the Desire by Letters missive of a *Number of the Brethren*, to our several Churches, presenting “their Agreement with the Rev. Mr. *Edwards* in judging that none ought to be admitted to full Communion in the Christian Church but such as make a credible Profession of real Christianity: that this is agreeable to the original Constitution of their Church, which was never altered by an Vote of the Church, tho’ they gradually swerved from it: that the Rev. Mr. *Edwards* having been their faithful Pastor for many Years, whom the most of them think themselves obliged to esteem and love as their spiritual Father; his Dismission from them meerly on the Account of said Principle is very grievous to them, and has brought them into a distressed State: earnestly desiring to continue under his Ministry, and that we would incorporate them, if we shou’d think it best, into a distinct Church, and appoint him Pastor over them; but if we should think this not expedient, then to direct them what to do in their extream difficult Circumstances.”³⁴ The Rev. Mr. *Edwards* also by Letters missive at the same Time to our several Churches, representing “his complying with their Desire to be attended with great Difficulty and Darkness, desiring the Opportunity to lay his own Case before us, to ask our Judgment of it, and expressing his Willingness to resign himself in this Affair to our Direction.”³⁵

After humble Application to the God of Light, Grace and Peace, in the Name of Christ, we proceeded to enquire into their Difficulties; and in the Exercise of Brotherly and Christian Charity, first laboured to treat with the Church for a *Reconciliation*, by sending several Letters and Messengers to the present Moderator and Committee of the Church, to call the Church together, that we might have a friendly Conference with them for this happy Purpose. But we are grieved to find them utterly irreconcilable, by refusing absolutely to call the Church together or enter into any Treaty with us, tho’ we offered to adjourn ourselves and treat only as a Number of Christian Brethren, deeply concerned for the Restoration of their Peace and Union. Upon which

1903), 36, 79; John Flint and John H. Stone, comp., *A Genealogical Register of the Descendants of Thomas Flint, of Salem* (Andover, Mass.: Warren F. Draper, 1860), 13; M. D. Raymond, *Gray Genealogy: Being a Genealogical Record and History of the Descendants of John Gray, of Beverly, Mass., and Also Including Sketches of Other Gray Families* (Tarrytown, N.Y.: Published by the Author, 1887), 150-151; Lawrence Park, *Joseph Badger (1708-1765) and a Descriptive List of Some of His Works* (Boston: University Press, 1918), 21-22; Stillman Foster Kneeland, *Seven Centuries in the Kneeland Family* (New York: Published by the Author, 1897), 52-55; Frederic Beech Pierce, *Pierce Genealogy: Being the Record of the Posterity of Thomas Pierce, an Early Inhabitant of Charlestown, and Afterwards Charlestown Village (Woburn), in New England* (Worcester, Mass.: Charles Hamilton, 1882), 47-48; “Brief Notice of Richard Southgate and His Family,” *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 19 (1865): 252-53; Charles H. Preston, “Genealogy of the Whipples of Ipswich for Five Generations,” *Putnam’s Monthly Historical Magazine Devoted to Genealogy, History, and Archaeology* 2 (1893-1894): 66; “Upham Genealogy,” *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 23 (1865): 35, 130; Sarah Alice Worcester, *The Descendants of Rev. William Worcester, with a Brief Notice of the Connecticut Wooster Family* (Boston: Hudson Printing Co., 1914), 12-13.

³⁴ Cf. “Northampton Minority to William Hobby,” n.d. [ca. April 1751].

³⁵ Cf. Edwards to Sewall and Prince, Apr. 10, 1751, 368-69.

the aggrieved Brethren first laid before us the weighty and urgent Reasons of their Desire of Incorporation and Settlement under Mr. *Edwards*; and then the Rev. Mr. *Edwards* laid before us the great Difficulties and Discouragements which lay in his Way to settle here on the one Hand, with his Encouragements both for *Stockbridge & Canaan* on the other; which he had all along told his Brethren he should with an upright Conscience be obliged to do.

And upon the whole, we find, judge and advise as follows.

