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THE MYSTERY HID FROM AGES AND GENERATIONS, OR THE
SALVATION OF ALL MEN: THE GROWTH OF OPTIMISM
IN NEW ENGLAND PURITANISM, 1745 TO 1763

By

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B.A., University of Montana, 1967

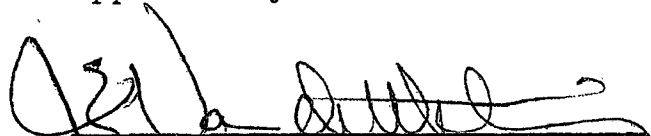
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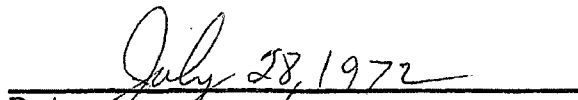
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

New England Puritanism, as a derivative of Calvinism, was not by nature optimistic, but pessimistic. The promises of Christianity belonged only to the elect, or to a small portion of mankind, chosen by God prior to the creation of the world. Puritans viewed life on earth as merely a trial, after which those worthy ones would enter into the Kingdom of God. The majority of mankind, however, corrupted by original sin and outside God's benefices, were damned to eternal perdition. God predetermined election and damnation absolutely, without regard to man's earthly activity, as the guilt of original sin tainted the elect and the damned equally. This pessimistic theological view developed within the scholastic conception of man and the universe. God, the absolute sovereign, actively participated in the daily workings of the universe; He controlled and moved the heavens, and ordered all events upon the earth. Man's trial was only one part of this divine plan, not for the glorification of man, but of God. This view clouded man and nature in the same pessimistic morass.

By 1760, changes within the New England Puritan order created a new role for man in God's scheme, and posited a more optimistic religion. Significantly, man no longer viewed himself only as a passive agent; he now accepted an active role in the determination of his future state, and was unwilling to leave that decision totally in the hands of God. Optimistic Puritanism, like traditional Puritanism, rejected man's free will, but instead modified God's control over man. The demands that God judge man reasonably tempered the absolute sovereignty of God and increased man's own function. Other fundamental Puritan tenets required similar re-interpretation for this changed attitude to occur. Joseph Bellamy, as well as other New Divinity leaders¹, described the presence of sin in the world as a blessing, or a benefit, creating greater good for man, and not merely his damnation. In this interpretation, the nature of sin had not changed, it was still as hateful to God; however, through sin, God displayed His divine purposes in the best possible means and elevated the general level of holiness and happiness in the world. Further, election, released from dependence upon predesti-

¹The New Divinity clergymen consisted of students and followers of Jonathan Edwards. These enlightened divines were to dominate New England theology in the last half of the eighteenth century. They occupied the majority of the Puritan pulpits, and in 1795 assumed leadership over Yale College. Infra, p. 175.

nation, became less restrictive, encompassing "all men" through a general redemptive call. Taken together, these changes within the doctrines of the sovereignty of God, original sin, and the redemption of Christ moderated the negative nature of Puritanism without severing connection with the Calvinist tradition.

These changes in New England theology were not unique, but were part of a general response to the influences of the Enlightenment. Primarily a secular movement involving a revolution in science and psychology, the prevalent attitude of the eighteenth century emphasized man's reason and confidence in his ability to comprehend the workings of nature. In response to this new intellectual mood, Puritanism underwent profound redefinition in order to become compatible with the age. New England Puritanism, more conservative than other Puritan religious bodies, resisted this redefinition, but following the Great Awakening duplicated those changes that had occurred in England and in other Calvinist countries. Optimism, as a pervading religious attitude, developed from this redefinition of Puritan principles upon a firm reasonable basis.

In 1689, John Locke wrote An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, describing a reasonable theory of the nature of knowledge, that, like Newtonian physics, was based upon inductive or empirical proof.² Post-Reformation scholas-

ticism taught that man's knowledge expanded by deductive, or syllogistic reasoning, which demanded that man held universal statements innately. Locke denied that man could have innate knowledge, because in the process of learning, one did not discover that which he already knew. Man derived all knowledge through observation and experience.³ As innate knowledge was not possible, there could be no innate laws or universal statements, imprinted upon man's original nature. Locke stated that these laws were natural, merely hidden from man's understanding because of his original ignorance.⁴ Even the idea of God, the most natural discovery that man made, was not an innate idea, but one uncovered by human reason.

We have an intuitive knowledge of our existence and a demonstrative knowledge of God; of the existence of anything else, we have no other but a sensitive knowledge, which extends not beyond our senses.⁵

Thus, Locke described a unity in man's acquisition of knowledge that rejected the scholastic separation of modes and faculties. Reason, imagination, will, and emotion were

²John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1961), in two volumes. Locke wrote the Essay in 1689, but all copies of the first edition were dated 1690.

³Ibid., I, p. 77.

⁴Ibid., I, p. 35.

⁵Ibid., II, pp. 157-158.

not separate processes of the mind, but conformed to the same process of inductive reasoning. With all knowledge accessible through sensation, Locke removed the mysteries that had surrounded man's comprehension of nature and accentuated the role of human experience and the dignity of the mind and senses.

In 1695, John Locke directly attacked the tradition of the English Church in The Reasonableness of Christianity, utilizing this change in epistemology. Locke pleaded for toleration for the dissenters, or Non-Conformists, that the Act of Uniformity in 1662 had denied them.⁶ He searched the scriptures and found that Christ had reduced the commandments of the church to but one article of faith. He commanded men only to believe in Him as the Messiah.

This was all the doctrine they [the scriptures] proposed to be believed; for what they taught, as well as our Savior contained a great deal more; but that concerned practice and not belief.⁷

⁶The Act of Uniformity revised the English Book of Common Prayer, required episcopal ordination (excluded Puritan "presbyterian" ordination) and reserved the celebration and administration of the Lord's Supper only to those so ordained. The Act, a reaction to Cromwell's Puritan rule of England, was a part of the restoration of the Stuart monarchy. The clergy were forced to subscribe explicitly to the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England; those who refused were "dissenters" or "Non-Conformists." Norman Sykes, From Sheldon to Seeker, Aspects of English Church History (Cambridge, England: At the University Press, 1959), pp. 5, and p. 69.

⁷John Locke, The Works of John Locke, vol. VII: The

Locke argued that men had exceeded the biblical demands by restricting church membership, and hence entrance into the Kingdom of God. The Bible required simply belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Following the Newtonian revolution in science, men began to argue the merits of natural religion over revelation, or whether man can best understand God through His works; i. e., the universe and natural law, or through His word in the scriptures. In scholasticism, no disparity existed, but with the new science verifying a mechanistic cosmos, some theologians favored proofs demonstrable by natural law and reason rather than biblical ones. Locke rejected any difference between natural and revealed religion, as both were reasonable and could not conflict. In a like manner, he argued that the doctrinal differences between Conformists and Non-Conformists were traditional, rather than fundamental. He denied that tradition could establish any essential doctrine of the church. "Nobody can add to these fundamental articles of faith; nor make any other necessary, but what God Himself hath made, and declared to be so."⁸ Locke urged the elimination of all

Reasonableness of Christianity (Aachen, Germany, Scientia Verlag, 1963), p. 51.

⁸Ibid., p. 115.

church dogma that was not strictly scriptural; the realization of this simple faith, he felt, would end all doctrinal controversy and intolerance. Man's senses could judge the fundamental nature of these articles of faith in the same manner that his senses revealed natural law.

Locke's writings lent support to a loosely organized group of divines within the Church of England, known as Latitudinarians. Both Locke and these "liberal" theologians opposed enthusiasm and blind traditionalism, and sought, by eliminating doctrinal questions, "to preserve Christianity while adjusting it to the rational [reasonable], scientific temper."⁹

The firstfruit of Locke for most people was not the scepticism latent in his epistemology; it was his own faith in a rational [reasonable] religion, his commonsense revolt against the 'mysteries' accompanied, however, by his belief that Christianity could be both simple and clear.¹⁰

Latitudinarian liberalism appeared in England as early as 1650, influenced by the Dutch Remonstrants (Arminians)¹¹,

⁹Roland N. Stromberg, Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth Century England (London, England: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 20.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 18.

¹¹Arminians followed the teachings of Jacobus Arminius who was condemned at the Synod of Dort in 1618. They contradicted traditional Calvinist positions by denying predestination and by teaching free will acting in concert with free grace.

but at the end of the century, one feature seemed to dominate their demands: a plea for toleration for the dissenters, or broad based membership of the church. The opposition to such a move by the Puritan element of the church was a matter of course. Any move to broaden church membership led to further corruption of the Visible Church, through the influx of the baser, more impure elements of society. Toleration was antithetical to Puritan principles, as the Visible Church must approximate the Invisible Church (the elect Kingdom of God) as closely as possible. The Puritans who came to America in the 1620's and 1630's left England because they abhorred toleration. They sought to establish the perfect Christian community, the community of the elect, and through this experience, purify the church.¹²

Latitudinarians made no such restrictions regarding church membership; they considered all who confessed adherence to the Apostle's Creed as full members.¹³ Their preference for the Apostle's Creed indicated a desire to accommodate both Puritans and liberals within the framework

¹²Perry Miller, Errand into the Wilderness (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1956), pp. 4-5.

¹³Norman Sykes, Church and State in England in the XVIII Century (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1962), p. 22, and p. 257.

of the English Church. The Act of Uniformity, in the Second Prayer Book, had replaced the Apostle's Creed with the Athanasian one.¹⁴ These men of Latitude favored the former primarily because it offered a much simpler statement of doctrine than did the one incorrectly attributed to St. Athanasius. In their attempts to make theology reasonable, they generally followed Locke by reducing church doctrine to essentials, in order to minimize conflicts which tended toward heresy.

Their attempt to simplify the foundation of the church and thereby to give it a broader base and greater unity had the opposite effect. The Athanasian Creed postulated a triune God with no part superior, while the Apostle's Creed indicated that Christ's position in the trinity was subservient to that of the Father. Instead of drawing dissenting factions back within the Church of England, the emphasis upon the Apostle's Creed rekindled the Arian heresy that the Council of Constantinople had settled in 381. Instead of quieting doctrinal questions, the

¹⁴James Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), vol. 4, p. 242. The Athanasian Creed, falsely attributed to St. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria (c. 375), was formulated in the fourth century to oppose the Arian heresy that had originated in the Eastern Church. The other Christian creeds are the Nicene and the Apostle's; the Roman Catholic adhered to the former and Protestant Churches generally adhered to the latter, because of its simple doctrine and connection with the early church.

Latitudinarians opened further conflicts, and threw English theology into turmoil throughout the first half of the eighteenth century.

Latitudinarianism did not move into heretical positions unknowingly. John Tillotson, Edward Stillingfleet, and Simon Patrick--typical leaders of these Latitudinarians in the eighteenth century--corresponded with the Dutch Remonstrant, Philip van Limborch.¹⁵ Ralph Cudworth, a Cambridge Platonist, wrote Limborch in 1674 that the English Church,

just as in Noah's ark were all sorts of animals, are all kinds of Protestants: Calvinists, Remonstrants, and I believe even Socinians, all dwelling here, united with no apparent discord in one and the same communion.¹⁶

The dissenting Arian movement grew out of this seventeenth century diversity, but was more directly a result of the Latitudinarian preference for the Apostle's creed. The

¹⁵Philip van Limborch, a leading Arminian theologian, held a professorship at the Remonstrant college at Amsterdam from 1668 until his death in 1712. His most important works included A Compleat System or Body of Divinity (1686) and A History of the Inquisition (1692). Samuel Macauley Jackson, editor, The Schraff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1959), vol. 6, p. 490. Norman Sykes states that the Dutch Arminians and the Cambridge Platonists shared similar aims and a vigorous correspondence from 1667 to 1687. Sykes, From Sheldon to Seeker, pp. 142-143.

¹⁶Sykes, From Sheldon to Seeker, p. 146. Sykes states that "the line dividing the Cambridge Platonists and their Latitudinarian successors is devious and difficult to draw. Their relationship indeed was one of filiation."

actual heresy originated with Dr. Samuel Clarke's Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity, published in 1712. Clarke, obviously influenced by John Locke, demonstrated the necessity of Christian principles conforming with reason.¹⁷ Clarke did not deny the divinity of Christ, but felt that both the scriptures and common sense taught that the Son was subordinate to the Father. He demonstrated the contrariety of the trinity expressed in the Athanasian Creed to that in the Bible. Clarke's chief opponent, Daniel Waterland, defended the orthodox position on the trinity. Their controversy climaxed in 1719, at the Salter's Hall Synod, with the split between Presbyterians and Independents over the trinity. Of the English dissenters, the Presbyterians, who followed Dr. Clarke, became identified with liberty of opinion and laxity of church doctrine.¹⁸

By mid-century, the division within the English Church was greater than at the Revolutionary Settlement of 1689. Between 1730 and 1750, all the major doctrines of the Christian Church came under scrutiny, resulting in the realization that all of them were not purely scriptural.¹⁹ The Arian controversy in England during the eighteenth

¹⁷J. Hay Colligan, The Arian Movement in England (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1913), pp. 33-34.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 94.

century differed substantially from that of the fourth century. The promoters of Arianism intended to liberate theology from predestination and election by reasonably interpreting the scriptures and extending the Protestant principle of private judgment.²⁰ Latitudinarianism had challenged traditional Puritanism, and found the latter wanting in the eighteenth century.

These changes that took place in science, psychology, and religion did effect New England theology, although Puritanism there exhibited greater solidarity than in England. For over a century, reliance upon the covenant or federal theory of theology dominated New England Puritanism. The covenant was the basis both of church polity and of social theory; God covenanted individually with the regenerate person (the covenant of grace) and with the societal group as a whole. According to Perry Miller, "God settles the social terms with a band of men, which thereupon becomes committed, as a political entity, to a specifically enunciated political program."²¹ Rigid Calvinism had demanded absolute and predetermined election, but the Puritan covenant system tempered this rigidity through this

²⁰Ibid., p. 146.

²¹Perry Miller, The New England Mind; From Colony to Province (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953), p. 21.

societal or national covenant. Man's preparation for salvation, or endeavoring to perfect external behavior, could not gain his personal salvation, but did fulfill the national terms of the covenant. Because even the elect had no definite assurance of their future state, this interpretation gave a unity of purpose to society and impeded the splintering into separate groups and competing interests. "All men could be called upon to prepare themselves, and so to exert themselves toward exactly that obedience required by the nation's covenant."²² Preparation, operating without the experience of saving grace, resulted from human volition; man turned towards God and through this voluntary act, obtained an awareness of his helpless and hopeless condition.²³

Roland Stromberg, in discussing the widespread acceptance and approval of Newtonian science stated:

By 1721 Cotton Mather of Massachusetts had accepted the new science as Christianity's handmaiden on behalf of what was surely the Western world's most conservative religious body.²⁴

Stromberg correctly assessed the conservatism of New Eng-

²²Ibid., p. 56.

²³Edmund S. Morgan, Visible Saints; The History of a Puritan Idea (New York: New York University Press, 1963), pp. 68-69.

²⁴Stromberg, Religious Liberalism, p. 22.

land theology, but underestimated the extent that theologians there had adopted Lockean and Newtonian thought. Perry Miller noted that in 1700 Cotton Mather published Reasonable Religion, and followed with tracts entitled Reason Satisfied and Faith Established and A Man of Reason; Experience Mayhew in 1720 wrote A Discourse Shewing that God Dealeth with Men as Reasonable Creatures; and Benjamin Coleman announced as well that God Deals with us as Reasonable Creatures in 1723. Further, the sermons of Joseph Sewall, Thomas Prince, and Thomas Foxcroft "burgeoned with similar tributes to the charm of reason."²⁵ These principle Boston clerics had sought to incorporate the Lockean and Newtonian emphasis upon reason within the spirit of the church.

New England divines, while conceiving the world order in Aristotelian terms, never completely made their theology dependent upon scholastic science. For the most part, the shift to Newtonian physics created no great change in their formal system of ideas.²⁶ They merely adopted the Newtonian world order, and utilized it in exactly the same manner to confirm their theological propositions, and to defend the New England covenant system.

²⁵Miller, The New England Mind, p. 417.

²⁶Ibid., p. 439.

Miller stated that these so-called Matherian conservatives had learned to accept, "willingly or unwillingly, an array of ideas simply incompatible with their federalism."²⁷

For at least a quarter century, New England Puritans made no attempt to reconcile the tension between the new science and the rigidity of covenant theology. New England Puritanism had not experienced any major conflict like the Puritan Revolution in England. As a consequence, rigid doctrinal groupings had not developed, so that the Latitudinarian controversy had made much less of an impact. Not until the Great Awakening, from 1739 to 1745, did the church undergo widespread schism, and allow Latitudinarian principles to disrupt the New England system.

Jonathan Edwards, in the following excerpt from a sermon that he delivered in 1741 at New Haven, described the spirit of the Great Awakening that had just swept through New England.

The Spirit that is at work, takes off person's minds from the vanities of the world, and engages them in a deep concern about eternal happiness...It awakens men's consciences, and makes them sensible of the dreadfulness of God's anger, and causes in them a great desire and earnest care and endeavor to obtain his favor.²⁸

²⁷Ibid., p. 460.

²⁸Jonathan Edwards, "The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God," The Works of President Edwards, Sereno Dwight, editor (New York: Leavitt & Allen, 1854), p. 546.

This spirit of experiential religion emphasized renewal, or the regeneration of the purity of the Apostolic Church. This spirit awakened within the sinner both the understanding of the depth and enormity of his sin, and the emotional beauty of God and His divine plan. The revival uncovered man's depravity, rather than optimistic promises of universal salvation; yet, as Edwards noted, the spirit of renewal awakened a general concern for salvation above concerns of this world. This reformation emphasized piety and the personal relationship of man to God through the conversion experience. The Great Awakening signalled the end of a long process of depersonalization of religion that had accelerated in the early part of the eighteenth century, and had removed the vital spirit from Christianity.²⁹

The reform of the Great Awakening, like all religious reformations, was no simple process. Man cannot easily turn to a different spirit or ideal, when he is tied to a particular institutional framework. And the Puritan

²⁹Edwin Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (New York: Harpers & Brothers, 1957), p. 13. Gaustad cites the Saybrook Platform of 1707/8, as the beginnings of the movement away from pietism towards rigidity and formalism. C. C. Goen, Revivalism and Separatism in New England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 3, describes similar declension in New England Puritanism with the beginnings of separation between Massachusetts and Connecticut churches dating from the Saybrook Platform.