I. We find by the Records of the Church, that it had at first it's Foundation laid in *Principles* agreeing with those of the Rev. Mr. *Edwards*: which Principles we judge agreeable to those of our Forefathers in particular, the Reformed Churches in general, and the Declaration of God's Holy Will as revealed in his Word; which Principles the Church also proceeded on for *above Forty Years*, and have never reversed or altered by any Vote of their own.

II. We find that Mr. *Edwards* differing from his former Sentiments in Point of Qualification for a due Admission to the Table of the Lord, tho' not differing from the first Principles of the Church, was for this Reason only, dismissed by the Advice of a Council that sat in *June 1750*, at least intentionally and constructively, tho' with great Impropriety and Irregularity: Which Dismission we desire to lament, as having an awful Aspect and fatal Tendency.

III. We find that Mr. *Edwards* since his Dismission as well as before, has been loaded with Reproaches both in Respect of his particular Tenet, and his moral Character: By which it is suggested, that he requires the highest Degrees of Evidence to real Godliness in his admitting Persons to the Table of the Lord; that he has acted a dishonest Part, in that he has been labouring to impose himself on a People from whom he has been dismiss'd, and in which Dismission he ever pretended to rest satisfied: Which Reproaches we find to be without Truth or Justice.

IV. We find that however ready Mr. *Edwards*'s Opposers are to heap Calumnies and Reproaches upon him, even in the Face of the Council; yet he is not suffered by them to vindicate himself against those Reproaches in the same publick Manner wherein he is accused: which we judge to be contrary not only to the Rules of the Gospel, but to the Law of Nature itself; which Calumnies they refuse to support, and we find to be groundless.

V. We find such an unhappy Temper prevailing in the first Church of *Northampton*, as shuts out all Prospect of an Accommodation between their late Rev. Pastor and them.

In Consideration of all which, we think ourselves obliged to bare our Testimony in Favour of Mr. *Edwards*'s *Principles, Character and Conduct*, as also against the Treatment he has met with from those he is separated from.

As to Mr. *Edwards*'s *Principles*—We think them unanswerably justified by the Word of God, as appears by his *Treatise* lately published; that they are the Voice of the Reformed Churches in general, as appears by *Langley, Baxter, Watts*, and a Cloud of Witnesses:³⁶ Nor can

³⁶ The council's assertion appears to be based upon Thomas Foxcroft, "An Appendix," in Jonathan Edwards, *An Humble Inquiry into the Rules of the Word of God, Concerning the Qualifications Requisite to a Compleat Standing and Full Communion in the Visible Christian Church* (Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1749), *WJE* 12:326-48.

we see that there is any great Difference between the Rev. Mr. *Edwards* and the Rev. Mr. *Williams* of *Lebanon*: Mr. *Williams* allowing, as in Page 5 of his Answer to Mr. *Edwards*, “That the Church ought to admit none to their holy Communion in special Ordinances or the outward Priviledges of the Covenant of Grace but *visible Saints*; and *this Visibility* must be such as to a Judgment of Rational Charity makes them appear *as real Saints*.”³⁷ And if, as the Rev. Mr. *Williams* suggests, the Controversy between him and the Rev. Mr. *Edwards* turns upon *the Evidence of Saintsship*; we are so far from apprehending that Mr. *Edwards* insists upon the *highest* Evidence, that we think he admits the *lowest*; as appears not only by his Principles now laid before us, and by his *Preface* to his *Farewel-Sermon* containing *two Draughts* or *Forms* of Accommodation, and an *Extract of a Letter* sent to the Rev. Mr. *Clark* read before the former Council, but also by his *Treatise* published on the controverted Point; and the *Extract of his Lecture-Sermon* preached before his Dismission.³⁸

In Respect of his *Character* we need not greatly enlarge; the Gentlemen of the former Council that advised his Dismission, having “recommended him as a person eminently qualified for the Work of the Ministry”³⁹—Shall therefore only add, that on Account of his Sincerity and Uprightness, his Learning and Piety, his Labours & Usefulness, his Praise is deservedly in all the Churches: And however great Pains have been taken to asperse him both at Home and Abroad; yet it appears evident to us, that his Conduct is of a Piece with itself, and agreeable to the Word of God, shewing forth much of Integrity and Openness, Candor and Generosity, Meekness and Longsuffering; that being reviled he reviled not again,⁴⁰ & that with much Patience he endured the Contradiction of his Opposers.