Church, as a social association had to operate institutionally. Reform can seek the simple spirituality of early Christianity, as the New England Puritans did during the Great Awakening, but expressing that spirituality within an institutional framework frustrates that simple ideal. The reformation of the Great Awakening, then, consisted of two separate, but not necessarily antagonistic, processes. The first related directly to the spirit of renewal, or the individual "reform" of Christianity. This process, as in the case of millennial reform, looks to an ideal spirituality in the future, rather than in the past.³⁰ The spirit of renewal, with its emphasis upon personal piety and moral purity, was institutionally careless, and in truth could not be completely institutionalized. Renewal led to the second phase of reform, or to "re-form" the institution of the Church to incorporate the spirit of renewal or the individualized reform. Institutionalized reform was more traditional, and as a consequence, thwarted the full impact of renewal.³¹

³⁰For discussion of the Puritan historical view, see Willam C. Eamon, "Kingdom and Church in New England, Puritan Eschatology from John Cotton to Jonathan Edwards," (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Montana, 1970), pp. 4-7, and passim.

³¹For further discussion of "reform ideas" see Gerhard Ladner, The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), Jeffrey Burton Russell,

New England Puritanism, through the Great Awakening, had experienced the first phase of reform prior to 1745. The reform after 1745 was institutional, concerned less with revival, than with incorporating that spiritual reform within a doctrinal framework. The revivalists, especially the enthusiastic lay preachers during the Awakening, had attacked the unconverted clergy and created division within the church structure over questions of enthusiasm and itineracy. Exacerbation of these conflicts led to schism, or separation within the Puritan Church by 1742, and led ultimately to the development of three doctrinal groupings.³² This schism was the result of the attempt to recapture or renew the spontaneity of pietism, or religion of the heart³³; the doctrinal separations that followed were the workings of the institutionalization of that piety. In the context of this second phase of reformation, Puritan-

A History of Medieval Christianity, Prophecy and Order (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968), and Samuel H. Miller and G. Ernest Wright, editors, Ecumenical Dialogue at Harvard (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 330-343. Each of these authors dealt with the tension in Christianity that causes a continual process of reformation, either of the individual or of the institution. Each employed different terminology to describe this tension: Ladner contrasted "renewal and reform," The Ecumenical Dialogue, "reform and re-form" and Russell, the antagonistic processes of "prophecy and order."

³²Infra, p. 32.

³³Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England, p. 16.

ism fully severed its reliance upon scholastic rationalism in favor of the reasonable epistemology of the eighteenth century. The repudiation of scholasticism, along with this reform of order, changed the relationship between God and man, and created a new Puritanism, markedly different from that held before the Great Awakening.

CHAPTER II

THE DOCTRINES OF GLORIOUS GRACE, UNFOLDED, DEFENDED,

AND PRACTICALLY IMPROVED: THE ARMINIAN

CHALLENGE TO THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Optimistic Puritanism, a phenomena of the 1760's, came not as a denial of Puritan principles, but was the natural outgrowth of a reasonable religion, immersed in eighteenth century natural law and order. Traditionally, Puritanism, a pessimistic creed, exhibited optimism, or the promise of a better world, only for those whom God had predestined to salvation, and only in life after death. The majority of mankind, depraved and corrupted by original sin, deserved and received eternal damnation. Essential to this pessimistic scheme was the federal or covenant theology, which established a parallel between sin's entrance into the world and man's deliverance from that sin. God covenanted twice with mankind's federal heads: first with Adam in the covenant of works, and second with His son Jesus Christ in the covenant of grace. Sin entered the world by one man, Adam, just as salvation entered by the adherence of one man to the moral law, Christ, or the second Adam.

As Adam was the root of sin, death, and condemnation to all his natural seed, so Christ is the root of holiness, righteousness, and life to his spiritual seed.¹

Traditional Puritanism depended upon the doctrine of original sin, or the belief that all mankind shared the sin of Adam through imputation, which made man naturally corrupt and sinful, incapable of performing good works. Correlated to the doctrine of original sin were the doctrines of predestination and redemption by free grace. Predestination required God's perfect foreknowledge of Adam's fall prior to creation. Consequently, God, through His absolute grace, chose some men to salvation, and damned the majority of mankind, although the same pollution of sin tinged the elect as it did the damned. In this conception of God the sovereign, the absolute ruler, no other power in the world limited His judgment or will.

Doctrinally, this view had changed very little since the early seventeenth century; however, conditions by the mid-eighteenth century had changed drastically. In America, the clerical leadership had avoided fundamental doctrinal changes to a greater degree than in any other Calvinist country. New England orthodoxy institu-

¹Isacc Chandler, The Doctrines of Glorious Grace, Unfolded, Defended, and Practically Improved (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1744), p. 9.

ted changes, like the Half-Way Covenant and Stoddardism², to preserve and maintain their social control, and to increase membership, but these were institutional or ceremonial changes. Voluntarism³ increased man's volition in preparation for salvation, but retained covenant theology and the sovereignty of God. Thus New England Puritanism, without incorporating any vital doctrinal changes, occupied a unique and unstable position in the eighteenth century. New England theologians had not harmonized covenant theology and the new science; they avoided conflict between the scholastic theological system and Lockean and Newtonian thought because of the clerical solidarity in New England. No major challenge to this unity had occurred prior to the Great Awakening in the 1740's. When that disruption did occur, the English heretical ideas infected New England and the attack upon Puritan orthodoxy there began.

The schism in American Puritanism created by the Great Awakening was not initially a doctrinal split, for

²The Half-Way Covenant allowed baptism for children whose parents had received baptism, but had not experienced conversion. The Synod of 1662 in Massachusetts extended the criteria of the external covenant so that the third generation Puritans were not excluded from the Church. Stoddardism, begun in the Connecticut Valley by Solomon Stoddard, extended participation in the Lord's Supper as well.

³Supra, pp. 12-13.

in the revival, churches separated over the spirit of renewal and fear of an unconverted ministry, and not over theological positions. As early as 1742, the midpoint in the revival, the Boston clergy had divided into pro-revival new lights and anti-revival old lights over whether or not the revival was the "work of God."⁴ Charles Chauncy, one of the first of the Boston clerics to oppose the revival, did so over questions of itineracy and enthusiasm, and not theology.⁷ In 1742-1743, Chauncy in Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion and Jonathan Edwards in Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival in New England clashed over the nature of the revival and of true religion. Chauncy claimed that an enlightened mind, and not affections (emotions) judged truth through "reasonable solicitude," not "censoriousness, separations, itinerants, and frenzies."⁶ The revival, according to Chauncy, was not the work of God, but in fact, the work of the

⁴C. C. Goen, Revivalism and Separatism, pp. 31-33, and 36-39. Goen states that the concern of the clergy over the evangelical issues exceeded that of doctrinal differences at the onset of separation. Immediately after 1743, separatist protest concentrated on the standard of church membership.

⁵Clifford K. Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates: Biographical Sketches of those who Attended Harvard College (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1958), vol. 6, p. 444.

⁶Perry Miller, Jonathan Edwards (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1949), p. 176.

Devil. This debate exacerbated the differences between pro-revival and anti-revival clergymen and led to a wider schism. The spirit of renewal and questions regarding the "works of God" created the first significant chink in New England theological solidarity. The ministry no longer presented a united front against doctrinal errors; now they would have to come to grips with religious changes that had occurred throughout the Protestant world.

In the period after 1745, three doctrinal groups emerged from the revival experience and became clearly discernible: radical new lights who tended towards Antinomianism, liberal old lights who tended towards Arminianism, and a middle group of pro-revivalists who avoided either heresy and sought to re-interpret Calvinism and make it compatible with the new age.⁷ The history of New

⁷Goen, Revivalism and Separatism, p. 34n. Alan Heimert, Religion and the American Mind (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), states "there were in substance only two parties on the American religious scene in the period after the Great Awakening. Generally speaking one consisted of the opponents of the revival, and the other of its advocates...." (p. 3.) Further, he states that these groups represented either "reason." or "piety." While it is true that there could be no middle ground over the revival experience, one either supported or opposed it, the moderate leaders themselves felt their median position. Jonathan Edwards in Religious Affections and Joseph Bellamy in True Religion Delineated saw the religious reformation endangered by the activities of the radical new lights as well as the opposition from the lib-

England Puritanism from 1745 to 1763, unveiled a reformation of order, and institutional "re-forming" of the Puritan Church to incorporate the spirit of renewal. Such a reformation dealt with those questions that had been unimportant or ignored during the revival, and led ultimately to a redefined Puritanism. This second phase of the reformation had two major goals: to incorporate renewal into the institutional structure of the church, and to re-establish New England theological solidarity. As a consequence, clergymen turned their attention to those questions, raised by the Enlightenment, of human liberty and natural law, and to the English heresies. The conflicts that developed led to a new theology, doctrinally tied to the earlier New England Puritanism, yet conformed to the changing American experience at the end of the colonial period.

Immediately following the Awakening, the differentiation of these groupings began. The first to fall out was, quite naturally, the old light liberals who tended toward Arminianism. These were primarily anti-revivalists who opposed experiential religion, and after

eral old lights. Thus, from the standpoint of the continuing reformation after 1745, three clearly discernible doctrinal groups developed. Two of these groups supported the revival, and the moderate group represented a balance between "piety" and "reason," denigrating neither.

the schism, adopted the Latitudinarian attitudes that invaded New England. Essentially, the problem after 1745 was the same that had confronted the revivalists, as well as those during the sixteenth century Reformation: "What must I do to be saved?" However, Newtonian science and Lockean epistemology created a new framework for its answer; the elevation of human reason caused man in the eighteenth century to doubt that the answer rested in the sovereignty of God completely. English Latitudinarians had stimulated similar disturbances in the half-century prior to the Awakening and had laid the foundation for this attack upon Puritan orthodoxy.

In America, Arminianism had already infected the clergy of the Church of England, especially the missionary wing of the church, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG). The Church of England, at the time of the English Reformation, had only nominally accepted the doctrines of Calvinism, and in the eighteenth century, many in the church recanted these tenets. Anglican Arminianism taught universal salvation, free will acting in harmony with free grace, and had denied absolute predestination and original sin.⁸ This

⁸Sir Leslie Stephen, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, inc., 1962), a reprint of the 1876 edition in

blatant denial of Puritan dogma indicated the denigration of the workings of God and the elevation of man's own part in the affair of salvation. The emphasis upon human reason and free will negated the very basis for experiential religion which demanded man's passivity in the actual process of salvation; man prepared himself to receive the workings of God, but this preparation did not insure that he would be saved. Thus, the doctrine proposed by these Anglicans offered a greater challenge than the elevation of works over grace. The emphasis of "reason" over "piety" challenged the whole process of revival and religion of the heart. Puritan resistance in the period after the Great Awakening became more vital than in the period preceeding it, because of the schism. In this second phase of the reform the Puritan clergy discovered that a retreat to the traditional interpretations of the Bible was no longer an adequate response to doctrinal attacks.

The conflict between Anglican and Puritan clergymen predated the Awakening by at least two decades, intensifying after the revolt to Anglicanism by Samuel Johnson, Timothy Cutler, and several of their Yale col-

two volumes. Stephen provides a good survey of the Latitudinarian influences upon the Church of England. For a more recent monograph, see Norman Sykes, From Sheldon to Seeker.

leagues in the 1720's.⁹ The opposition that followed the Yale apostasy centered on church form and practice, rather than upon doctrine. In the specific debate between John Beach and Jonathan Dickinson that began in the 1730's, one can discern two separate phases. Only in the second phase that followed the Great Awakening and matched the reform of order, did Beach and Dickinson include doctrinal questions in their debate.¹⁰ John Beach opened this phase in 1745 with a sermon entitled Eternal Life is God's Free Gift. This sermon embodied the heretical writings of Daniel Whitby and Thomas Chubb, two prominent English Latitudinarians, and threatened the workings of the revival.

⁹Samuel Johnson, Samuel Johnson, President of Kings College: His Career and Writings, vol. 1: Autobiography and Letters, edited by Herbert and Carol Schneider (New York: 1929), p. 13.

¹⁰Jonathan Dickinson, The Vanities of Human Institutions in the Worship of God (New York: John Peter Zenger, 1736), and John Beach, A Vindication of the Worship of God, According to the Church of England from the Aspersion Cast upon it (New York: William Bradford, 1736). The Presbyterian, Jonathan Dickinson, accused the Anglican Church of denying the Reformation and turning to Romish practices, specifically with its liturgy which demonstrated man's vanity in worship. (p. 8.) The Anglican, John Beach, responded that they placed no "religion" in institutional ceremonies such as the liturgy, but were merely means of placing "order" in worship. (p. 13.) The fear of the Puritans, as expressed by Dickinson, resulted from the apparent rejection of the sixteenth century Reformation by the Anglicans; this natural antagonism existed throughout the Colonial period.

John Beach had not defected from orthodoxy with the initial group in 1722, but belonged to the second wave of Anglican converts. As an undergraduate at Yale College, he came under the influence of Samuel Johnson, his tutor, but upon graduation in the year of the apostasy, he remained within the Puritan fold. Beach stayed in close association with Johnson for nearly a decade before he actually converted. He entered the ministry at the Congregational Church in Stratford, Connecticut, where Johnson served as an Anglican missionary. In 1724, Beach moved to Newton, Connecticut, as minister of the Congregational Church there. His close friendship with Johnson eventually led to conflict between Beach and his congregation. In 1732, convinced that he had strayed, Beach's congregation voted his removal because of his "defection to episcopacy."¹¹ Following his dismissal, he journeyed to England and received Anglican ordination and commission as a SPG missionary. In September of that same year, Beach returned to Newton and established an Anglican Church there, and later another one in Redding, Connecticut.¹²

¹¹Franklin B. Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale with Annals of the College History (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1885), p. 240.

¹¹Ibid., p. 240.

In 1745, before the congregation in Newton, Beach preached Eternal Life is God's Free Gift, using as his text Romans 6:23.¹³ He asserted the concert of free will and free grace, a position that Puritanism traditionally denied. Beach argued that in fact there was no contradiction: man's salvation "began, continued, and ended by the infinite mercy and free grace of God."¹⁴ Therefore, without grace, man could not effect his own salvation through good works, and the action of his will. Beach merely expanded God's free grace, so that it was not confined to an elect number of saints, but "comprehends the race of Adam."¹⁵ The crux of this scheme of salvation hinged upon conditional grace and not absolute grace. Damnation occurred not from a lack of grace, but the failure of man to improve the grace that God gave. "...everyone of us Christians belong to the election of God's free grace; yet notwithstanding, we shall perish, if we don't walk worthy of God's electing love."¹⁶ Also,

¹³"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

¹⁴John Beach, A Sermon Shewing that Eternal Life is God's Free Gift, Bestowed upon Men according to their Moral Behavior and that Free Grace and Free Will Concur in the Affair of Man's Salvation (Newport: Printed by the Widow Franklin, 1745), p. 5.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 13-14.

man's conversion "is of grace; and if we remain wicked, it is because we abuse grace, when we could do otherwise."¹⁷ In advocating the doctrine of conditional election, Beach denied Puritan irresistible grace and predestination. Puritans stipulated that grace was irresistible, or that God's elect could not refuse His saving grace. Beach countered that if grace were irresistible, then man could not avoid salvation, whereas free grace allowed a choice. Man could work with God and gain salvation, or he could turn and work against God's plan and receive damnation.¹⁸ Free will placed the responsibility for salvation or damnation upon the individual; irresistible grace placed the responsibility upon God.¹⁹ If man did not have free will, then the blame for sin reflected back to God, for:

if we did sin by necessity, our consciences would never reproach us for any wickedness; nor could we be justly punished, by God or man for crimes that we could not avoid.²⁰

Beach's synthesis of free will and free grace, if

¹⁷Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁹Arminians, following the example of Daniel Whitby, argued that the Puritan scheme of redemption and original sin placed the blame for sin upon God and not man. They reasoned that if man were not a moral agent, and some other power determined their actions, then they acted necessarily and without free choice. The blame for sin, then, belonged to the cause, or author of sin, and not to the bound agent.

²⁰Beach, Eternal Life is God's Free Gift, pp. 22-23.

allowed, would disrupt the entire Puritan scheme, specifically the covenant or federal relationship of Adam and Christ. Universal redemption and universal free grace, as proposed by Beach, limited God's sovereignty. If the Puritans conceded either doctrine, then man's will and not God's sovereignty determined election. Thus, in this scheme of salvation, the Arminians viewed God's authority as subservient to man's will and human liberty. Beach argued that man must have grace, and that grace preceded any workings of man's will, but man's will made the final determination whether the individual received salvation or damnation.

Soon after Beach wrote this pamphlet, Samuel Johnson joined in the attack upon Puritan orthodoxy. Now the two "ablest defenders of the Church [Anglican] in the colonies combined against the Calvinist view of redemption."²¹ Johnson was one of the oldest and most prominent dissenters in America; when he published his Letter From Aristocles to Authades, he had actively opposed Puritanism for nearly three decades.²² Johnson had re-

²¹Dexter, Biographical Sketches, p. 240.

²²The same year as Johnson's graduation from Yale College, 1714, the college library received the Dummer Collection which included books by John Locke, Isaac Newton, Daniel Whitby, Isaac Barrow, and John Tillotson, "however, few had any curiosity to consult these fine writers

mained after his graduation at Yale as a tutor from 1716 to 1719, the same years that the English heretical ideas infected his doctrinal view. After journeying to England in 1722, and receiving ordination as a SPG missionary, he returned to Connecticut as minister of the Anglican Church at Stratford in 1723.²³ Johnson remained at Stratford until April 15, 1754, when he became the first president of Kings College (now Columbia University).²⁴

Johnson anonymously entered the debate in 1745 with A Letter From Aristocles to Authades, Concerning the Sovereignty and Promises of God. Johnson's presence greatly improved the position of Beach, and gave the Anglicans greater persuasiveness. His careful reasoning complemented the hot tempered rhetoric of Beach.²⁵ Sam-

except Messrs. Cutler, Eliot, Hart, Whittelsey, Wethmore, Browne, and he [Johnson]. Johnson, Autobiography and Letters, p. 7. Most of the individuals Johnson listed journeyed to England in 1722, and received Anglican ordination. The English clerics warmly received the defectors, and included with ordination an honorary D.D. for Rector Timothy Cutler, and a M.A. for Johnson. Later, in 1743, Oxford University honored Johnson with a D.D.

²³Ibid., p. 13. The situation at Stratford was unique, as approximately thirty families, recently arrived from England, petitioned the SPG for a minister. This procedure lacked precedence in Connecticut, and released Johnson from proselytization in establishing a congregation.

²⁴William B. Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, vol. 4: Episcopalianism (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969), p. 55.

²⁵Throughout the controversy Beach resorted to vin-

uel Johnson claimed that the doctrine of absolute sovereignty contradicted the attributes and nature of God as the moral governor of the world, and established God as a judge, and not as an absolute sovereign. He argued that the Puritan doctrine placed God's creatures under a "necessity of being good or bad, and leaves no room for either virtue or vice, praise or blame, reward or punishment"²⁶ He felt, therefore, that theologians must distinguish between God the benefactor, the bestower of talents and favors upon man, and God the judge, the arbiter of man's use of those talents and favors.²⁷

Johnson granted that God exercised His decrees absolutely and personally, but man's life was only temporary and probationary. Therefore, he contended, an absolute disposition previously made, or predestination, could not decide the condition of men, but rather God decided according to the improvement and use that the in-

dictive attacks upon the Puritan clergy; e.g., "Thus by your stupid interpretation of Holy Scripture...you have presented [our blessed savior] as being of the same malicious spirit and temper with infernal spirits, who rejoice in man's wickedness and damnation." John Beach, God's Sovereignty and His Universal Love to the Souls of Men Reconciled (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1747), p. 12.

²⁶Samuel Johnson, A Letter From Aristocles to Authades, Concerning the Sovereignty and Promises of God (Boston: T. Fleet, 1745), pp. 1-2.

²⁷Ibid., p. 6.

dividual made of the talents that God freely gave. Johnson pleaded for a reasonable God, one who sat in judgment of men as moral agents, rather than a sovereign, whose divine decrees conformed to no logical or consistent plan.

Johnson arrived at this view by surveying the effects of God's absolute sovereignty on those who received damnation without their activity as moral agents. He argued that man's will could work in harmony with God's, but only if both complied with the laws of reason; God could not be arbitrary and despotic in determining salvation. If man acted by necessity, however, and his actions did not determine his eternal condition, then man lacked responsibility for his actions and could not sin.

If we suppose our actions immediately dependent on the will of God, we must suppose them necessary as to us, and consequently that we are not to blame for them, being not properly moral agents, but acted and necessitated in what we do; which is absurd as it makes God the author of our sins.²⁸

These arguments against Puritan principles originated in England with Thomas Chubb, Daniel Whitby, and Samuel Clarke. Beach and Johnson served only as agents, bringing the beginnings of the Enlightened spirit in theology in America. The Anglican Arminian position centered

²⁸Ibid., p. 12.

upon man's free will, or moral agency. To deny free will placed the onus of sin upon God, and therefore was blasphemous and degrading. The doctrine of free will contradicted the doctrines of original sin and predestination, so that the latter had to be tempered or removed from the Christian redemptive scheme. This demand by the Arminians undercut God's sovereignty and challenged Puritan federal theology. God's will and man's will worked in harmony, with the individual Christian's eternal state determined by man's activity alone. The Arminians denied emotional religion and the work of God upon man's heart and therefore, dismissed the spirit of renewal that had just swept through New England.

Jonathan Dickinson took up the Arminian challenge. Before the Great Awakening, he had denounced, as dangerous, the practices of the Church of England, and saw the threat now posed to Puritanism as similar. Dickinson's opposition to Anglican Church practices stemmed from their denial of the sixteenth century Reformation and obvious popery. In 1745 they endangered the reform experience that continued after the revival; the elevation of reason at the expense of piety created a sterile, unemotional religion. Dickinson began this extended controversy with Anglican clergymen at the time of the Yale Apostasy; his first defense of Presbyterian ordination

came in 1723.²⁹ Until his death in 1747, he remained the constant opponent of those who denied religion of the heart, and a proponent of the Protestant Reformation and revivalism. Thomas Foxcroft, delivering his funeral oration, declared:

It may be doubted whether, with the single exception of the elder Edwards, Calvinism has ever found an abler or more efficient defender in this country than Jonathan Dickinson.³⁰

Jonathan Dickinson's Vindication of God's Sovereign Free Grace (1746) confronted the Arminian arguments of John Beach, Samuel Johnson, and Henry Caner.³¹ He launched a direct attack upon their logic, but relied most heavily upon scripture and tradition to refute the Arminian principles. His defense embodied the traditional Puritan arguments defending the sovereignty of God and

²⁹In 1723 Dickinson answered John Checkley's A Modest Proof of the Order and Government Settled by Christ, in the Church with A Defense of Presbyterian Ordination. Leonard J. Trinterud, The Forming of an American Tradition (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1949), p. 230.

³⁰Dexter, Biographical Sketches, p. 49.

³¹Henry Caner's tract did not conform to the type of approach revealed in those by Beach and Johnson, but centered over a specious argument whether Christ directed the Sermon on the Mount to the multitude or to His disciples. Caner favored the latter, which he said taught the elevation of works over grace. Henry Caner, The True Nature and Method of Christian Preaching, Examined and Stated in a Discourse (Newport: Printed by the Widow Franklin, 1745), p. 8, and pp. 10-11.

appeared more a part of the seventeenth century than the eighteenth. This did not mean that Dickinson had ignored Locke and Newton, but indicated the rapid change that was occurring within New England theology after the Awakening. Dickinson's major concern was to retain covenant theology, which had grown out of scholastic thought and not the new science. Thus, his defense comprised scriptural and traditional arguments, and failed to answer definitively the questions posed in this reasonable age.

Beach had denied predestination, taught universal redemption by Christ, free will cooperating with free grace, and the possibility of the regenerate falling from grace.³² These statements conflicted directly with the orthodox view represented by the declarations of the Synod of Dort. This Synod, composed of representatives of all the reformed churches, convened in November, 1618, at Dort, Netherlands, to adjudicate between the doctrines of Jacobus Arminius and Calvinism. The representatives affirmed Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion and the doctrines of original sin, predestination, and justification by grace alone. The Church of England confirmed these declarations and denied adherence to the now heretical doctrines of Arminius. Dickinson argued that

³²Beach, God's Sovereignty, pp. 17-21.

Beach was maintaining a position counter to Protestantism in general, and specifically contradicted the Articles of the Church of England, the institution that he claimed adherence to.³³ Article X denied expressly that man had free will after the fall.³⁴ Dickinson pointed out Beach's position refuted not only the fundamentals of Puritanism, but the entire Protestant Reformation. This he felt would be the result of overbalancing religion based upon reason, rather than upon the heart.

Dickinson's primary concern dwelt with the Arminian conception of grace. Beach and Johnson declared that salvation came by way of grace, a universal grace that contradicted any notions of grace held by Puritan theologians. The latter separated common and saving grace by kind or species as well as degree. In other words, common grace was not just a lesser form of saving grace, but a distinct type of grace that allowed man only to live a holy and Christian life. Universal grace, as described by these Arminians, was to Dickinson no different than common grace, also granted universally, but with no pro-

³³Jonathan Dickinson, A Vindication of God's Sovereign Free Grace (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1746), pp. 14-15.

³⁴Ibid., p. 9.

mise of salvation.³⁵ Man could improve upon common grace, but by that improvement, one could not earn saving grace. Puritans separated two kinds of grace in order to allow the individual to prepare himself for the workings of God. Man turned towards God and lived a Christian life, but by so turning did not receive salvation. Justification by grace alone meant that the work of election was by God alone, without man's activity.

Dickinson also attacked Beach's concert of free will and free grace, and uncovered some basic contradictions. First, Beach stated that man cannot "oblige God to thank or reward us," as God freely gave grace, which denied any obligation. Yet, when our obedience complied with the conditions of the moral law, "veracity and justice obliges Him to make the promise good; and when he performs it, it is a reward of bounty."³⁶ Beach contradicted himself in declaring that our obedience cannot oblige God to reward us; however, our obedience in fact does oblige God to reward us.³⁷ Secondly, Dickinson

³⁵Johnson argued universal salvation from Matthew 20:16--"Many are called, but few are chosen." Dickinson answered that only common grace was promised, and that election to saving grace was predetermined, and outside of man's will. Ibid., p. 69.

³⁶Ibid., p. 19, quotes Beach, Eternal Life, p. 5, and p. 32.

³⁷Ibid., p. 19.

stated that Beach declared that "no man can come to Christ til he be drawn of the Father," or until God determined man towards good and holy acts. Again this was a contradiction, as the notion of determination refuted the notion of free acts by the individual, or freedom of the will.³⁸ Dickinson demonstrated that Beach placed free will and free grace in opposition, as the Puritans had, yet claimed that they acted in harmony.

Dr. Johnson's charge that the Puritan belief in God's sovereignty made good and evil necessary posed a greater problem for Dickinson. He denied that Puritans had ever held a compulsive necessity for holiness or wickedness, but that mankind remained in a state of perfect freedom, so that until election they acted by their own voluntary inclinations.³⁹ He did deny though, that this "perfect freedom" of action had any effect upon man's salvation. Dickinson circumvented the major argument of the Arminians, ignoring the ticklish conflict of human liberty and predestination.

In the Second Vindication, published after his death by his brother Moses, he again approached the issue of the authorship of sin. Dickinson stated that God retained determining power over man's wills, but this did

³⁸Ibid., p. 20.

³⁹Ibid., p. 68.

not make Him the author of sin, but rather of holiness and grace.⁴⁰ The Arminians had confused the issue by demanding that man have free will to committ sin and frustrate God's plan, rather than turning to God and true holiness. Further, God did not determine the sin, instead He determined the event and permitted the sin to occur. God became the permitter of evil, but not the necessitating cause or author of sin. God's decree to permit sin left the sinner with as much "liberty in all his actions, as if there had been no decree at all, and therefore, cannot be the author of sin which is freely and voluntarily committed."⁴¹

Dickinson's logic, demonstrated in these two tracts, was pejorative. Freedom of the will could not improve God's purposes, but only man's, so that he placed less value on unassisted human liberty, than the bondage of man's will to God's divine plan. The liberty that he allowed man was not human liberty in the eighteenth century sense. At his death in 1747, Dickinson had not halted nor impeded the Arminian attack, nor had he met them on

⁴⁰Jonathan Dickinson, A Second Vindication of God's Sovereign Free Grace (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1748), p. 19.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 67. The permission of sin was the basis for the reasonable, optimistic Puritanism that Jonathan Edwards began and Joseph Bellamy perfected. Supra, pp.

their terms. God's sovereignty was as absolute with Dickinson as it was with Calvin. He had attempted to preserve the theological solidarity that had existed before the revival, and to do so, retreated to the authority of traditional biblical interpretation. The failure of Dickinson to refute the Arminians was not personal, but that of traditional Puritanism. The intellectual climate had shifted, so that men judged truth by reason, rather than venerated tradition.⁴²

Dickinson tried to preserve the spirit of the renewal in terms of the revival itself. His answers were not essentially part of the reformation of order that followed renewal. He, like other Puritans before the revival, endeavored to retain the traditional New England system, the spirit of renewal, and the new science, which led to an untenable position. In his unfinished work, the Second Vindication, he hinted at a reasonable defense of God's sovereignty through the idea of the permission

⁴²Others as well entered into the controversy, yet Dickinson was the staunchest defender of Puritanism immediately after the Great Awakening. See also Jedediah Mills, A Vindication of Gospel-Truth and Refutation of Some Dangerous Errors (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1747). For the Puritan defense of justification by faith alone, see Richard Elvins, True Justifying Faith Producing Evangelical Obedience (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1747) and Israel Loring, Justification not by Works, but by Faith in Jesus Christ (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1749).

of sin, but had not re-interpreted Puritan principles, so that they conformed to the demands of the eighteenth century.

The recognition of the Puritan failure to retain theological unity came in 1747, with the first Arminian pamphlet written by a Puritan and not an Anglican. The old light Puritans who had opposed the Awakening had not entered into the controversy between the moderate Puritans and the Anglicans. That the first response from the liberal clergy favored the Anglican position in the controversy was extremely significant. The Anglican pamphleteers had successfully penetrated Puritan doctrinal unity, and initiated a fundamental schism, beyond revivalism. The Puritan response to this split became more important than the controversy between Puritans and Anglicans.⁴³

Experience Mayhew, father of the more famous liberal leader Jonathan Mayhew, wrote Whether Saving Grace be Different in Species from Common Grace, or in Degree Only, and changed the complexion of the controversy. The elder Mayhew argued that the process of regeneration must restore man's free will, so that former sinners could turn to God and lead a holy life.⁴⁴ Mayhew's pamphlet

⁴³By no means did the Anglican attack end in 1747, but that controversy became only tangential to the disruption within the Puritan orthodoxy, the concern of this paper.

espoused an extremely mild Arminianism. He did not teach a universal redemption promise, and retained the traditional Puritan view that common grace and saving grace differed in kind as well as degree. However, he believed that men could receive salvation through the improvement of common grace, a position counter to traditional Puritanism.

The mild Arminian view presented in Experience Mayhew's pamphlet typified the non-Anglican or liberal Puritan position in the 1750's and 1760's. The writings of Clarke, Whitby, Chubb, and other English Latitudinarians did not affect the principles of these divines to the extent that they did the Anglicans. Charles Chauncy and Jonathan Mayhew accommodated both the attitudes of the Latitudinarians and the Puritan tradition in a scheme that confused both reason and the scriptures.⁴⁵ They did

⁴⁴Experience Mayhew, A Letter to a Gentleman on the Question, Whether Saving Grace be Different in Species from Common Grace, or in Degree Only (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1747), p. 8.

⁴⁵Perry Miller, Jonathan Edwards, p. 176. In the debate between Chauncy and Edwards during the Awakening, Miller cites the former defending his position in the language of the outmoded science, while the defender of Calvinism used modern, dynamic, analytic psychology. This contradiction resulted from Chauncy's retention of scholastic psychology, with reason, imagination, will, and emotion as separate "faculties." He had not incorporated Lockean mixed modes, ideas, and sensations into his theological view as Edwards had.

not redefine Puritanism to fit the mood of the age, nor did they sever their connection with Puritan orthodoxy. Instead, they retained the best of both schemes; when reason and scriptures conflicted, they accepted the reasonable proof. Jonathan Mayhew displayed the inherent contradiction in determining doctrine in this manner. He insisted that man must strive for salvation, but made no provision in his doctrine for man's free will. He accepted the loss of free will with Adam's fall, as well as the doctrine of predestination.⁴⁶ His position was more a modification or extension of the concept of voluntarism, than an attack upon orthodox Puritanism. Mayhew and other liberal Puritan leaders, by ignoring free will as the underlying principle of their doctrinal view, contradicted the English Arminians and their American disciples, Beach and Johnson. The liberal Puritans argued moral virtue and not free will; they disregarded whether man acted freely, maintaining only that his actions were righteous.

Opposition to the revival and experiential religion centered around Harvard College in the 1740's. George

⁴⁶Jonathan Mayhew, Striving to Enter in at the Strait Gate (Boston: R. Draper, 1761), pp. 41-42. See also Conrad Wright, The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America (Boston: Starr King Press, 1955), p. 60, and p. 94, and Charles W. Akers, Called Unto Liberty (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 124-125.

Whitefield's famous claim that Harvard taught dangerous doctrines inspired by the liberal Archbishop John Tillotson and Samuel Clarke was refuted in 1740, but probably would have stood in 1745.⁴⁷ Whitefield's challenge stimulated interest in these works; during the Awakening, Jonathan Mayhew, and undoubtedly others as well, read these works and incorporated Latitudinarian principles into their theology. Harvard College became for America during the Awakening, what the liberal academies at Whit-haven and Finden were for the English dissenters in the 1720's and 1730's, both politically and religiously.⁴⁸ Surely the rights of man and Lockean epistemology entered Harvard theology as they did political theory.

The liberal influence of Harvard College became apparent when Lemuel Briant challenged Puritan orthodoxy with the sermon, The Absurdity and Blasphemy of Depreca-

⁴⁷Edward Wigglesworth, president of Harvard College, answered Whitefield that no undergraduate had borrowed Tillotson's works from the college library for nine years, and Clarke's for over two. Akers, Called Unto Liberty, p. 28.

⁴⁸See J. Hay Colligan, Eighteenth Century NonConformity (London: Longsmans, Green and Co., Ind., 1915), pp. 72-73, for the importance of dissenting academies in the growth of English heterodoxy. For a similar assessment of Harvard, see Wright, Beginnings of Unitarianism, p. 36. Mayhew's fellow students included the Revolutionary leaders James Otis, Jr., Samuel Cooper, James Bowdoin, James Warren, and Thomas Cushing, as well as future religious liberals. Akers, Called Unto Liberty, p. 23.

ting Moral Virtue. Before its publication in 1749, Briant had preached this sermon several times; from his own pulpit at the North Church in Braintree, and also from the pulpits of Nathaniel Eells and Jonathan Mayhew.⁴⁹ Undoubtedly, this repetition served more to stimulate controversy, than the doctrine it contained. As it was, Briant received scant notice from the major orthodox clerics. Nathaniel Eells exclaimed after Briant first preached the sermon, "Alas! sir, you have undone today all that I have been doing for forty years."⁵⁰ Eells, to repair the damage, preached a series of sermons with doctrine closely resembling that in The Absurdity and Blasphemy. Briant presented a doctrinal view quite common in New England at the end of the 1740's, but gained notoriety primarily because of his avowed Arminianism.

The heretical sermon had as its text, Isaiah 64:4, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Puritans traditionally interpreted this text as a demonstration of man's inability to perform good works. Briant argued that this interpretation belied the context of the Book of Isaiah. The prophet referred to the wicked character of

⁴⁹Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, vol. 10, p. 343.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 343-344.

the Jews, who "made religion a cloak for their immoralities," considered themselves righteous and God's chosen people, yet lived an unholy life.⁵¹ By re-interpreting this text, Briant claimed that the salvation scheme required man's personal righteousness, and that God did not do everything. Briant, like Beach had earlier, stated that man's salvation "by grace" did not exclude all moral agency, and that man's Christian duties, or works, at least aided in salvation. Puritans, Briant claimed, by not studying the scriptures in context, took Christian morality, which considered man as a moral agent, and "turned [it] into idle speculation instead of a doctrine of sobriety, righteousness, and piety."⁵² Deprecating moral virtue, as the Puritans had done by denying man's righteousness, led men into utter contempt for those things that they should value most.