However, while we bare our Testimony against the Principle upon which Mr. *Edwards* was dismiss’d, as what tends to the Apostacy of the Churches, the Destruction of vital Piety, and all just Distinction between *the Church* and *the World*, as also against that Alienation of Affection in the Church from their Pastor, grounded thereupon, which arose to such an hight as earnestly to seek his Dismission, and which has discover’d itself in Revilings, Reproaches, Variance and Strife, those Works of the Flesh which are manifest;⁴¹ yet inasmuch as there remains but small Prospect of Mr. *Edwards*’s Usefulness in this Place, and it has pleased God to open a Door of Hope that he may be eminently useful elsewhere; We therefore, tho’ with Grief of Heart, judge it not adviseable for Mr. *Edwards* to continue here at present: And tho’ we dare

³⁷ Solomon Williams, *The True State of the Question Concerning the Qualifications Necessary to Lawful Communion in the Christian Sacraments* (Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1751), 5.

³⁸ Jonathan Edwards, *A Farewel-Sermon Preached at the First Precinct in Northampton* (Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1751), *WJE*, 25:488-93; Edwards, *Humble Inquiry*; Edwards, “Lectures on the Qualifications for Full Communion in the Church of Christ,” *WJE*, 25:349-440.

³⁹ Cf. *Result of a Council of Nine Churches*, 5.

⁴⁰ Cf. 1 Pet. 2:23.

⁴¹ Cf. Gal. 5:19.

not say that 'tis the Voice of God—Depart to the *Heathen*;⁴² yet we cannot but think him peculiarly qualified for the Service of God, in Christianizing *them*, as well as for Service in *any Christian Churches*.

And now, in as much as a Number of *aggrieved Brethren* have desired our Advice in Case it shou'd not be thought expedient to incorporate them and install their late Pastor over them in particular; We advise them so far as they can do it with a good Conscience, to hold Communion with the Church; still bearing their Testimony against the controverted Point maintain'd by the Church, and endeavouring with all Meekness to recover their Brethren from it: And when it shall please God so to enlarge their Numbers and increase their Strength, as that they shall be enable to support the publick Ministry by themselves; Then that they form into a distinct Society or Church founded upon the original Principle and Practice of the first Church of Christ in this Place, under the Influence and Direction of some other Church or Council as they shall see meet. And with Respect to such as cannot with a good Conscience communicate with the first Church at *Northampton*; We advise them either to seek orderly Dismission therefrom, or hold occasional Communion with any Neighbor Churches as they think most for their Edification; and we advise such Churches to receive them, as Christ also hath received them.

And now heartily commending the Rev. Mr. *Edwards* to the Grace of God; and with earnest Prayers that God's Presence may be with him, and that he wou'd crown him with abundant Success wherever he goes, as also that God wou'd smile on the Endeavours of the Church for resettling the Gospel Ministry and Ordinances in their Purity; We wou'd intreat our Brethren of the first Church at *Northampton* to hearken to the Call of God in his frowning Providence upon them; and wou'd with Meekness and Love earnestly advise them to humble themselves under the mighty Hand of God upon them, to look into their own Hearts & Ways, and by fervent Prayer to cry to God that he also wou'd search and try them, know their Hearts and Reins, discover to them what is amiss in them, and lead them in the Way everlasting.⁴³ And so with our earnest Prayers to God, that he would pour out his Spirit upon all this People—a Spirit of Truth and Holiness, Peace and Kindness; that they may be enabled to forgive one another as Christ also hath forgiven us, and to forbear one another in Love, that all may be of the same Mind which was in Christ Jesus, and glorify God with one Heart and with one Mouth; We subscribe

Your affectionate Brethren,

<i>Joseph Jackson,</i>	Tho. Prince, <i>Mod.</i>
<i>John Kneeland,</i>	Peter Clark,
<i>Matthew Whipple,</i>	David Hall,

⁴² Cf. Lam. 4:15.

⁴³ Cf. Ps. 139:23-24.

Joseph Cumings, Wm. Hobby, Scr.
Thomas Flint, David Goddard,
Ebenezer Peirce, Joshua Eaton,
Benjamin Brown, Rob. Abercombie
Samuel Bancroft,
Nathan Upham, Attest.
John Worster, Wm. Hobby, Scr.
John Gray.

Count Vavasor to the Northampton Council, May 18, 1751

To the Venerable Elders resident, at N-Hampton,

When you Set out from your families & Charge of your Sheep & Lambs you left your boniform⁴⁴ powers to Gratifie a juris-consult⁴⁵ & Son of a Tapster⁴⁶ the firebrand & ringleader of A few benighted Witlings better qualified to be employed in dragging Garbage to tygers & Monsters than to trouble you Venerable Stars of the First Magnitude To Ascend Mount Coy. Venerable Gentlemen If I had my Martial Cassock⁴⁷ with a Sacerdotal Ephod⁴⁸ I would have given you my Salute; but well knowing your Errand being So Superficial & well understanding the Criterion of the Church of Said Town being Calculated for good Doctrine uniform & Established by the Celebrated Stoddard of Ever blessed Memory a wise Casuist & builder, & had the repute & honor to ware the Garland⁴⁹ for fifty Years. Know than Gentlemen that inasmuch as Mr. Edwards his Successor & Nepos⁵⁰ hath undertaken to interr him twenty years Since his demise has put

⁴⁴ “Having the form of good,” “akin to the Good,” or a “faculty by which moral goodness is appreciated” (*OED*).

⁴⁵ “One learned in law,” a jurist, or a “master of jurisprudence” (*OED*).

⁴⁶ A person who “draws the beer” for “customers in a public house,” or the “keeper of a tavern” (*OED*).

⁴⁷ A “cloak or long coat worn by some soldiers,” especially horsemen, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (*OED*).

⁴⁸ A “typical priestly garment” symbolic of “clerical influence” (*OED*).

⁴⁹ According to the *London Encyclopædia: Or, Universal Dictionary of Science, Art, Literature, and Practical Mechanics*, 22 vols. (London: Thomas Tegg, 1829), 9:758, this phrase often was used “figuratively as expressive of esteem and value,” most notably in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*.

⁵⁰ Typically a nephew but, in this case, Stoddard’s grandson (*OED*).

this Church in a Conflagration & the flame too vehement. Your Errand is insuperable
Without you Can Unite Opposites which I Know is not in your Skill. You may Yam their
Shael⁵¹ & fill your truncks with indian Meal Suppain & boniclapper &c.⁵²

Count Vavator

P.S. The woods held a Council & brought forth A monster.

5th Month 18th day 1751

[*On reverse*] To The Venerable Council Setting At Northampton
Ego curo incipsum at stadius Equum⁵³

[*Written in a later hand*] Old Baker

⁵¹ Read “eat their shell.”

⁵² Bonny-clabber, called “*loppert* or *lappert*” in Scotland, refers to milk that is “naturally clotted or coagulated on souring” (*OED*). Baker undoubtedly intended this last sentence as a slur. Cf. early New England explorer William Wood’s comparison between Indian foodways and “Irish Boniclapper,” quoted in Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians & English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 162.

⁵³ The meaning of this odd phrase is unclear, as Baker had only a passing familiarity with Latin. It may more properly read “ego curo in ipsum ut stultus equus,” or “I am taking care against himself like a stupid horse.” I thank Walter Stevenson for suggesting this translation.

NEW ENGLAND, No. 1623.
 THE
Boston Gazette,
 OR
Weekly JOURNAL.
 TUESDAY JULY 2 1754

To the late Council convened at
 Newport, May 16. 1753.