Ostensibly, Briant argued the importance of man's personal righteousness, but underlying these arguments were the questions of justification by grace and by works, the imputation of original sin, and the validity of predestination. Puritans traditionally had argued that

⁵¹Lemuel Briant, The Absurdity and Blasphemy of Deprecating Moral Virtue (Boston: J. Green for D. Gookin, 1749), pp. 15-16.

⁵²Ibid., p. 14.

Christ was the source of all human righteousness, and that man had no personal righteousness because of Adam's fall. Throughout the ensuing controversy, Briant insisted that the only disparity between his position and that of traditional Puritanism was the single line of text from Isaiah, and refused to argue the specific implications of his sermon. He did not broach free will, original sin, or predestination, but argued only moral virtue. Still his insistence upon man's personal righteousness was a denial of God's absolute sovereignty and predestination, and negated man's passivity.

Briant's sermon attracted little attention from prominent Puritans; only John Porter, the country pastor at the First Congregational Church at Brockton, felt moved to answer him. Porter, an unlikely defender of orthodoxy, had previously ventured into controversy only by defending George Whitefield from charges of enthusiasm in 1745. Porter delivered his Justification by the Personal Righteousness of Men is Absurd and Blasphemous from the new light pulpit in Braintree on Christmas Day, 1749. Afterwards, Briant charged that Porter had invaded Braintree in an attempt to have him unseated.⁵³ In the debate, both disputants were intemperate, lapsing into personal

⁵³Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, vol. 10, p. 344.

charges rather than doctrinal criticism. Porter accused Briant of immaturity and "heathenish morality," and in turn was accused of forgetting his Latin, misunderstanding Calvin, and having stolen two of his sermons from Archbishop Tillotson.⁵⁴ Each was reluctant to argue the specific implications of moral virtue, and demonstrated their failure to root their arguments in the reasonable thought of the Enlightenment. Briant's attack indicated only a superficial reliance upon any Latitudinarian principles, and Porter's answer was traditional.

Porter correctly stated the traditional Puritan view of personal righteousness and the text from Isaiah. He claimed that Briant had first fixed upon the principle of man's moral virtue, and then investigated the scriptures for support of this preconceived notion. Through this type of proof, he argued, "Arians, Socinians, Arminians, Antinomians, and even Quakers have endeavored to support and maintain their destructive tenets."⁵⁵ Clearly, the reference in Isaiah referred only to the righteousness of the best men, as the scriptures never used the word "righteousness" to describe the hypocritical perfor-

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 70, and p. 344.

⁵⁵John Porter, Justification by the Personal Righteousness of Men is Absurd and Blasphemous (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1750), p. 3.

mances of wicked men as Briant had suggested.⁵⁶ Further, the reference to righteousness as "filthy rags" indicated that man's acts were imperfect and not suited "to cover their moral nakedness and render them agreeable to the King of Glory."⁵⁷ Porter understood the full implication of Briant's sermon; personal righteousness voided the Puritan conception of salvation by grace alone, and included works in the scheme of justification.

Whoever is establishing a scheme [that] substitutes the personal righteousness of men, in the room of the surety righteousness of Christ, in the affair of justification and salvation, runs counter to the gospel, and will assuredly find themselves falling infinitely short of the favor and Kingdom of God.⁵⁸

Briant, throughout the controversy, emphasized that the only dispute between Porter and himself was the interpretation of Isaiah. Porter answered that in fact, there was a general controversy between them over the nature of justification. Briant had exploded the notion of imputed righteousness from Christ in justification, and maintained that moral virtue made man righteous before God, and that forgiveness of sin depended upon the personal righteousness of man.⁵⁹ Porter recognized the im-

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 5-6.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 8.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 21.

⁵⁹John Porter, Vindication of a Sermon (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1751), p. 10.

plication of these arguments, and exploited their intention, presumably, to force Briant to admit adherence to the papist doctrine of merit, or that man's works merited salvation. Such an admission would have demonstrated the full implication of Arminian doctrine--the denial of the whole reformation experience.

John Cotton, minister of the rural church at Halifax, Massachusetts, joined Porter in an appendix to the Vindication explaining the agreement of Briant's doctrine to the traditional Arminian heresy. Briant had explicitly denied free justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, and by this denial, opposed personal election, or predestination, and the doctrine of original sin.⁶⁰

The most important outcome of the controversy existed outside the pamphlet warfare, in the reaction of Briant's congregation to his apostasy into the errors of Arminianism. They called a council to judge his heretical views. On April 14, 1753, the council, headed by John Quincy, announced that they found no error in doctrinal questions; they differed personally with his doctrine, but upheld his "undoubted right to judge for himself."⁶¹

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 24.

⁶¹Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, p. 367.

This judgment established a precedent that allowed deviation from orthodoxy without censure, and emphasized human liberty and the right of personal judgment in religious matters. The council affirmed the attitudes of Latitudinarianism, that reason judged religious truths, and not tradition. This judgment also endangered the workings of the Awakening and renewal of the heart, by emphasizing religion of the mind. Briant's congregation, in establishing this precedent, admitted that any hope for doctrinal solidarity in New England was now at an end.

Lemuel Briant, stricken with illness before the council met, died later that year, vindicated. John Porter remained active in his pulpit at Brockton until his death in 1802, but never again became involved in controversy. In his later years, he gradually moved to an increasingly conservative religious position.⁶²

Briant's views concerning man's moral virtue did not deviate greatly from those taught by most Puritan divines in New England after the Great Awakening. Consequently, they ignored what he said, but they could not ignore what he implied. He avowed Arminianism, and taught works and grace together as necessary for salvation. Like most liberal clergymen, he emphasized the importance

⁶²Ibid., p. 72.

of man's active participation in salvation, rather than passive acceptance of God's decisions. These Arminians required God to act reasonably, and to perform as God the judge rather than God the sovereign. Their position differed substantially, however, from that of the Anglican Arminians. They exhibited reluctance either to oppose the Puritan redemptive scheme completely, or to fully accept that of the Latitudinarians.

Lemuel Briant's more famous liberal associate, Jonathan Mayhew, revealed the same accommodation of both schemes, and reluctance to attack the position of Puritan orthodoxy on justification. Mayhew had developed his Arminianism prior to his ordination in 1748, which led to difficulty when that ceremony took place. The opposition came not from the parishioners of the West Church in Boston, a rather homogeneous group of merchants and the newly wealthy, but from the established clergy at the other Boston churches.⁶³ The clergymen boycotted the ordination ceremony scheduled for May 20, which delayed that ceremony nearly two months, until July 17, 1748. In order to insure the presence of enough ministers the

⁶³Miller, Jonathan Edwards, p. 113. Miller discusses the economic and social order within the West Church that allowed Mayhew to break away from a purely orthodox position. He preached a theology compatible with reasonable and commercial Boston.

second time, the West Church ignored the Boston clerics and invited divines from country parishes.⁶⁴

Even with these problems in ordination and his position outside of orthodoxy, Mayhew did not attack the principle Puritan tenets. In the latter half of the 1750's, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel attempted to establish an American bishopric, and Mayhew's stormy protest led to his acceptance by the Boston orthodoxy.⁶⁵ Still, with the clerical opposition lessened, Mayhew did not publish Striving to Enter in at the Strait Gate until 1761, declaring the importance of works in the scheme of salvation. Mayhew, like other liberal divines, dared not exert those ideas too strongly which would split them from the Puritan fold. They strove to remain within orthodoxy, and to avoid being declared heretical.

Mayhew's Seven Sermons, published in 1749⁶⁶, de-

⁶⁴Akers, Called Unto Liberty, p. 51. Akers describes the boycott not as a religious one, but a protest against the West Church's invitation of only the Brattle Street and the First Churches, while ignoring the other seven Boston churches. The ordination ceremony carried great significance as a social and religious event in the eighteenth century. The boycotting of Mayhew's ordination resulted in deep resentment and antagonism between Mayhew and Boston's established clergy.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 91.

⁶⁶Jonathan Mayhew, Seven Sermons on the Following Subjects (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1749), demonstrates his nascent Unitarianism that developed soon after ordi-

monstrated the liberal reliance upon reason, and the accommodation of English Latitudinarianism and traditional Puritanism. Passages of these sermons indicated Mayhew's acceptance of Lockean thought; Mayhew's style, like that of most liberal divines in America, was simplistic and highly reminiscent of Archbishop Tillotson's.⁶⁷ In the first sermon concerning right and wrong, Mayhew declared that there was a natural difference between truth and falsehood; truth was determinant in itself and existed independent of man's notions concerning it.

No man's opinions are either right or wrong--that however contrary the sentiments of different men are to one another, both are equally conformable to the nature and reality of the thing that they judge.⁶⁸

Mayhew believed that there existed an absolute nature of truth and moral rectitude, which did not depend upon the opinions of men, and especially upon the number of men

nation. For Mayhew's christology, see Wright, Beginnings of Unitarianism, or Akers, Called Unto Liberty.

⁶⁷Miller, Jonathan Edwards, p. 27 and p. 48, compares the pulpit styles of liberal divines and the pro-revivalists. The former, lacking the histrionics of the revivalists, were dry and reasonable to the extreme. See also Louis G. Locke, Tillotson, A Study in Seventeenth Century Literature (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1954), pp. 114-116, and passim. Locke discusses Tillotson's stylistic innovation, that of a plain and simple style.

⁶⁸Mayhew, Seven Sermons, p. 7.

with such an opinion. "They [absolute truths] will not change their nature out of compliance to the most numerous and powerful body of men in the world."⁶⁹ He joined this idea of truth and falsehood to ideas of man's performance of righteous acts, or man's need to imitate the moral excellence of God and, thus, approach the design of the Creator.⁷⁰ Lemuel Briant had presented a much more heterodox view of man's moral virtue than Mayhew had, as the latter placed no value upon works themselves, but called instead, for freedom of interpretation of the scheme of God.

He expanded this theme further in the remaining sermons, specifically with man's ability to recognize the difference between truth and error. Men had this ability, but the ability varied in individual men.⁷¹ This variation revealed a natural limitation upon human reason that accounted for man's instruction through divine revelation. Mayhew distinguished in the manner of the Latitudinarians between natural and revealed religion, with revelation compensating for man's limited understanding. But even though man's understanding was limited, reason exalted him from the beasts in the field

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 17-18.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 12.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 29.

and allied him to God and the angels.

Yea by this we resemble God himself. So that how weak so ever our intellectual faculties are, yet to speak reproachfully of reason, in general, is nothing less than blasphemy against God.⁷²

Man's reason sufficed for him to judge moral and religious truths, or those man received through divine revelation. This contradicted the Puritan notion of total ignorance that resulted from Adam's fall and hid the workings of God from man. Mayhew argued, in a manner contradictory to traditional Puritanism, that through reason and revelation, man could understand the divine scheme.⁷³

In further application of these ideas, Mayhew stated that man had the duty to assert private judgment, with freedom of thought and inquiry in religious matters. Christ forbade man to submit implicitly to the dictates of any other man, or for Christians to usurp or assume authority over their brethren. Man inhibited judgment and assumed authority in the formation of creeds, or "setting up human tests of orthodoxy instead of the infallible word of God."⁷⁴ Mayhew directed this argument against the high Anglicans and Roman Catholics who based truth on the authority of tradition and not upon reasonable interpreta-

⁷²Ibid., p. 39.

⁷³Ibid., p. 38.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 59.

tion of the word of God. He realized, but did not emphasize, the relevance of making the same attack against Puritan orthodoxy.

Mayhew's Seven Sermons expressed a conservative religious view and pled for freedom of inquiry and an end to judging truth by tradition rather than common sense. His demands were significant in increasing man's role in God's plan, but fell short of Briant's moral virtue. In 1753 when the council at Braintree adjudged Briant's apostasy, Mayhew's insistence upon private judgment received open approval. Even with this victory, Mayhew never launched a full attack upon the Puritan redemptive scheme, but attempted only to accommodate his views alongside traditional church dogma.

Twelve years after the publication of the Seven Sermons, Mayhew sought to clarify his position on justification in Striving to Enter in at the Strait Gate, and stressed the importance of man's working for salvation. He used for his text, Luke 13:14, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." To Mayhew, striving referred to man's earnest endeavors, or working for salvation. This striving came after the spirit of God affected the heart of the sinner, and awakened an understanding of his sinful nature.⁷⁵ The failure of the major-

ity who "seek to enter in" was not due to election of only a few, but that of those who heeded the call, few strove to obtain the goal.⁷⁶ Mayhew contended that the gospel offered a general salvation to all men, and God would not make the offer without providing the means. "For if God hath no pleasure in their death, but the contrary; and if they themselves desire life, and endeavor to obtain it, what should hinder their salvation?"⁷⁷

Mayhew pointed out that striving did not relate to the regenerate, "or those already born of God, or such as are true believers and real Christians," but wholly to the workings of the unregenerate.⁷⁸ Mayhew, then, retained the concept of predestination and election. God chose a few elect prior to the creation of the world, the regenerate. For these elect, works, or man's personal righteousness had no influence, yet in the salvation of the unregenerate, once the spirit of God had infected their souls, works and virtue made them worthy of salvation. Mayhew emphasized that works always followed grace, and could not exist independent of grace. By this argu-

⁷⁵Mayhew, Striving to Enter, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 35. Mayhew did not deny election, but argued only that election was not the sole means for obtaining salvation.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 49.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 41.

ment, he shunned the threat of heresy for teaching the popish doctrine of merit.

Mayhew had avoided any declaration regarding the salvation of all men, and did not stress works and grace in conjunction until the 1760's. The actions of Mayhew, Briant, and other liberal Puritans demonstrated a fear of heterodoxy that forced them into only a mild Arminianism. They argued moral virtue and righteousness rather than justification by works, and freedom of inquiry rather than freedom of the will. For these Arminians, works did not differ in definition from the Puritan "fruits of faith" which followed grace. Although these liberals espoused only a mild Arminianism, they aroused enormous fear, that if left unchecked, the heresy would soon exceed the bounds of the liberal divines and destroy the work of renewal and the Puritan covenant system.

English Arminianism and liberal Puritanism differed substantially; the term "Arminian" did not actually reflect the theological position of the liberal divines, but was used by the Puritans as a term of derision. More than a separate theological group, they were a splintering of Puritanism, and indicated that any claim to theological solidarity was at an end. The controversies involving Jonathan Dickinson and John Porter had demonstrated the weaknesses of traditional Puritanism in refuting these

eighteenth century heretical views. The retention of Puritan order and the revival experience required a complete revision and redefinition of their religious positions. This task faced Jonathan Edwards and the New Divinity School in the 1750's and 1760's.

CHAPTER III

A CAREFUL AND STRICT ENQUIRY INTO THE MODERN PREVAILING NOTIONS OF FREEDOM OF THE WILL: JONATHAN EDWARDS AND THE ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

He that would know the workings of the New England Mind in the middle of the eighteenth century, and the throbbing of its heart, must give his days and nights to the study of Jonathan Edwards.¹

Few historians have taken issue with this assessment by George Bancroft that revealed Jonathan Edwards' central position in American intellectual life. However, in explicating that leadership, historians have not agreed whether he was the first modern American, or the last in a long line of medieval philosophers.² Generally, one can presume that the critics of Edwards' modernity looked

¹George Bancroft, The History of the United States, quoted in Edward M. Griffin, Jonathan Edwards (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 5, and Vincent Tomas, "The Modernity of Jonathan Edwards," New England Quarterly, XXV (1952), p. 60.

²For an assessment of Edwards' modernity see Perry Miller, Jonathan Edwards, pp. 77-78, and passim. Vincent Tomas, in his critical review of Miller's biography, The Modernity of Jonathan Edwards, pp. 60-84, and Peter Gay, A Loss of Mastery: Puritan Historians in Colonial America (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), viewed him as an anachronism in the American Enlightenment.

only at the nature of the religious questions he dealt with, and the doctrine that he defended. The questions and the doctrine were medieval in form and substance, yet his methodology unquestionably indicated his modernity. Twentieth century man does not share Edwards' concern for original sin or the bondage of man's will, but the intellectual milieu of the eighteenth century determined the importance of these questions, so that his preoccupation with them was not singular.

While Edwards' conclusions conformed to sixteenth century Calvinist dogma, the manner in which he arrived at them departed wholly from the scholastic tradition. Edward H. Davidson stated that Edwards "conducted his intellectual and spiritual pilgrimage in point for point relevance with the most advanced thought of his age--and undercut it at nearly every occasion."³ He turned to the source of the Latitudinarian attack--Lockean epistemology and Newtonian science--and demonstrated that traditional Calvinist doctrine, and not the Arminian errors, conformed exactly to eighteenth century reason. In this manner, Edwards became in mid-century both an exponent of reasonable religion and a primary defender of experiential re-

³Edward H. Davidson, "From Locke to Edwards," Journal of the History of Ideas, XXIV (1963), No. 3, p. 372.

ligion. He denied that reason and emotion were distinct faculties of the mind, functioning separately according to Aristotelian terms, but were "powers of the unified self."⁴ Since these faculties were not separate, there could be no hierocratic ordering of "understanding," "affection," and "will"--each contributed in a like manner to human knowledge. Thus, one could emphasize the role of religious affections (emotions), as identical to that of man's will, and not denigrate religion, but honor it.⁵

Edwards' introduction to John Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding came in his second year at Yale College at the age of thirteen. Towards the end of his life, Edwards, in recollecting that early reading, stated:

[I] was as much engaged, and had more satisfaction and pleasure in studying it, than the most greedy miser in gathering up handfuls of silver and gold from some new discovered treasure.⁶

⁴Griffin, Jonathan Edwards, p. 24.

⁵Ibid., p. 24. J. M. Bumsted and J. E. Van de Wetering, "'What Must I Do to be Saved?' The Great Awakening in Colonial America" (MS, unpublished, 1971), state that the singularity of Edwards' acceptance of the new intellectual mood has been exaggerated. The Awakening itself emphasized the harmony of mind and emotion, and by its end, most leaders had read commentaries upon Locke, if not the works themselves. The wholeness of mind, spirit, and emotion was widely accepted. p. 132.