GENTLEMEN,

Having had the Satisfaction of reading your Reply, published in the Boston Gazette, I should look upon my self very ungrateful not to manifest the just Opposition I entertain you my former Thanks for the same you have done me, and the Party as which I believe known in this Country by the Name of *Methodists*. You can't but be sensible what a *Glorious* and *Useful* Cause we are engaged in, and how necessary it is to preserve the standing Churches in Town, which have too long enjoyed Peace; and that from our Country's being loaded with so many *Preachers*, People begin really to look upon us as a *Scandal* to Religion, and understanding the very Foundation of all Order and Discipline in these Churches. And also it was my earnest wish, and we must have been filled with terrible Apprehensions of having laboured in vain, had you not stepped in at the critical Conjunction, and by your Advice to the approved System of *Non-Resistance* (which never was proposed, revived or longed for) for we can't but now stand our first thro' the Authority of your Advice, we shall be suffered to go on quietly in the Profession of our beloved *Religion*; and that soon will have the Blessing or Impediment by which we shall be soon able to proceed to think that we shall be soon able to increase you with Accounts of our having divided and broken up many Churches, upon which we could before make no Impression. — But had you should be in England as not to let the great Father you have done us, and the High Priests you have justly merited from us, I shall be the Condition of such, how low will your Reply agree with the Methods we have conducted taken in every part of our Design; and hope that I shall be able to your numerous Humours, evince that you have very much refined upon our Scheme, and given us new Advantages. — It would be needless to inform that it is our constant Method to declaim against the Principles and Practices of such Churches as we design to divide and break to Pieces, as Things of most dangerous and destructive Tendency. — And herein your Method is perfectly harmonious with yours, and we never go further than with Pleasure we find you have done, when speaking of the Principles of *Non-Resistance* Church, upon which Mr. Edwards was dissenting, and say that it is what tends to the Apostacy of the Churches and Destruction of vital Piety, &c. and whilst we are charmed with the open and avowed Manner in which you have condemned that Church, which before you took in Hand, was looked upon in the Country as the most corrupted Church; we think, to think that we have been so cowardly as to give our own Confession against Churches, but by Heavens! had you thought their too, chiefly of our own Party, had we should be treated with the same Names of *Blasphemers* and *Rebels*. For we can never imagine our selves on this Footing, that you had any regard to respect the Affairs of that Church, and we have their Principles and Conduct, then we have it you see, that you were only loaded by a Number of *Aggravated* Evils, and we have much to say in a Number of *disaffected* and *unapproved* Brethren to insist in where he goes, but we will not the Confession which our positions are upon. It is some Satisfaction to reflect, that the Authority of the noble Example you have set us, will direct our Feet for the future, so it focuses us from the Imposition of *Slandering* or *Reviling*, in our most Solemn Declarations against the Principles and Conduct of such Churches as we shall endeavour hereafter to break to Pieces. — We thank you for the valuable Preface, and shall be ambitious of adding fully up to the Example. And as it is known and established Maxim with us, to dissent and propagate Controversies & Schemes, where we go, so it is with Pleasure we find you have advised, if we understand you, the aggrieved Brethren, for such I am ambitious of calling them, to maintain their Disputes with the Church of *Non-Resistance*, and to keep up the Contention which has sprung that Church into its most Confusion already; and herein your Advice perfectly agrees

with the Advice we constantly give to the dissenting Brethren where we go, and have found by long Experience, the best Method to accomplish that you set in their View, is to increase their Number and Strength, so as to be able to form into a *disaffected* Society; we can't but hope, that this Method is advantageous to our Interest, will by being adopted by you, be accounted feasible, and that we shall be delivered from the Reproaches and Revilings of unopposable Men, which we have long suffered, for going into it. — Nor are we a little pleased, at the other Method which you advise the application of *Resistance*, viz. To hold Communion with the Church, until their *Number and Strength* are increased, so as to be able to form into a *disaffected* Society (this I take to be the Purpose of your Advice) for *fastly* many singular Advantages will arise to the Separates issued there, from such a Position; in how much better Situation will they be, to withstand the Methods of the Church in getting reconciled, and may they not carry on their Disputes to better Advantage, and will they not be more likely to draw of Numbers to their Party than, though they should at present be separated. And have we not thankfully acknowledge, that you have put a new Advantage into our Hands. By this Piece of Advice, I mean, furnished us with a Preface that will vindicate us in giving the same: For I must confess we have heretofore been fearful about advising our Friends to such a Method, lest those who are always watching for Advantages against us, might have taken Occasion to Reproach us with acting a *contradictory* and *divided* Part in advising them to break off from the Communion of a Church, when their Numbers were increased, for Whom we supposed might with a good Conscience hold Communion with it, for you know that People are fond of changing Contradictions upon us, and in that Way labour to render us *contradictory*. — But as we enter our Objections, that by your Advice, which will do us no Discredit, the Methods of *Resistance* and *Non-Resistance* will be clear. — We shall cheerfully come into the Scheme, and expect many singular Advantages will arise to the Separates issued therefrom. — I can't further mentioning another peculiar Advantage your Reply has been to me and my Brethren. You have unobscurely been acquainted how extremely we have been ridiculed and reproached of by *Opposers* for the Liberty we take to introduce into our Disputes, and insist chiefly upon Subjects foreign from our Texts and notwithstanding the forcible Arguments we have used to vindicate such a Method, as *absolutely* calculated to furnish with Matters, a Method that gave a noble Scope to the Imagination, and gave us Opportunity to bring many new Truths to Light, which would otherwise have lain in Obscurity. Yet I fear that we should have always suffered in our Credit and Reputation on this Account, had it not been for your Reply; and I can assure you, that it gave us no small Joy to find that the Method for which we have been so unmercifully battered, has in great an *Audacity* as that of your Reply to support. — I can't conclude my Letter without heartily sympathizing with you on Account of the great Neglect you complain you were treated with by the Church of *Non-Resistance*. Such barbarous Treatment have we many Times, to our great Mortification met with, and People have shewn it sufficient to lay in their Justification — That we might have foreseen to intermeddle where we had no business, but as we never judged this a sufficient Excuse, we are glad to see that you have discovered your Infirmities at such Conjunction; and your being the World that the Church of *Non-Resistance* are vitally irreconcilable, &c. because they refused to enter into any Treaty with you, and that they were really *offending*, *Reprobates*, *Vindictive* and *Evil*, tho' they never gave you Opportunity to look into their Case, was the least you could wish *Propriety* and *Decency* for on such an Occasion. — We having, we trust, taken us into your Protection, from our great Obligations to you, I make no doubt but that we shall cheerfully resign our selves to your Discretion. I add not, but that I am,
 Your most obliged Friend,
 And very humble Servant,
 T. SEPAPATHY.

M A D R I D, April 22.

MR. KINGS, Envoy Extraordinary from the King of Great Britain, had on the 19th his Audience with His Majesty's Quality of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of His Britannick Majesty, in which he delivered his Credentials to the King, and met with a most gracious Reception. His Excellency has since had many Conferences with the Ministry, concerning a new important Negotiation which is said to be on the Tap.

An Extract of a Letter from the H. A. O. N. E. dated April 20.

Our last Advice from Madrid imports, that nothing is more talk'd than what has been published in some foreign Papers concerning the extraordinary Diligence made Use of in all the Ports of Spain to put the naval Force of his Catholic Majesty upon a formidable Footing; when there is really nothing more in what is doing, than Endeavour to re-establish in some Degree their Marine, which was almost totally ruin'd, by building only to many Men of War as are indispensably necessary for protecting their Commerce, and giving a Check to the Piracies of the Corsairs of Barbary. The same Advice adds, that the Court, whose Views are absolutely pacific, and between whom and the Court of Great Britain a perfect Harmony is established, has now no Need of an extraordinary naval Force; that the King applies himself solely to whatever may contribute to the Happiness of his Subjects, and to make his Kingdom flourish, and takes such wise Measures to accomplish this End, that he can scarcely fill in his Duties, and this already manifestly appears by the Progress which has herein quickly made in the Manufacture and Cultivation of Land in the Kingdom, and the Conveniences which Foreigners now find in Spain.

L O N D O N.