He gained more than pleasure from this early reading of Locke, for while still in his teens, he formulated the intellectual and religious principles that were to govern the remainder of his life. He wrote the "Notes on the Mind," a collection of uncompleted thoughts, which demonstrate his complete digestion of Locke's psychological principles, and foreshadowed much of his later treatise on the Freedom of the Will. One cannot over-emphasize Edwards' early intellectual development and the effect that this early maturity had upon his later life. He retained throughout his career as a minister and theologian those intellectual principles that he had developed in his teen.⁷

In the same manner that the "Notes on the Mind" foreshadowed his later philosophic development, his youthful preparation for religious conversion previewed his later concern for experiential religion. Both as a child in his father's congregation and in his senior year in college, he underwent "seasons of awakening" which ex-

⁶Samuel Hopkins, "The Life and Character of Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards," Jonathan Edwards: A Profile, David Levin, editor (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), pp. 5-6.

⁷Miller, Jonathan Edwards, p. 44. "Edwards was not the sort who undergoes a long development or whose work can be divided into 'periods.' His whole insight was given him at once, preternaturally early, and he did not change: he only deepened."

posed to him an "inward delight" in religious duties and concern for the salvation of his soul. This concern stimulated him to pray "five times a day in secret," to spend much time in religious talk with other boys, and to meet with them in prayer.⁸ While his early religiosity was fervent, he found that these affections fostered a self-righteous pleasure and false sense of grace. After each awakening, he soon "returned like a dog to his vomit" to his old ways of sin. The experience did not lead to inner quiet and hope, but to violent inward struggles and doubt as to his eventual salvation. "I made seeking my salvation the main business of my life...I felt a spirit to part with all things in the world...but yet it never seemed to be proper to express my concern that I had."⁹ The experience of trying to earn grace and failing, left Edwards with the strong belief that salvation rested entirely in the hands of God, and that man's will had no effect in securing true grace.

Soon after graduation from Yale College in September, 1720, Jonathan Edwards experienced the deep religious conversion that he had sought earlier. Before conversion, he had come to a full understanding of the meaning of the

⁸Hopkins, The Life and Character, pp. 24-25.

⁹Ibid., p. 25.

sovereignty of God. In his youth, he had looked with horror at God's absolute determination of election and damnation. But to the mature Edwards, this doctrine appeared exceedingly pleasant and honorable. He stated that the change occurred while reading I Timothy 1:17-- "Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever, Amen." This passage opened within him a new sense of the divine glory of God and the excellence of His being. "From about that time, I began to have a new kind of apprehension and idea of Christ, and the work of redemption, and the glorious way of salvation by Him."¹⁰

A short time after discovering this new sense of divine things, he experienced saving conversion while walking alone in his father's pasture. He felt the glorious majesty of God and the meekness of His grace come together in a "sweet conjunction."¹¹ His religious attitude after this conversion changed drastically from that following his youthful awakenings.

Those former delights, never reached the heart; and did not arise from any sight of the divine excellency of the things of God; or any taste of the soul-satisfying, and life-giving good there is in them.¹²

¹⁰Ibid., p. 26.

¹¹Ibid., p. 27.

¹²Ibid., p. 29.

Edwards' conversion convinced him that man's will was entirely passive in the affair of salvation. Man's heart must be touched, or his will disposed toward God before he could receive salvation or exhibit true justifying grace. Part of the preparation that man must undertake, was a complete understanding of the sovereignty of God and the binding of one's self to the will of God.

A year and a half after Edwards began to sense this new spirit of divinity, he accepted the pastorate at a small church in New York City, where he remained slightly longer than one year. He returned to the Connecticut Valley, and in June of 1724, became a tutor at Yale College. In the interval between his graduation in 1720 and his tutorship, the Yale apostasy, or the defection of Rector Timothy Cutler, Samuel Johnson, and others had taken place.¹³ This defection had left the college in disorder, so that Edwards' tutorship, coming so soon after the event, helped to stabilize the quality of instruction. He left the college in 1727, and, at the invitation of his grandfather Solomon Stoddard, became assistant pastor at Northampton. Edwards received ordination at the Northampton Church on February 15, 1727, and two years later, after the death of his grandfather, took sole charge.¹⁴

¹³Supra, p. 32, and Johnson, Autobiography, p. 7.

The Connecticut Valley had experienced periodic ripples of revival, usually emanating from the pulpit of the Northampton Church. Grandfather Stoddard had stimulated several seasons of renewal, marked by an increase in the number experiencing conversion and widespread concern for salvation. In 1734 Edwards' own experimental acquaintance with the spirit of God aided in the outpouring of renewal within his congregation.¹⁵ The Northampton revival began the Awakening in New England that lasted for over a decade in varying degrees of intensity.¹⁶

Samuel Hopkins stated that Edwards was "what is called by some a rigid Calvinist," because he defended those doctrines which many in the eighteenth century thought should be removed.¹⁷ One of the central themes that he supported and others opposed was the sovereignty

¹⁴Willsiton Walker, "Jonathan Edwards," Jonathan Edwards: A Profile, David Levin, editor (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), p. 93.

¹⁵Hopkins, The Life and Character, pp. 51-52.

¹⁶Edwards traced the spirit of revival in three separate monographs: A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Works of God in the Conversion of many Hundred Souls (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1738), The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1741), and Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1742.)

¹⁷Hopkins, The Life and Character, p. 52.

of God. After the Great Awakening, he did not join Dickinson and others in the controversy with the Anglican Arminians primarily because of the difficulties he faced with his own congregation. Edwards opposed the practice begun by his grandfather in opening the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the unconverted.¹⁸ Several influential families, led by Israel Williams and Joseph Hawley, known for their economic position in Northampton rather than their piety, declared that Edwards was "un-Stoddardean."¹⁹ The conflict between Edwards and the Williamses culminated on June 18, 1750, when a council of nine churches met to advise the Northampton Church whether or not to dissolve the relationship between pastor and congregation. The council, packed with anti-Edwardseans, voted five to four recommending dismissal. The congregation concurred, voting more than two hundred to twenty-three in favor of his removal.²⁰ On June 22, 1750, "fit only for study, aged

¹⁸Stoddard saw that the Half-Way members, brought into the church through the Synod of 1662, were not undergoing conversion. Stoddard opened the Lord's Supper to the unconverted as a means to obtain conversion. This move discarded the New England covenant theories, and blurred the distinction between the Visible and Invisible Churches. Miller, The New England Mind, From Colony to Province, pp. 232-236.

¹⁹Miller, Jonathan Edwards, pp. 218-219.

²⁰Hopkins, The Life and Character, p. 61, and Walker, Jonathan Edwards, pp. 105-107.

forty-six and physically exhausted, Edwards was thrown onto the world, a major artist and America's foremost philosopher."²¹

In December of that year, the rural church at Stockbridge invited Edwards to become their minister and missionary to the Housatonnuck Indians.²² Removed from the pressures of a large congregation, he wrote his major theological works, The Freedom of the Will, and The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin, Defended. The first treatise, published in 1754, reflected his concern over the Latitudinarian challenge to the sovereignty of God. Edwards' research into Arminianism began much earlier. In a letter to Joseph Bellamy dated January 15, 1746/7, he stated that he had begun reading Daniel Whitby's discourses, and "with it I have got so deep into this controversy, that I am no willing to dismiss it, till I know the utmost of these matters."²³ Edwards asked Bellamy if he knew of any Arminian better versed in the idea of free will, because, "I don't know but I shall publish something after a while on that Subject."²⁴

²¹Miller, Jonathan Edwards, p. 225.

²²Stanley T. Williams, "Six Letters of Jonathan Edwards to Joseph Bellamy," New England Quarterly, I (1928), p. 240.

²³Ibid., p. 230.

²⁴Ibid., p. 231.

The Freedom of the Will reflected Edwards' reliance upon both major attitudes that he had cultivated as a young man. He combined Lockean epistemology and traditional Puritan doctrine to establish a new reasonable Puritanism, one that repudiated Aristotelian scholasticism in favor of the science and psychology that dominated the eighteenth century. The Freedom of the Will, the cornerstone of the New Divinity theology, introduced the reasonableness of the Enlightenment to Puritanism, but did not change the restrictiveness of the benefits of Christianity. Edwards defended the traditional Puritan sovereignty of God, election, and saving grace, and denied the validity of the notion that free will was necessary for man's moral agency.

The real controversy in America was hidden within questions of moral agency and man's working for salvation. Edwards understood that freedom of the will was the central issue in the Arminian-Puritan debate.²⁵ The sovereignty

²⁵Conrad Wright, The Beginnings of Unitarianism, insists that Edwards confused the issues; American Arminians held that the most important conflict was over original sin and not free will. However, Wright looked at these liberals, not as they were in the 1750's, but what they became for the nineteenth century, nascent Unitarians. Therefore, failed to explicate properly their threat to Puritanism in the mid-eighteenth century, even though they were not Arminians in the strict sense of the word.

of God required man to bind his will to God's, and to become completely passive in salvation. Bondage of the will was the central theme attacked by the Arminians, but a first principle in traditional Puritanism. Also, Edwards clearly recognized who his adversaries actually were. He ignored those Anglicans and liberals in America, and struck at the source, the the English divines who revived the doctrines of Jacobus Arminius. Edwards concentrated on the writings of three popularizers, who together encompassed the entire scope of eighteenth century Arminianism. Thomas Chubb, a Deist, illustrated the extremes of the heresy, Daniel Whitby, an Arian-Arminian, was a minister of the Church of England, and Isaac Watts, represented Edwards' own tradition of theology.²⁶ By demonstrating the unreasonableness of the central theme (free will) and each divine's application of it, Edwards struck a decisive blow at the root of the heresy and established the bondage of man's will to God on a reasonable and a scriptural basis.

Edwards' approach to free will closely followed the treatment presented by John Locke in An Essay Concern-

²⁶Jonathan Edwards, A Careful and Strict Enquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notion of Freedom of the Will, Paul Ramsey, editor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 66. (Editor's Introduction.)

ing Human Understanding. Locke had examined the reasonableness of free will and stated that the question itself was improper and invalid.

It is as insignificant to ask whether man's will be free, as to ask whether his sleep will be swift; Liberty being as little applicable to the will as swiftness is to sleep. Liberty which is but a power, belongs only to agents, and cannot be an attribute or modification of the will which is also but a power.²⁷

This definition restricted liberty to an agent; liberty cannot have liberty, and the power to choose cannot have the power to choose; therefore, these conditions did not establish a valid question. To ask if man has free will was to ask if the "will wills," or if one ability has another ability, "a question at first sight too grossly absurd to make a dispute or need an answer."²⁸ Edwards agreed with this assessment, and with Locke's description of volition as an ability of the mind, rather than the scholastic notion that will and understanding were separate faculties. However, as a dedicated Calvinist, he could not merely answer that the question was invalid. He had to demonstrate more explicitly the nature of the will and to prove that it could not be self-determining.

²⁷John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, vol. 1, p. 199.

²⁸Ibid., vol. 1, p. 200.

Like Locke, Jonathan Edwards defined "will" as that "by which the mind chooses anything...and an act of the will is the same as an act of choosing or choice."²⁹ Edwards deviated slightly from Locke when he stated that one chooses according to one's desires, and therefore, volition and desire always agree.³⁰ Man's voluntary actions arose from his pleasure or desire; he performed that which he found most agreeable. If man chose his actions from disagreeable motives, then he would deny his pleasure. Therefore, Edwards said, "the will always is as the greatest apparent good is."³¹ In other words, "will" and "the greatest apparent good" (desire) were co-equal terms, and an agent chose according to his pleasure those motives that he comprehended as most inviting. The equation of will and desire further demonstrated that will was not a separate faculty of the mind, but a power or ability. Willing or choosing required an agent in the same manner that desiring required an agent to desire.

Building upon the statement that choice or volition

²⁹Edwards, Freedom of the Will, p. 137.

³⁰Locke stated that choice resulted from uneasiness in man's present state or condition and did not relate directly to desire. Man's action, determined by uneasiness, and his desire could run counter to each other. Therefore, he held man's choice (will) and desire as separate and distinct. Locke, Essay, vol. 1, p. 199.

³¹Edwards, Freedom of the Will, p. 142.

required the action of an agent, Edwards demonstrated the unreasonableness of the Arminian self-determination of the will. He said, "to talk of the determination of the will, supposes an effect, which must have a cause. If the will be determined, there is a determiner."³² With regard to a self-determined will, the will became the determiner and the determined, or both cause and effect. This demonstration by Edwards echoed the earlier statements by John Locke that the question of freedom of the will was unreasonable and invalid.

If one accepted the Arminian claim of the will's self-determining power, then one must grant that the will had sovereignty over itself, and acted independent of any antecedent acts. These conditions were necessary, so that the will itself would have the power of volition, and not something, or some other agent, outside of the will. Further, Edwards deemed that the free action of the will required an equilibrium of the mind before determination, and also contingency of the will. The mind must be devoid of any antecedent causes or predilections that could effect the will's determination. Edwards defined contingency "not in the common acceptance of the word...but as opposed to all necessity, or any fixed and certain con-

³²Ibid., p. 141.

nection with some previous ground or reason for its existence."³³ These conditions isolated the will from any motives other than the will itself. Otherwise, Arminian self-determination actually had another cause, and the will was only the determined and not the determiner.

After outlining these necessary conditions for the self-determination of the will, Edwards demonstrated that such conditions could not exist. First, self-determination of the will could logically only mean that the soul, or the individual, exercised the power of willing.

When it is said, the will decides or determines, the meaning must be, that the person in the exercise of a power of willing and choosing, or the soul, acting voluntarily, determines.³⁴

Edwards, drawing support from Locke, stated that only agents had the power of choice, and not the powers themselves. However, according to the Arminian notion, the will determined its own free acts; therefore, a preceding act of choice had determined every free act of the will.

If the will determines the will, then choice orders and determines choice; and acts of choice are subject to the decision, and follow the conduct of other acts of choice.³⁵

In other words, a free act of the will depended upon all previous acts of the will, which must be free. In a

³³Ibid., pp. 164-165.

³⁴Ibid., p. 172.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 171-172.

series of three acts of volition, the freedom of the third act depended upon the freedom of the acts that had immediately preceded it. If the second, or the first act in that series was not self-determined or free, then in a like manner, that third act could not be free. Further, according to the above definition, for the first act in this series to be free, a preceding free act of the will must have taken place--a contradiction in the given assumption that there were only three acts of volition in the series. The only remaining explanation, said Edwards, was that the first act in the series was not free or self-determined, and therefore, all succeeding acts were also not free, but determined by that first act.³⁶

Edwards' approach was reductio ad absurdum, or to logically extend his opponents' key assumptions until they contradicted themselves. The statement that the will determined volition became absurd when directed specifically toward the first necessary resolution the will made: whether or not it would be free. His argument, going beyond whether the will had the power to choose, settled upon whether or not it had the power to choose that it would be free. Edwards maintained that unless a free act of the will made this decision, unrestrained and unaided,

³⁶Ibid., p. 172.

the will could not be free, but was determined and bound. Further, reason insisted that this determination was impossible, as any free act required a preceding free act. The only other explanation, then, was that this first act of the will was uncaused, for if a cause existed outside of the will itself, it would be determined and not free. Yet one could not imagine an effect without a cause, so that the first determination must have had some other foundation than the will itself.³⁷

Edwards purposefully did not base his destruction of free will upon traditional Puritan theology and scriptural proof. Jonathan Dickinson had failed to refute the Arminians because he depended upon the authority of the scriptures, but his opponents had not accepted the primacy of the scriptural word over reason. Edwards, by attacking the doctrine of free will on reasonable grounds, severed the connection between Puritanism and scholastic epistemology.

The denial of man's free will, in turn, established the necessity of God's absolute sovereignty, for man required some first principle or first cause outside of himself to control and direct his volitions. Thus, having sustained God's sovereignty, Edwards re-established the

³⁷Ibid., p. 181, and passim.

validity of the arguments Dickinson had presented defending emotional religion and man's passivity in salvation.³⁸ Edwards re-affirmed the principles of the Reformation and the Great Awakening, but he placed these principles firmly within the common sense framework of the eighteenth century. In The Freedom of the Will, he successfully brought together those two early attitudes that governed his life: experiential religion of the heart and Lockean psychology.

At this point in the treatise, Edwards had not advanced much beyond John Locke. He had described the inconsistency between free will and reason with greater clarity and in greater detail, but for the purposes of the controversy that he had enjoined, Edwards had to approach the specific arguments of his opponents. Edwards realized that they were "Arminian" in the same manner that he was "Calvinist." He could not assume that all those labelled as Arminian held only those beliefs taught by Daniel Whitby, any more than as a Calvinist, he accepted everything taught by Calvin.³⁹ He selected Whitby as an opponent because he was a central figure in the English heresy, widely read and quoted by the American Arminians. Thomas Chubb, less well known in either America or England,

³⁸Supra, pp. 39-40, and p. 43.

³⁹Edwards, Freedom of the Will, p. 131.

was a Deist and represented what Jonathan Edwards believed was the natural extension of Arminian thought. His third opponent, Isaac Watts, represented the serious breach that Edwards felt Arminianism was making within his own theological tradition.⁴⁰ With a defense this broad, Edwards, by demonstrating the errors of only these three divines, effectively blocked all Arminian arguments.

The first opponent Edwards challenged was Thomas Chubb, a candle and glove maker who devoted his leisure to the study of philosophy and theology. Within the circle of English Arminians and Deists, Chubb managed to obtain some repute as both a theologian and philosopher, although he lacked formal education. Sir Leslie Stephen described him as "a good Salisbury tallow-chandler, who ingenuously confesses, whilst criticising the scriptures, that he knows no language but his own."⁴¹ A self-proclaimed disciple of William Whiston and Samuel Clarke, Chubb began his theological writing with a defense of Arianism in The Supremacy of the Father Asserted (1715). During his career, he passed from Arianism to Socinianism, and finally to Deism. He was the least educated of the English Deists, but showed considerable natural ability. According to

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 65-66. (Editor's Introduction.)

⁴¹Stephen, The History of English Thought, vol. 1, p. 73.