April 4. Yesterday the Body of Capt. Thomas Coates, who with great Industry and long Solicitation procured the Charter for the Foundling Hospital, was, according to his Request, interred in the Vault under the Chapel of that Hospital. The Charter of the Hospital was carried before the Body on a Velvet Cushion, the Children of the Hospital walking before it, and at the Gate of the Hospital the Corps was met by the Governour. The Pall was supported by Peter Barrell, Joseph Fartherop, and John Milner, Esqrs. Mr. Joseph Hankey, Paul Jordrel, Samuel Clarke, Stephen Beckingham, and Samuel Gibson, Esqrs. and a great Number of the Governours followed the Body in deep Mourning to the Chapel, where they were met by the Gentlemen of the several Choles of St. Paul and Westminster, who performed a solemn Service composed by Dr. Boscawen. The Governour Scam and Alar were put in Mourning, and a great Number of Persons of Distinction were present on this Occasion, to do the last Offices to a Person whose Memory deserves so well the publick Regard. And we hear there is to be a Monument erected for him in the Hospital, to transmit so posterity the Services he did to, that excellent Charity; but the Charity was at no Expence on this Occasion.

'Tis said that his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales has given Orders for all the late Prince's domestick servants to be allow'd their Salaries till they can be otherwise provided for.

On Sunday Night, at the Prince of Wales's Funeral, a Man was so terribly crazed betwix the Abbey-Door, endeavouring to get in, that he died the next Day.

BOSTON

Boston Gazette, July 2, 1751

To the late Council convened at *Northampton*, May 16, 1751.

GENTLEMEN,

Having had the Satisfaction of reading your *Result*, published in the *Boston Gazette*, I should look upon myself very ungrateful not to embrace the first Opportunity to return you my sincerest Thanks for the Favour you have done me, and the Party to which I belong, known in the Country by the Name of *Separates*. You can't but be sensible what a Clamour has been raised against us, for our laudible Endeavours to break the standing Churches to Pieces, which have too long enjoyed Peace; and that from our Conduct's being loaded with so many Reproaches, People began really to look upon us as Enemies to Religion, and undermining the very Foundation of all Order and Discipline in their Churches. And alas, it was too apparent that our Interest was sinking, and we must have soon been filled with terrible Apprehensions of having laboured in vain, had you not stepp'd in at the critical Conjunction, and by your Advice to the aggrieved Brethren of *Northampton*: (Advice never eno' to be praised,) revived our sinking Hopes; for we can't but flatter ourselves that from the Authority of your Advice, we shall be suffered to go on quietly in that Prosecution of our beloved Scheme; and that none will have the Boldness or Impudence to Attack us any more: And are pleased to think that we shall be soon able to favour you with Accounts of our having divided and broken to Pieces many Churches, upon which we could before make no Impression.

But least any should be so stupid as not to see the great Favour you have done us, and the high Praises you have justly merited from us, I will for the Conviction of such, shew how well your Result agrees with the Methods we have constantly taken to carry on our Designs; and hope that I shall be able to your immortal Honour, to evince that you have very much refined upon our Scheme, and given us new Advantages. It would be needless to inform that it is our constant Method to declaim against the Principles and Practices of such Churches as we design to divide and break to Pieces, as Things of most dangerous and destructive Tendency. And herein our Method is perfectly harmonious with yours, and we never go further than with Pleasure we find you have done, when speaking of the Principle of *N-ampton* Church, upon which Mr. *Edwards* was dismiss'd, and say, that it is what tends to the Apostacy of the Churches, the Destruction of vital Piety, &c. and whilst we are charm'd with the open and avowed Manner in which you have condemned that Church, which before you took in Hand, was looked upon in the Country a well regulated Church; we blush to think that we have been so cowardly as to give out our Censures against Churches, but by Halves and amongst those two, chiefly of our own Party, least we should be branded with the odious Names of Slanderers and Revilers. For we can never vindicate ourselves on this Footing, that you had a greater Right to inspect the Affairs of that Church, and to censure their Principles and Conduct, than we have: For we find that you were only invited by a Number of aggrieved Brethren, and we have almost constantly a Number of disaffected and aggrieved Brethren to invite us where we go. But amidst all the Confusion which our pusillanimity gives us, it is some Satisfaction to Reflect, that the Authority of the noble Example

you have set us, will dispel our Fears for the future, as it secures us from the Imputation of Slandering or Reviling, in our most sanguine Declamations against the Principles and Conduct of such Churches as we shall endeavour hereafter to break to Pieces.