Stephen, Chubb's writings came after the culmination of the Deistic movement, accounting for his negligible influence, although he had encompassed nearly the entire spectrum of Deistic beliefs.⁴²

A Collection of Tracts on Various Subjects (1730) contained the arguments for free will that Edwards challenged. Chubb had stated that the mind can choose to comply with the motives that influenced the will, or to refuse them. "Man has the power, and is as much at liberty to reject the motive that does prevail as he has power, and is at liberty to reject those motive that do not."⁴³ In other words, Chubb granted that man's will and man's desire were not the same, nor did choice proceed from previous dispositions of the mind. Man was at perfect liberty to accept or reject any motive that influenced the will. By this separation of will and motive, Chubb argued that an effect could be uncaused, or without any necessary connection between cause and effect. The will "apparently acts wholly without motive, without any previous reason to dispose the mind to it." However, this

⁴²Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 138-140, and Edwards, Freedom of the Will, p. 67. (Editor's Introduction.)

⁴³Thomas Chubb, A Collection of Tracts on Various Subjects (London: 1730), quoted in Edwards, Freedom of the Will, pp. 226-227.

statement contradicted a condition that Chubb had outlined in the same tract: "no action can take place without some motive to excite it."⁴⁴

In addition to this contradiction, Edwards stated that Chubb's concept of liberty was liberty of the will from reason. Reason and will were described as separate faculties of the mind, in order to allow the will freedom and to remove the necessary connection between will and the last dictate of the understanding. Thus, Chubb's definition of liberty and will conformed more closely with scholastic epistemology than with Locke's mixed modes. The absurdity of Chubb's argument was "certainly as much to say there is previous ground and reason in the motive for the act of preference, and yet no previous ground for it."⁴⁵

Daniel Whitby offered Edwards a much more difficult challenge. Whitby was better educated than Chubb, he had received his D.D. from Trinity College in 1672, and had acquired wide recognition in England and in America as a polemical divine. Beach, Johnson, and other American Anglicans adapted their Arminian arguments directly from Whitby's tracts. Jonathan Edwards himself became enmeshed in the question of free will through Whitby's discourses,

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 230.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 231.

and in 1746 asked Joseph Bellamy to ask Dr. Johnson if anyone else was better versed in the Arminian notion of free will.⁴⁶ Whitby had adopted his heterodoxical views prior to 1700, and with Dr. Samuel Clark's publication of The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity in 1712, became an Arian as well as an Arminian. At his death in 1726, he held an extreme Arminianism, but did not approach the Deism of Thomas Chubb.

Whitby wrote several tracts attacking the Calvinist principles of the English theologian John Edwards⁴⁷ which were published in 1710 as the Discourse on the Five Points.⁴⁸ In Freedom of the Will, Edwards directed his assault upon this work, especially Discourse IV, "The Liberty of the Will of Man in a State of Trial and Pro-

⁴⁶Williams, Six Letters of Jonathan Edwards, pp. 230-231.

⁴⁷John Edwards was an English polemist who died in 1716. His dissenting views and rigid Calvinism, forced his resignation from St. Johns College in Cambridge in 1670, because he conflicted with the 1662 Act of Uniformity. He retired from the pulpit in 1686, and until his death, published against the Arminian heresy that was permeating the Church of England. Sidney Lee, editor, Dictionary of National Biography, vol. VI (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1908), pp. 539-541.

⁴⁸Edwards simplified the title of Whitby's tract. The Dummer Collection at Yale College listed it as Discourses on the Quinquarticular Controversy. Edwards, Freedom of the Will, pp. 82-83. (Editor's Introduction.)

bation."⁴⁹ In this discourse, Whitby ventured beyond the traditional Arminian position and departed from the more specifically theological defense of the five principles.⁵⁰

Whitby had asserted that if God had absolute and perfect foreknowledge of the free actions of a moral agent, that foreknowledge could not affect the individual's free decisions. A basic tenet of traditional Calvinism stated that God did have perfect foreknowledge, and that foreknowledge restricted man's will. The American Puritan tradition modified that principle, not to denigrate God's omniscience, but to allow man more freedom in that scheme. Whitby's statement went beyond Puritan voluntarism and insisted that God's foreknowledge had no effect on the determination of human events, and that man's will was not subject to the divine will. He stated that foreknowledge had as little effect in the determination of events as afterknowledge. "God's prescience is not the cause of things future, their being future is the cause of God's prescience that they will be."⁵¹

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 82.

⁵⁰Supra, pp. 30-31. Arminians traditionally were concerned less with free will (specifically a doctrine of Pelagianism), than in insisting upon conditional grace over irresistible grace. Whitby then modified Arminianism from that condemned at the Synod of Dort in 1618.

Whitby did not deny that God had foreknowledge of man's volitions. God was omniscient, but omniscience was not determination. Edwards stated that Whitby's view contradicted reason, for common sense dictated that God's prescience of the volitions of moral agents was inconsistent with the contingency of events. Arminians argued, in essence, that man was under no restraint or "coaction," yet because they allowed God's foreknowledge, these supposedly voluntary moral actions were necessary and determined.⁵² God could not foreknow events unless they were to happen, and since they were foreknown, they must happen, and therefore, were determined. Whitby had argued that the free actions of the individual were necessary for man to act morally, but like the Puritans, held that to obtain salvation, man must comply with the teachings of God. To Edwards, this inconsistency indicated that the Arminians were as guilty as the Puritans in implying a doctrine of fatality.⁵³

Edwards questioned Whitby's reliance upon the contingency of events rather than prior determination.

⁵¹Daniel Whitby, Discourse on the Five Points, quoted in Edwards, Freedom of the Will, pp. 262-263.

⁵²Edwards, Freedom of the Will, p. 271.

⁵³Ibid., p. 269, and pp. 270-271.

By contingency, the free actions of individuals, and not God, determined the future state of the world. The course of events depended upon "millions and millions of volitions," so that a single event could drastically change the future for all succeeding generations.⁵⁴ The whole divine order and purpose rested upon contingency and not God's sovereignty. Therefore, man's independent actions could thwart all biblical predictions, and God was "liable to be frustrated of His end."⁵⁵ Edwards admitted that the Puritan doctrine of necessity had restricted human liberty, but the Arminians, through contingency, had restricted the liberty of God. They had, in effect, denied moral agency to the most perfect moral agent--an absurd conclusion.

The essential qualities of a moral agent are in God, in the greatest possible perfections; such as understanding to perceive the difference between moral good and evil...and a power of acting according to his choice or pleasure, and being capable of doing those things which are in the highest sense of praiseworthy.⁵⁶

In the process of the will's determination, necessity and contingency again came in conflict. Whitby had argued that free acts must be contingent. He did not state with Chubb that acts of the will were uncaused, so

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 248

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 255.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 166.

that the will's determination must depend upon antecedent choices.⁵⁷ Therefore, the will was not contingent, but previous choice had determined the action of the will, and made it necessary.

An yet they say, necessity is utterly inconsistent with liberty. So that, by their scheme, the acts of the will can't be free unless they are necessary, and yet cannot be free if they are necessary.⁵⁸

Whitby claimed the impossible; contingency belonged to the notion of liberty, yet was inconsistent with it. Edwards argued that Whitby's liberty, like Chubb's, was liberty to act unintelligently and unreasonably, without the guidance of understanding.⁵⁹ The Arminian argument could be sound only if reason and will were separate, or "as long as the will awaits outside the council chamber of speculation."⁶⁰

Isaac Watts, the most moderate of these divines, was one of the most popular writers of the day. His Catechisms, Or Instructions in the Principles of the Christian Religion (1730) and A Short View of the Whole Scripture History (1732) were standard works in England at mid-

⁵⁷Supra, pp. 77-78.

⁵⁸Edwards, Freedom of the Will, pp. 270-271.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 273.

⁶⁰Miller, Jonathan Edwards, p. 254.

century, but his greatest reputation resulted from his hymns. Although he was affected by the Arian heresy, he never widely departed from the mainstream of Puritan thought in either his theology or his hymnody.⁶¹ In 1732 he wrote An Essay on Freedom of Will in God and in Creatures, expressing a mildly Arminian view. He stated that "spirits, which are beings of active nature," have the power within themselves to make determinations.⁶² Edwards countered that the soul could not determine itself as Watts suggested, because the mind cannot be the determining cause of its own actions. Edwards pointed out that the soul, or spirit within the mind, was merely a linguistic substitution for will, and allowed the creature no greater freedom. "Therefore the activity of the nature of the soul affords no relief from the difficulties which the notion of a self-determining power in the will is attended with."⁶³

Edwards treated these three divines in the same fashion; he demonstrated the inconsistencies and absurdities within each's argument for free will in the manner

⁶¹Sidney Lee, editor, Dictionary of National Biography, vol. XX, pp. 978-981.

⁶²Edwards, Freedom of the Will, p. 186.

⁶³Ibid., p. 189.

first outlined by John Locke. The process of volition required an agent and a cause outside of the will itself, so that the will could not be self-caused. Chubb, Whitby, and Watts each described different mechanisms for volition, but each contradicted the conditions necessary for free determination. By answering the specific arguments of each, Edwards undermined the foundation of Arminianism and upheld the Puritan doctrine of necessity and the sovereignty of God on wholly modern grounds.

After removing the major stumbling block, free will, Edwards turned to questions of moral agency that Whitby had raised and that had occupied American polemicists. Whitby stated that if human actions were necessary, then virtue and vice were empty names, and man was not accountable for sin. Edwards answered Whitby from the scriptures. First, he said, "if there be any truth in Christianity or in the holy scriptures, the man Christ Jesus had his will infallibly, unalterably, and unfrustrably determined to good and to that alone."⁶⁴ Edwards doubted that any would claim that Jesus was not virtuous or praiseworthy, although His will was determined. The Arminian statement that praise and blame, virtue and vice could not exist when man's actions were determined, contradicted the sense of the

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 289-290.

scriptures. These conditions could not apply to Christ's actions, and likewise, would not apply to man's. If the perfect moral agent lost no virtue because of determination, then human actions, although determined, would also deserve praise and blame. Second, the Arminian notion questioned the need for Christ's atonement for man's sin. Whitby held that determination removed the accountability for sin from man, and therefore, the imputation of blame as well. Without the pollution of sin, God had no need to sacrifice His son. This scheme perverted the entire gospel and made Christ's atonement completely unnecessary.⁶⁵

The most difficult argument that the Arminians posed, claimed that the Puritan doctrine of necessity made the first cause and orderer of all things [God] the author of sin.⁶⁶ Edwards defined "author of sin" in two ways: the doer of an evil act, and the permitter of an evil deed. "'Tis manifest, that God sometimes permits sin to be committed, and at the same times orders things so, that if He permits the fact, it will come to pass."⁶⁷ God had a completely passive role in the occurrence of sin;

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 301.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 397.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 403. See also A. B. Crabtree, Jonathan Edwards View of Man: A Study in Eighteenth Century Calvinism (Wallington Surrey, England: The Religious Education Press, Ltd., 1948), pp. 8-9, and p. 50. Crabtree presents seven means that reformed theologians used to expiate God's responsibility for sin. Edwards, in choosing "permission"

through His infinite foreknowledge, He knew that man would sin, and permitted it to take place. The permission of sin and the performance of that sin differed greatly, so that to accuse God of the latter was blasphemous, while the former was not reproachful to His character. Edwards stated that God permitted sin because that permission created greater good within the divine scheme, than if He had forbade it. He offered the example of Joseph's enslavement by his brothers' evil act. They intended evil and harm to Joseph, but God's ordering and determining created greater good than if they had not sinned. "As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good."⁶⁸

The doctrine of necessity supposed all events were connected to some antecedent ground and reason, and therefore, man had the means to prove the existence of God. In contrast, the Arminian doctrine of contingency, or that events had no dependence upon preceding causes, took away all such proof.⁶⁹ Arminians dispensed with all such

was not novel, since he had such predecessors as Hollinger and Voetius. However, Edwards used "permission" differently than these earlier theologians, as he had severed the connection with scholastic rationalism.

⁶⁸Genesis 50:20, and Edwards, Freedom of the Will, p. 406. For Joseph Bellamy's application of permission beyond Edwards, infra, pp. 153.

⁶⁹Edwards, Freedom of the Will, p. 405.

notions of world order or a grand design on the part of God. They tended toward a mechanistic cosmos, created by God, and instilled with reason. However, that reasonable order was human, contingent upon millions and millions of volitions by finite men. Such a plan could have no other result than to destroy whatever order God had intended. Edwards argued that the maintenance of the grand design necessitated that this reasonable order be dependent upon God, and not upon man and man's will.⁷⁰

Edwards admitted that the Puritan doctrine of the sovereignty of God placed limits upon man's reason, but these were the natural limitations of a finite creature. The Arminians, in advancing man's reason, placed no limits upon the finite creature, but by so doing, limited God. One could not reasonably suppose that the creator could allow his creations greater liberty than Himself, without fear of frustrating the divine order, or His predetermined plan. Both the gospel and the sacrifice of God's son were purposeless, if His will were limited by the free actions of men. Edwards united biblical proof and reason to halt the Arminian subversion of the grand design of God and to rescue the great Puritan doctrine of the sovereignty of God.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 420.

Edwards had begun to reconcile the two chief attitudes that dominated his personal intellectual and religious life. He demonstrated that Lockean epistemology supported the central doctrine of Puritan experiential religion--the sovereignty of God, and undermined the central theme of the Arminian detractors. As knowledge of the sovereignty of God was the first step in saving conversion, so was it the first step in establishing the new reasonable religion. Edwards' Freedom of the Will provided that foundation, but other fundamental tenets of Puritanism required that same profound redefinition.

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN, DEFENDED: THE NEW ENGLAND PURITAN RESPONSE TO JOHN TAYLOR'S SCRIPTURE-DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN

With Jonathan Edwards' defense of the Puritan doctrine of the sovereignty of God in 1754, that controversy in New England slipped into the background. The Arminians, lacking any effective counter arguments for The Freedom of the Will, levelled only claims that Edwards was too metaphysical and had clouded the issues with his reductio ad absurdum. Further, Edwards, by ignoring the specific arguments posed by either the Anglicans or the liberal Puritans, had removed the controversy from the American experience. He had argued against position that the liberals had also avoided--they had not argued freedom of the will, but only the right of private judgment. But the major reason that the liberals ignored Edwards' treatise was that the nature of the controversy had shifted. The liberals and the moderate Puritans now clashed over the pollution of Adam's sin.

From the time of St. Augustine, the question of

free will included the scriptural argument on the doctrine of original sin.¹ In the eighteenth century, John Taylor broached this question in his Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin, published in 1740.² Taylor's treatise renewed protest against the ancient Christian doctrine that held that the imputation of Adam's first sin tainted and polluted all of his posterity. Traditional Christianity taught that man's original corruption was necessary in the redemptive scheme. Romans 5:19 stated, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Through Adam, the natural head of mankind, all were made sinners and de-

¹The doctrine of original sin, with its roots in the Old Testament, traced man's natural depravity to Adam's fall from grace. By that fall, all men were placed in disfavor with God. Paul, in Romans 5:18-19--"Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation...For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners..."--established the covenant relationship between sin's entrance into the world, and man's deliverance from that sin. However, until the early fifth century, during the debate between St. Augustine and Pelagius, no one had undertaken a systematic study of original sin. St. Augustine described man's fall as complete, so that all of Adam's posterity received his "spoilt seed" and lacked the ability to will good. James Hastings, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, vol. 9, pp. 559-561.

²John Taylor of Norwick, England, (1694-1761) wrote the Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin in 1735, but some dispute exists over the actual publication date. Perry Miller, Jonathan Edwards, cites the date as 1738, while both the Dictionary of National Biography and Jeremy Goring, "Calvinism in Decay," Hibbert Journal, vol. 60, p. 206, give the date as 1740.

serving damnation, just as through the sacrifice of Christ, mankind's spiritual head, God offered salvation to His predestined elect.

Puritan covenant or federal theology softened God's determinism, but did not lessen the effects of the imputation of Adam's sin. If man were not depraved and originally corrupt, Christ's atonement and sacrifice were superfluous. The atonement included a change of state, regeneration or circumcision of the heart; man must necessarily have been in an evil state for God to change his heart to good.³ The sixteenth century Reformation had affirmed the inability of sinful man to gain his own salvation. The spirit of renewal during the Great Awakening similarly emphasized man's depravity and the divine beauty of God. Puritan experiential religion depended upon a close connection between the doctrines of original sin and the sovereignty of God; man's passivity and God's absolute determination in the affair of salvation reflected man's original corruption.

In the disruption of orthodoxy caused by the Latitudinarians and Arminians in eighteenth century England, the Christian doctrine also came under scrutiny. John

³Joseph Haroutanian, Piety Versus Moralism, the Passing of New England Theology (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1964), pp. 20-21.

Taylor's Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin renewed the attack upon this fundamental doctrine of the Reformed Churches in the same manner in which Christ's divinity and the sovereignty of God had earlier been questioned. Taylor questioned original sin on two grounds: reason and scripture. He examined the Greek and Hebrew texts and found mistranslations that had been used incorrectly to establish the doctrine. In this manner, he posited an opposing view to St. Augustine's doctrine, that withstood traditional Puritan counter arguments. An Irish minister, reacting to the treatise, stated "it is a bad book, and a dangerous book, and an heretical book; and, what is worse than all, the book is unanswerable."⁴ Taylor expressed similar confidence, calling his tract the final blow to Calvinism. Sereno Dwight, in his 1829 biography of Jonathan Edwards, stated that Edwards' answer to Taylor's treatise dealt such an unexpected blow to the confident Arminian, that it brought about his early death.⁵

John Taylor, reputedly the best Hebraic scholar in England, had attended the liberal academies at Finden and

⁴Goring, Calvinism in Decay, p. 206, and Jonathan Edwards, The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin, Defended, Clyde A. Holbrook, editor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 3. (Editor's Introduction.)

⁵Edwards, Original Sin, p. 3. (Editor's Introduction.)

Whitehaven. Despite their emphasis upon free thinking, he did not drift away from orthodoxy until after he had left school and entered the ministry. While in college, he had read the works of Philip van Limborch, the Dutch Remonstrant⁶, but these heretical ideas did not immediately influence his theology. His defection to Arminianism became apparent only after his acceptance of the assistant pastorate at Norwich, England, in 1733. Taylor wrote his treatise on original sin two years later, and followed in 1745 with The Key to the Apostolic Writings, and in 1751 with The Scripture-Doctrine of the Atonement. Taken together, these three books hastened the decline of rigid Calvinism in England, in Scotland, and in America.⁷

The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin, the most important of these three books in America, received wide attention from both Arminian and Calvinist clerics. Taylor's extensive Hebraic scholarship, combined with Lockean epistemology, created an attack upon the orthodox view unlike any that had preceded it. He exploded the federal relationship of Adam to his posterity, as inconsistent with reason. Taylor stated that unless man had some voice in the choosing of his personal representative, then he lacked respon-

⁶Supra, p. 10n.

⁷Goring, Calvinism in Decay, p. 206.

sibility for that representative's actions. In the case of Adam, he became mankind's federal head only through divine decree, and without man's concurrence, so that his posterity could not share in Adam's guilt. Further, Taylor stated that the Hebrew texts scripturally demonstrated that man did not suffer the guilt of Adam's sin, but only its consequences.

Taylor divided The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin into three parts. The first two were critical examinations of the Greek and Hebrew biblical texts, and the third dealt with moral theology. The last part gained the most attention among his contemporaries, as he attacked Calvinist assumptions regarding original sin.

Essentially, Taylor argued that the doctrine of original sin was the invention of St. Augustine and that the Apostolic Church had not held such a view. There were, he claimed, at most five references in the Bible that explicitly described the consequences of man's first transgression. Two of these were in the Old Testament and three were in the New.⁸ He denied that any of these references

⁸The two Old Testament citations were Genesis 2:17, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," and Genesis 3:7 to the end of the chapter. This passage described the punishment God levied for Adam's transgression. God threatened Adam with death in the first reference, but according to the second, that

established the federal nature of Adam, so that all of his posterity could not have shared in the guilt of his sin, but only in its consequences. Adam brought death into the world, but only physical death, or the loss of immortality. This, he stated, was not a punishment, but a blessing, for how else could man enter into the Kingdom of God, save by dying.⁹ Taylor based his argument upon original guilt rather than original sin. Man could not be blamed for sharing in the sin of Adam, any more than the family of a criminal shared in the guilt of the father's crimes. The father in this case, as with Adam, was the natural or federal head of the family. The guilt in either instance was not imputed to the posterity, but only the consequences of that guilt. The criminal's family would suffer because of his crime, but they would not share in the responsibility of blame.

death was only the loss of immortality. In the New Testament there were Romans 5:12-21, especially verse twelve: "Wherefore, as by one sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed to all men, for that all men have sinned," I Corinthians 15:21-22: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," and I Timothy 2:14: "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

⁹John Taylor, "The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin," Hibbert Journal, vol. 61, pp. 91-92. This journal article contained only excerpts from the third section of John Taylor's full treatise.

Original guilt and the nature of representation reflected the changing thought in the eighteenth century. Guilt implied the action of an agent, with the agent accountable for his performance. Man in "sinning with Adam" did not willfully join Adam in the performance of sin, and therefore, suffered only the consequences of that sin, the fall from grace, but not the pollution of guilt. In a like manner, representation could not be absolutely decreed or imposed upon mankind. They must have shared in the choosing in order to have shared in the responsibility of their representatives guilt. If man neither willfully sinned, nor selected his representatives, then reasonably, he could not suffer the actual guilt for another's actions.

Further, Taylor admitted that sin and corruption were in the world, but the cause of that sin must be in man himself, and original sin gave a false cause.

Doth not the doctrine of original sin teach you to transfer your wickedness and sin to a wrong cause: whereas you ought to blame or condemn yourself alone for any wicked lusts which prevail in your heart...you lay the whole upon Adam.¹⁰

Taylor felt that the doctrine of original sin imputed the cause of man's sin to a pollution or corruption of the nature of man. Extended logically, this doctrine imputed the cause of sin to God, rather than to man. Assuming a

¹⁰Ibid., p. 91.

pollution of man's nature, meant that man was necessarily vicious and sinful. And if sin were natural and unavoidable, there could be no guilt or condemnation for that which one could not avoid. Taylor felt, then, that the doctrine of original sin subverted the Christian practices of sobriety, righteousness, and charity; original sin corrupted the basic Christian ethical system and was blasphemous to God. Christians needed to emphasize the encouragement offered by Christ's redemption, rather than a state of wretchedness that rendered man's reasonable powers quite useless.¹¹

New England clerics made no immediate response to Taylor's treatise, although it must have had wide circulation in the early 1740's.¹² However, until after the middle of the 1750's, the doctrine of original sin was only a secondary issue. The Anglican Arminians, Dr. Samuel Johnson and John Beach, had attacked that doctrine, but they had directed the brunt of their assault against the sovereignty of God.¹³ Until the publication of the Freedom

¹¹Ibid., p. 91.

¹²H. Sheldon Smith, Changing Conceptions of Original Sin; A Study in American Theology Since 1750 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), pp. 14-15. Smith cites Samuel Hopkins reading the tract at the age of twenty-three (he was born in 1721), and assumed that it was widely circulated late in the 1740's. Jonathan Edwards had received a copy from John Erskine of Scotland in 1748.

of the Will in 1754, the liberal wing of the Puritan Church placed little emphasis on original sin. Edwards, by undermining the arguments for man's free will and moral agency, shifted the controversy to the doctrine of original sin. Liberals, in attacking the Freedom of the Will, asserted that Edwards' use of Locke was abuse, and that by establishing "a theoretical necessity of sin, it destroyed the sinfulness of sin."¹⁴ With this apparent chink in Puritan orthodoxy created by the earlier controversy, Samuel Webster published A Winter's Evening Conversation upon the Doctrine of Original Sin in 1757, attacking that Puritan doctrine.

At the time of publication, Webster was not one of the more prominent clergymen in New England. He had earned his B.A. and M.A. at Harvard College, the latter in 1740, and settled as minister of the Rocky Church of the West Parish of Salisbury. Prior to the Winter's Evening Conversation, he was unknown as a polemical divine, and even as the controversy progressed, his principle rival, Peter Clark, knew him only as the author of that heretical pamphlet. The controversy removed Webster's obscurity as his works became widely read throughout New England. By 1774

¹³Supra, pp. 35-36.

¹⁴Miller, Jonathan Edwards, p. 268.

he had gained sufficient repute to be asked to deliver the Duddleigean Lecture at Harvard, an honor stemming from his attack upon the doctrine of original sin.¹⁵

The "conversation" was a dialogue between two Puritan laymen and a liberal clergyman. The laymen had raised the question whether the doctrine of original sin was a fundamental statement in Christian orthodoxy. The cleric's answer, in denying original sin, offered a watered-down version of John Taylor's tract, without the scriptural arguments. The clergyman skillfully exploded the federal relationship of Adam to his posterity, using the catch phrases of Taylor. He argued that even if Adam was the chosen representative of mankind, and committed sin, the guilt could not be imputed to his posterity. The effector of the sin alone was balmeable for the guilt; mankind suffered only the folly and ill consequences of sin. He concluded that if man received no taint from the sin of a chosen representative, then certainly the sin of one who was not his chosen representative could not be imputed.¹⁶

¹⁵Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, vol. 10, p. 253.

¹⁶Supra, p. 101, and pp. 104-105. Webster argued Taylor's point regarding original guilt rather than original sin, and guilt required man's moral agency. Both the position on guilt and the demands concerning representation negated the idea of the imputation of original sin to mankind.

Webster's cleric followed closely Taylor's other major arguments: original sin was the invention of St. Augustine¹⁷, death was a blessing to man and not a punishment, and there was little scriptural support for this doctrine.¹⁸

Webster differed from Taylor in applying the effects of the imputation of Adam's sin upon newborn children. Taylor originated the point, but Webster changed the emphasis. Instead of being merely an application of the doctrine of original sin, infant damnation became the fundamental issue between moderate Puritans and the liberals. The argument, while based in reason, was charged with emotion. Webster asked what was the nature of a God that would condemn a stillborn or newborn child for Adam's sin, a sin which reflected no fault or wrongdoing on the part of the child? "How can you reconcile, the goodness, holiness, or justice of God, to make them heirs of Hell, and send them into the world only to breathe and die, and then take them to Hell?"¹⁹ The question of infant damnation was the most compelling argument posed by Webster; an argument that many Puritans were wont to answer. Webster pushed the

¹⁷Samuel Webster, The Winter's Evening Conversation upon the Doctrine of Original Sin (Boston: Green and Russell, 1757), p. 4, and p. 23.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 13, and passim.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 6.

argument to the extreme, and stated that if the infants were not sinners before the imputation of Adam's sin, then the imputation alone made these infants sinners and deserving of eternal damnation. If this were the case, the author of that imputation was the cause of their sin and alone was blameable. The creator of all that was good and holy could not also be the author of all that was evil. Thus, Webster argued, the doctrine of original sin did not reflect well upon the character of God, and the holders of such doctrine were guilty of blasphemy.²⁰

Peter Clark, the minister at Danvers, took issue with Webster's claims the following year. The title of his tract, The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin, Stated, and Defended in a Summer-Morning Conversation, Between a Minister and a Neighbor, indicated that he was examining original sin in the harsh light of reason, instead of the idle speculation of a "Winter's Evening Conversation." Clark had earned a reputation as a champion of reason in an earlier controversy with the Baptists (1735), and was considerably better known than Webster.²¹ Clark was a conservative minister of the same ilk as Joseph Sewall and Thomas Prince.²²

²⁰Ibid., p. 27.

²¹Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, vol. 5, p. 617.

He had welcomed the Great Awakening and supported evangelicalsism, but like most of the Boston clergy, opposed enthusiasm. Clark's tract maintained the mechanical framework begun by Webster: the reluctant layman, reflecting upon the ideas that Webster had presented, entertained doubts about the liberal view. However, instead of returning with his questions to the "Winter's Evening" minister, the layman went to his own, a moderate Puritan. The question of infant damnation disturbed neither the layman nor the cleric; they stated that the major conflict between Puritans and Arminians was whether original sin was a fundamental doctrine. Clark dismissed infant damnation in the preface of this tract as among the secret things which belonged only to God. Again in the body, he referred to infant damnation as a "thing which few or none maintain," but otherwise ignored it as a major issue in the controversy.²³

Peter Clark's Summer-Morning Conversation presaged many of the arguments that Jonathan Edwards would use to

²²Joseph Sewall and Thomas Prince, two of the older moderate leaders in Boston, shared the pulpit of the Old South Church from 1718 until Prince's death in 1758.

²³Peter Clark, The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin, Stated and Defended in a Summer-Morning Conversation, between a Minister and a Neighbor (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1758), p. 1, and p. 8.

explode John Taylor's tract. He combined reason and scripture in the manner of Edwards, but his argument had one major deficiency, he rigidly retained federal theology. In so doing, he denied man the right to choose his own representatives. An act of God established Adam as the federal head of mankind; God covenanted with the whole of mankind, when Adam was the whole of mankind, for, as Clark argued, Adam's posterity "are but Adam multiplied."²⁴ Adam was the natural representative of mankind, as parents are the natural representatives of their children. The federal relationship, then, was merely the continuation of a law of nature.²⁵ Clark was unwilling to surrender this argument, as he saw covenant theology, complete with original sin, as the major discord between Webster and himself. If Adam were not the head of physical mankind, as Christ was the head of spiritual mankind, then the entire Puritan redemptive scheme failed. Sin entered the world by Adam, and redemption by Christ. Man was totally depraved and corrupt by nature, which established original sin as a fundamental doctrine. Clark correctly centered the controversy on the relationship of original sin to the redemption by Christ, but placed his defense in an untenable position through his insistence upon federal theology.

²⁴Ibid., p. 21.

²⁵Ibid., p. 17.

Clark denied that St. Augustine had invented the doctrine of original sin. St. Augustine had given the belief a name, but the doctrine itself had Old Testament roots, and was generally received and confessed in Apostolic times.²⁶ As the name was lacking before the fifth century, one could not expect to find references to "original sin" in the scripture, but it "was copiously and in a great variety of terms asserted and explained therein."²⁷ Clark cited several additional texts, not cited by Webster, like Genesis 6:5, which while not referring directly to Adam's sin, did "teach and prove the original and universal depravation of man's nature from its effects."²⁸

Probably the most important point that Clark made dealt with the claim that the doctrine of original sin made God the author of man's sin. He defined sin as a privation of moral good, and therefore, had no efficient cause that one could impute to God. Man, in the case of sin, was not a moral agent or efficient cause of sin, but only the deficient cause. Man sinned because he failed to perform good. Clark's answer was incomplete, but pointed toward

²⁶Ibid., pp. 99-100.

²⁷Ibid., p. 125.

²⁸Ibid., p. 74. Genesis 6:5 stated, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

the argument that Edwards expressed upon the nature of sin. But more importantly, Clark uncovered a basic difference between the Puritan and Arminian view of sin. To the former, sin was a lack of good, the inability to perform righteous acts; in other words, it was a part of the basic nature of man. Arminians viewed sin from the standpoint of guilt, and guilt required the performance of unholy acts, instead of an original corruption or a polluted nature. The individual's personal activity had to deserve damnation. Therefore, the questions that Webster posed were not valid in the Puritan sense, and Clark, mistakenly, did not dismiss them, rather than agreeing that few held such feelings or that infant damnation belonged to the secret things of God.

In the pamphlet dispute that followed, one point, infant damnation, became the major contention between moderate and liberal Puritans. Charles Chauncy and Edmund March joined Webster in defenses of the Winter's Evening Conversation, and all three liberal clerics insisted that Clark had ignored the major dispute, that Calvinism advocated infant damnation. Chauncy and March ignored the body of the tract, and directed their writings to the preface. Edmund March advised the attestors to Clark's defense to temper his statements.²⁹ He asked them why, in Clark's tract, infants were a special case, that they were not

subject to the federal liableness for Adam's sin, "while others; viz.: all that live to years, etc. remain under the same?"³⁰ Chauncy exploited the same inconsistency in Clark's scheme. Puritans viewed the whole of Adam's posterity as liable to eternal death for Adam's sin, but Clark's doctrine allowed some of Adam's posterity, namely infants, exception from damnation. Chauncy accused Clark of substituting "the private opinions of such men as Mr. Locke and Taylor, in the room of universally known tenets of Calvinism."³¹ Clark had made the damnation of infants a special case, and in that instance agreed with the liberal position. Chauncy assumed that Clark's silence connoted total agreement with Webster and a significant modification: "I rather think the better of him for not saying, with the Calvinists, that the first sin is so imputed to them [infants], as that they are liable to the damna-

²⁹The attestors to Clark's tract were Joseph Sewall, Thomas Prince, Samuel Phillips, Thomas Foxcroft, and Ebenezer Pemberton. Ibid., p. 11.

³⁰Edmund March, Fair Play! Or a Needful Word to Temper the Tract Entitled A Summer-Morning Conversation (Portsmouth: Daniel Fowle, 1758), p. 14.

³¹[Charles Chauncy], The Opinion of One that has Perused the Summer-Mornings Conversation Concerning Original Sin by the Rev. Mr. Peter Clark (Boston: Green and Russell, 1758), p. 14. Clark, expecting a favorable response from Charles Chauncy, asked the liberal cleric to review his work. The result was this unfavorable letter, printed anonymously. H. Sheldon Smith, Changing Conceptions of Original Sin, p. 47.

tion of hell."³²

In less than a year, the liberal view abandoned the specific attack begun by John Taylor, and held that the only point of controversy was the emotional issue of infant damnation, the point least defensible from either the scriptures or common sense. The idea that an all powerful God would condemn innocent, newborn babes repugned the Puritan defender and aided the Arminians. This issue was only a minor point in the entire concept of original sin, a point that had little validity for either side when viewed in the broad perspective. The condemnation of infants was in fact no different than the condemnation of adults. If Adam's sin tainted all mankind equally, and the taint of that sin deserved damnation, then no separate cases existed for infants and adults. These liberals backed Clark into expressing neither a Calvinist nor a liberal view of original sin, over this one specious question, an emotion filled one that he wanted to leave moot.

Joseph Bellamy, a disciple of Jonathan Edwards, better typified the kind of Puritan response these charges required. Bellamy challenged the validity of Webster's placing God as the judge higher than God as the sovereign.

³²Chauncy, The Opinion of One that has Perused, pp. 16-17.

But how do you prove, that death comes upon it [the infant] in this legal manner, from God as the lawgiver and judge? Who while acting in that capacity, ever renders to everyone according to their desserts?³³

His answer to infant damnation was equally unequivocal; if one agreed to the imputation of Adam's sin, as under the federal conception, then God had no choice but to damn them. They were not innocent babes, but shared in Adam's sin, as all the rest of mankind had. "God may justly cast them off forever; in case that sin deserved so great a punishment, which you grant it did."³⁴ Had Clark answered Webster in this manner, he would have avoided his inconsistencies, and the nature of the controversy would have taken a different complexion. The liberals would have had to pursue the central issues that separated the moderate and liberal Puritan thought on this doctrine. The controversy would have retained the framework first established by John Taylor: was original sin a fundamental statement of Puritan orthodoxy, scripturally what proof existed for original sin, and what punishment did man deserve, if any, for Adam's sin? Clark lacked the bluntness of Bellamy, and had allowed the controversy to become stalled upon a

³³Joseph Bellamy, A Letter to the Rev. Author of the Winter's Evening Conversation (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1758), p. 5.

³⁴Ibid., p. 7.

minor point.³⁵

The controversy included another round of pamphlets by Samuel Webster and Peter Clark. Together, The Winter's Evening Conversation, Vindicated and A Defense of the Principles of the Summer-Mornings Conversation, illustrated the degradation of the debate. Clark's apparent surrender over the point of infant damnation overshadowed the several good, reasonable arguments that he had introduced. Clark had stated that the futurity of infants belonged to God alone, but admitted that if God did condemn infants, surely He would not punish them as severely as those whose actions deserved damnation. God exempted them from "the stings and horrors of a guilty conscience, which arise from reflection upon men's actual sins."³⁶ Clark avoided the onus of declaring that infants deserved damnation, and essentially gave up this minor point. Webster turned this acquiescence into abandonment of the entire doctrine of original sin. He insisted that there was less controversy between his position and Clark's than between Clark and the Calvinist.³⁷

³⁵Joseph Bellamy had more importance in this controversy than the present discussion indicates. However, beyond this letter, his contribution belongs more properly to Chapter V. Infra, pp. 152-159.

³⁶Peter Clark, A Defense of the Principles of the Summer-Mornings Conversation Concerning Original Sin (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1760), p. 19, and p. 23.