We thank you for the valuable President,⁵⁴ and shall be ambitious of acting fully up to the Example. And as it is a known and established Maxim with us, to foment and propagate Contentions & Strifes, where we go; so it is with Pleasure we find you have advised, if we understand you, the aggrieved Brethren, for such I am ambitious of calling them, to maintain their Disputes with the Church of *Northampton*, and to keep up the Contention which has flung that Church into so much Confusion already; and herein your Advice perfectly agrees with the Advice we constantly give to the disaffected Brethren where we go, and have found by long Experience, the best Method to accomplish the End you set in their View, to increase their Number and Strength, so as to be able to form into a distinct Society; we can't but hope, that this Method so advantageous to our Interest, will by being adopted by you, be accounted laudible, and that we shall be delivered from the Reproaches & Revilings of unreasonable Men, which we have long suffered, for going into it. Nor are we a little pleased, at the other Method which you advise the aggrieved Brethren to, *viz.* To hold Communion with the Church, until their *Number and Strength* are so increased, as to be able to form into a distinct Society (this I take to be the Purport of your Advice) for surely many singular Advantages will arise to the Separate Interest there, from such a Projection: In how much better Situation will they be, to counteract the Methods of the Church in getting resetled; and may they not carry on their Disputes to better Advantage, and will they not be more likely to draw off Numbers to their Party then, though they should at present be separated. And here we thankfully acknowledge, that you have put a new Advantage into our Hands, By this Piece of Advice, I mean, furnished us with a President that will vindicate us in giving the same: For I must confess we have heretofore been fearful about advising our Friends to such a Method, least those who are always watching for Advantages against us, might have taken Occasion to Reproach us with acting a contradictory and absurd Part in advising those to break off from the Communion of a Church, when their Numbers were increased, &c. Whom we supposed might with a good Consciences hold Communion with it, for you know that People are fond of charging Contradictions upon us, and in that Way labour to render us contemptible.

But as we flatter ourselves, that by your Example, which none will dare to dispute, the Mouths of Cavellers and Gainsayers will be shut.

We shall chearfully come into the Scheme, and expect many singular Advantages will arise to the separate Interest herefrom. I can't forbear mentioning another peculiar Advantage your *Result* has been to me and my Brethren.

You have undoubtedly been acquainted how unreasonably we have been ridicul'd and reproached by *Opposers*, for the Liberty we take to introduce into our Discourses, and insist chiefly upon Subjects foreign from our Texts: and notwithstanding the forcible Arguments we

⁵⁴ Read "precedent."

have used to vindicate such a Method, as happily calculated to furnish with Matter, a Method that gave a noble Scope to the Invention, and gave us Opportunity to bring many new Truths to Light, which would otherwise have lain in Obscurity, Yet I fear that we should have always suffered in our Credit and Reputation on this Account, had it not been for your Result; and I can assure you, that it gave us no small Joy to find that the Method for which we have been so unmercifully banter'd,⁵⁵ has so great an Authority as that of your Result to support.

I can't conclude my Letter without heartily sympathizing with you on Account of the great Neglect you complain you were treated with by the Church of *Northampton*. Such barbarous Treatment have we, many Times, to our great Mortification met with, and People have tho't it sufficient to say in their Justification—That we might have foreborn to intermeddle where we had no Business. But as we never judged this a sufficient Excuse, so we are glad to see that you have discovered your just Resentments at such Conduct: and your telling the World that the Church of *Northampton* are utterly irreconcilable, &c. because they refused to enter into any Treaty with you; and that they were guilty of Revilings, Reproaches, Variance and Strife, tho' they never gave you Opportunity to look into their Case, was the least you could with Propriety and Decency say on such an Occasion.

You having, we trust, taken us into your Protection, from our great Obligations to you, I make no doubt but that we shall chearfully resign ourselves to your Direction.

I add not, but that I am,
Your most obliged Friend,
And very humble Servant,
 T. SEPARATIST.

⁵⁵ To “ridicule” or “make jest of” (*OED*).