The more important assertions, clouded by this false argument, dealt with the necessity of man's sinning while under a polluted or tainted nature.³⁸ Webster stated that natural necessity removed the blame of sin from man, and placed the blame on the cause of the imputation. Clark countered that the federal relationship did not make sinning necessary; God was not actively involved in the imputation. God did not will the fall of Adam, but permitted the violation of the covenant made between God and Adam, so that man brought sin into the world through his own free will. With the fall, man lost free will and sin completely and irrevocably tainted his nature. Therefore, one could not reasonably charge God as the author of sin, but merely the permitter of sin.³⁹

Clark, by borrowing heavily from Jonathan Edwards' treatises on The Freedom of the Will and Original Sin, actually countered one of the major claims lodged by the liberals against the Puritan scheme. However, in the context of this controversy, such insight did not aid the

8 ³⁷Samuel Webster, The Winter's Evening Conversation, Vindicated (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1759), p. 21.

³⁸Essentially this is the same doctrine of necessity that the Arminians claimed that the sovereignty of God required. Man's actions were determined, and therefore, man lacked responsibility for sin. Supra, p. 88.

³⁹Peter Clark, A Defense of the Principles, p. 104.

Danvers minister. The doctrine of original sin was no longer the concern of the liberal clergy. The controversy between Peter Clark and Samuel Webster clouded rather than clarified the issues between liberal and moderate Puritan doctrine. Clark's reluctance to answer the charges of Webster straight away, led to an avoidance of the major issues, so that this pamphlet debate was only a sideshow in the controversy between Puritans and Arminians. The disputants did uncover many of the major issues initially, and Clark's answers definitely demonstrated the trend towards a redefined Puritan doctrine, but they failed to maintain the controversy on the level it began.

Several authors, in defending Puritanism from the Arminian attack upon original sin, avoided the regrettable twist that Clark's and Webster's controversy had taken. Joseph Bellamy was one, but more important in this discussion were Samuel Niles and Jonathan Edwards. Both of these authors ignored the pamphlet warfare that was taking place in New England and struck at the root of the heresy, at John Taylor's Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin itself. Samuel Niles wrote The True Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin, Stated and Defended in 1757, and in the following year, Edwards' The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin, Defended was published posthumously. Because these works avoided the peculiar twist that the other phase of the

controversy had taken, they dealt more exactly with the major issues of disharmony between Puritan and Arminian principles. Both dismissed infant damnation and agreed that God had every right to damn infants as He damned adults because of pollution from Adam's sin.

In the preface to Original Sin, Jonathan Edwards stated that he had written his defense prior to knowledge of Mr. Niles' work, and continued publication even with the chance of duplication.⁴⁰ Edwards had not read Niles' defense, so that he did not realize that concern over duplication was unwarranted. There was a great disparity between the answers that Edwards and Niles presented to Taylor's tract. Niles' work was scriptural and scholastic, and had ignored the changes in eighteenth century epistemology. He echoed John Calvin, the Synod of Dort, and St. Augustine in reaffirming those defenses of original sin formulated centuries before. Niles denied that Taylor had opened a new argument, but merely restated the false debate begun by Pelagius in the fifth century. The difference between Niles' and Edwards' arguments demonstrated the tran-

⁴⁰Edwards stated that Niles had confined his answer to the first two parts of Taylor's Scripture-Doctrine, while his own was a more general defense of the entire doctrine. Both he felt, "may receive light from each other, and may confirm one another; and so the common design be better subserved." Edwards, Original Sin, p. 103.

sition from a more traditional Calvinism to the new reasonable Puritanism in the period following the Great Awakening. Both held similar doctrinal views, but the manner in which they defended these views differed drastically. Edwards could no longer reassert the fundamentalist ideas of Calvin, but now had to reinterpret those principles according to the temper of the Enlightened Age.

The background of the two divines differed as much as did their treatises on original sin. Samuel Niles, born in 1673, was seventy-three at the time he wrote the True Scripture-Doctrine. He was the first student to enter Harvard College from Rhode Island; matriculating at twenty-one, he vastly exceeded the average age of entering first-year students. Following graduation in 1699, he spent over ten years as a missionary in Rhode Island, before he became minister at the South Parish in Braintree. Soon after his ordination on May 23, 1711, the Braintree parishioners felt Niles' conservatism over the inclusion of singing in the Sunday services. Unlike most New England clerics, Niles feared the inroads of popery by such a practice, and saw the "hand of the Devil in the new way of singing, as they call it."⁴¹ He accepted this innovation only after the de-

⁴¹Acceptance of Hymnody was widespread in the eighteenth century. Niles, however, retained Calvin's impost against singing proclaimed during the sixteenth century Reformation. Niles' position was generally more stringent

fection of twenty members of his congregation to the Church of England. During the Great Awakening, his conservatism reappeared; he was one of the most bitter opponents of George Whitefield and the "enthusiastic exhorters."⁴² Following the revival, his major concern was defending orthodoxy from the liberal wing of the Puritan Church. In 1757 he again defended another Reformation principle, and his conservatism was as apparent in the True Scripture-Doc-trine, as in his refusal to accept hymnody.

John Taylor, in exploding federal or covenant theology, stated that there was a logical inconsistency in the covenant of works, the covenant of grace, the Mosaic Law, and the imputation of sin. The covenant of works, according to Taylor, made between God and Abraham, governed the salvation of the Jews until the death of Christ and the ascendancy of the covenant of grace. The covenant of works established a legal salvation, God judged man according to his merits, but this legal salvation preceded the law which God gave to Moses. Taylor stated that this contradicted reason to assume that man was under legal salvation from Adam to Moses without the law. He cited Romans 5:13, "For

than that common in New England at that time. Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, vol. 4, p. 488.

⁴²Ibid., p. 489.

until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law."⁴³ Under the conditions established by the Old Testament and by Paul, until God gave man the Mosaic Law there was no imputation of sin. Thus, Adam's sin could not be imputed because there was no law in the world. To Taylor, this text from Romans specifically denied that the doctrine of original sin was a fundamental religious statement.

Niles' traditional answer to Taylor stated that Adam was the federal and natural head of mankind, and as the first man represented all his posterity in the covenant with God. His failure to comply with the provisions of that covenant resulted in his fall from grace, and the pollution of all his natural posterity with his sin. However, Niles stated that God, in His infinite foreknowledge, knew that Adam would fall from grace, and therefore, enjoined Christ in the covenant of grace prior to the creation of the world.⁴⁴ Since the covenant God made with man came after the creation of the world, Niles had the covenant of grace preceding that of works. This scheme clearly contradicted reason; if the covenant of works came

⁴³Edwards, Original Sin, p. 315.

⁴⁴Samuel Niles, The True Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin, Stated and Defended (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1757), pp. 24-25.

after the covenant of grace, then the former had no validity, and was a false covenant. God's predetermination of Adam's fall from grace removed the first sin from man's free will, and thus could not be imputed. Calvinist doctrine had allowed Adam free will prior to the fall, but Niles' conclusions contradicted any notions of free will at all.

Taylor had broached infant damnation in his discussion of man's original nature. He denied that man was originally either righteous or corrupt and polluted with Adam's sin. Conformity to the law required the action of a moral agent, and an infant could not be a moral agent; an infant came into the world without any preconceived notions of good and evil because these were learned concepts.⁴⁵ The Calvinist assumption that Adam was perfectly righteous before the fall, or that his posterity were originally corrupt because of imputation, contradicted reason. Man was born without any innate knowledge or ability, and therefore, was originally neither good or evil.

Niles brushed aside Taylor's reasonable argument, responding only with biblical proof. He answered that if

⁴⁵Taylor indicated here his reliance upon Lockean epistemology. Man could not assume an original pollution, because there was in man no innate determination of good and evil, because they were learned qualities.

man were destitute of original righteousness, then man would have had no right to immediate communion with God. But God had spoken directly to Adam, demonstrating that in fact he was originally righteous.⁴⁶ Further, Niles argued that simple observation of infants' demonstrated the pollution of Adam's sin and their lack of virtue.

The absence of this [conformity to the moral law] so evidently appearing in all children, as soon as they are mature enough to be capable of religious and virtuous action, demonstrates them to be born, in a state of sin.⁴⁷

Niles' conclusions demonstrated a complete lack of understanding of Lockean epistemology and a reliance upon traditional arguments. His treatise was of the type which, Taylor boasted, made his work irrefutable.

Samuel Niles worked himself into a maze of contradiction within the Calvinist scheme. One could not refute Taylor without reinterpreting the foundation of the principles he defended and rejecting scholastic reasoning. Man had new faith in human ability and responsibility, so that the old arguments no longer were acceptable. Reason was the tool that man used to find God in the eighteenth century, and scripture had to conform to reason, rather than reason to scripture. Niles failed to answer Taylor because

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 63.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 179-180

his philosophy and religion were medieval, and the Puritan order emerging in the 1750's required an enlightened defense.

Obviously, Niles had not read nor understood Jonathan Edwards' Freedom of the Will, for in that treatise, Edwards answered many of those problems that lead Niles into inconsistencies and illogical conclusions. In the Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin, Defended, Edwards continued the framework established in his first work against the Arminian heresy.⁴⁸ He defined original sin, not merely as Adam's sin, as Taylor took it to mean, but as "the innate sinful depravity of the heart" vulgarly understood to include the imputation of Adam's sin.⁴⁹ Taylor's concern with original sin was a result of not understanding imputation of sin, and looking for guilt or or blame in an act too remote to suppose human activity. Edwards compared the federal relationship of Adam and his posterity to the roots and branches of a tree. If the

⁴⁸Many of the arguments presented by John Taylor paralleled those of Daniel Whitby and Thomas Chubb, so that many of those conditions Taylor deemed necessary for human nature, Edwards had already demonstrated to be false in the Freedom of the Will. Because of the nature of original sin, Edwards presented a much more scriptural proof, and thereby avoided the charge of being too metaphysical. Miller, Jonathan Edwards, p. 267.

⁴⁹Edwards, Original Sin, p. 107.

roots, the beginnings of the tree, are polluted and rotten, one could not expect the branches to produce good fruit. God in the covenant made with Adam "looked on his posterity as being one with him."⁵⁰ Thus, the pollution of man's soul at birth was not from the imputation of Adam's guilt, but the imputation of the first sin. The race of Adam partook

of the sin of the first apostasy, so as that this, in reality and propriety, shall become their sin; by virtue of a real union between the root and branches of the world of mankind ...and therefore the sin of apostasy is not theirs, merely because God imputes it to them; but is truly and properly theirs, and on that ground, God imputes it to them.⁵¹

Edwards established the covenant or federal framework on both reasonable and scriptural grounds. Niles and Clark had relied heavily upon the proof of the federal nature of Adam and Christ from Romans 5:19.⁵² This text was the major pillar of federal theology, but remained inadequate in light of human liberty and the rights of man. Taylor had argued against the covenant theory, because of the necessity of the pollution of moral agents. Edwards stated that Taylor misunderstood imputation and also the

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 389.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 407-408.

⁵²"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

nature of the pollution that resulted from Adam's fall. Taylor had charged that the doctrine of necessity had made God the author of sin, corrupting man's nature by a divine declaration. In Freedom of the Will, Edwards had rejected the charge that sin's entrance into the world required God's activity, but only His permission.⁵³ Taylor had attacked a rigid determination that Edwards declared did not exist; man was not bound to sin by a divine decree. In this treatise on Original Sin, he expanded the nature of man's pollution. According to Edwards, God created man with two sets of principles: a natural or carnal set which made him a part of God's creation, and a spiritual or supernatural set which was decidedly superior.⁵⁴ When man fell from grace and communion with God, he lost the spiritual set of principles and possessed only the carnal or natural ones.⁵⁵ This accounted for the corruption of mankind; without the superior principles to guide him to holy and virtuous activity, man could not refrain from becoming sin-

⁵³Supra, pp. 93-94.

⁵⁴Edwards was careful to point out that "natural and supernatural" did not have the traditional scholastic connotation. Natural principles were not those which man had originally, but only those which man has "only as a man." His use of natural and supernatural differentiated between the carnal and spiritual sets of principles. Edwards, Original Sin, pp. 381-382, and Miller, Jonathan Edwards, p. 281.

⁵⁵Edwards, Original Sin, p. 382.

ful. Further, as mankind multiplied, only these natural principles passed to Adam's posterity, as one could not pass on something that he did not possess.

Edwards' explanation avoided the usual difficulties attendant with covenant or federal theology. The pollution imputed to mankind was not guilt for sin, nor an active exercise by God. God could not be the author of sin, as He never implanted any bad principles in man's nature, but merely withdrew those that were perfect and holy.⁵⁶ The separation of natural and supernatural principles explained man's original righteousness before the fall, and the pollution of sin afterwards. God's sovereignty remained intact, and the Arminian charge of His authorship of sin was demonstrated to be false. Both Edwards and Clark described sin as a privation of moral good and built upon God as the permissive cause and not the effector of sin.

As Taylor had directed two-thirds of his tract to a scriptural denial of original sin, Edwards too connected his reasonable argument with the scriptures. Of the five biblical citations that Taylor had claimed referred to Adam's sin, or the consequences of that sin, the most important was the long passage from Romans.⁵⁷ From this,

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 383.

⁵⁷"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men,

Taylor had extracted his scriptural argument against federal theology, the imputation of sin, and described death merely as physical death and not the wages of sin. As indicated by Niles, Calvinists had difficulty with the thirteenth verse, "sin is not imputed when there is no law." Thus, according to Taylor, the death that "reigned from Adam to Moses," was not spiritual death, but only physical death which carried no blame for sin. Niles had abrogated the covenant of works in an attempt to answer Taylor, but Edwards sought a higher patriarch than Abraham for that covenant. Edwards stated that this passage clearly indicated Paul's intention of proving that the covenant of

for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; must more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 5:12-21.

works predated Abraham. Man's moral state depended upon Adam and not upon Abraham, and the law that man violated and made him a sinner was not the Mosaic Law, but the covenant articles between God and Adam. Paul showed that "sin, guilt, and desert [sic] of ruin, became universal in the world, long before the law given by Moses to the Jewish nation had any being."⁵⁸

Edwards found no obstacle in the thirteenth verse as had other defenders of the covenant theology and original sin. He demonstrated that sin belonged to man, not because Adam's seed was spoiled, but that Adam was the legal representative of mankind, a highly compatible idea with the Age of Enlightenment.⁵⁹ Jonathan Edwards reinterpreted the covenant relationship between Adam and his posterity, and opposed any notion of sinning because of a divine imposition. The relationship was a natural one, conforming to a higher law than man's, and entirely reasonable.

Edwards' Original Sin avoided all of the pitfalls inherent in Samuel Niles' scholasticism, and demonstrated that Puritan doctrine, regulated by reason, created a viable religion in the eighteenth century. He retained the

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 338.

⁵⁹Miller, Jonathan Edwards, p. 277.

Puritan doctrinal positions on the sovereignty of God, the denial of free will, and the pollution of original sin. His methodology had changed from the first treatise on free will to the second on original sin, but then so had the controversy. The two treatises joined the dominant themes in Edwards' life. He emphasized the unity of the scriptures and experience in contrasting human depravity with the divine beauty of God. He had exploded the belief that man sinned by necessity and demonstrated that man merely had a tendency to sin, a tendency which gave as clear an indication of man's depravity as if he had sinned by necessity. The Arminian notion that man had a basically good character because he sinned less than he performed good works was as absurd as to declare "the state of that ship is good, to cross the Atlantick Ocean in, under a notion that it will proceed and sail above water more hours than it will be sinking."⁶⁰

Jonathan Edwards died on March 22, 1758, from an inoculation against smallpox. He lived long enough to redefine Puritan principles upon a reasonable basis, but did not determine the direction in which they would be developed by his principle students, Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins. Edwards had not intended to posit an optimistic

⁶⁰Edwards, Original Sin, p. 129.

world view. Man remained polluted by Adam's sin and salvation was not opened to a general call. However, Edwards' view of God had significantly changed traditional Puritanism. God's sovereignty was not diminished, but the rule of reason tempered the disparity between God the judge and God the sovereign. God did not control mankind and the world by arbitrary judgment or whimsy, but created and governed by reason. For the developing optimistic view, Edwards' greatest advance was to remove man from the necessity of sinning. He had tempered the doctrine of predestination, without destroying God's sovereignty or granting man free will. Jonathan successfully created a world order, consonant with Puritan principles, that neither diminished the power of God, nor resulted in the mechanical sterility of the Deists. The doctrinal resolutions of Edwards provided the foundation from which Joseph Bellamy, and other New Divinity followers of Edwards, would create optimistic Puritanism.

CHAPTER V

THE WISDOM OF GOD IN THE PERMISSION OF SIN: JOSEPH BELLAMY'S OPTIMISTIC INTERPRETATION OF NEW ENGLAND PURITANISM

With the death of Jonathan Edwards in 1758, the leadership of the New Divinity School of theology passed to his close friend and student, Joseph Bellamy. Their friendship of mind and spirit began after Bellamy graduated from Yale College, and journeyed to Northampton to read theology under Edwards in 1736.¹ Shortly after his graduation at sixteen, Bellamy experienced saving conversion and dedicated his life to the ministry. Edwards re-

¹Bellamy graduated from Yale College with special honors in language and literature, and until his conversion, did not display any special concern for theology. Following conversion, he read with the Reverend Mr. Samuel Hall, pastor at Chesire, Connecticut, before travelling to Northampton. Bellamy's stay with Edwards coincided with Jonathan Edwards' preparation of the Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Works of God, a history of the revival in Northampton, 1734-1735. Bellamy absorbed much of the spirit of revival from Edwards and that revival. For more biographical detail, see Glenn Paul Anderson, "Joseph Bellamy (1719-1790): The Man and His Work," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1971), and Tyron Edwards, "Memoir," The Works of Joseph Bellamy, vol. 1 (Boston: The Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), and William B. Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, vol. 1 (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969), pp. 404-414.

mained, until his death, the strongest influence upon his theological thought. After reading at Northampton for about one year, Bellamy was licensed to preach by the New Haven East Association of Ministers on May 31, 1737. The following year, in November, he accepted a temporary call from Bethlem, Connecticut; that call became permanent on February 28, 1740, and ordination followed that spring.² Bellamy occupied the pulpit of the Bethlem Church for the next fifty years.

In the year of his ordination, the revival swept through the New England village of Bethlem and lasted until the summer of 1741.³ The evangelical fervor, spurred by the presence of George Whitefield, the Grand Itinerant, in the Connecticut Valley, overtook the young preacher. Bellamy followed Whitefield's example, and for nearly two years, stumped Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.⁴ Often he would

²Anderson, Joseph Bellamy, p. 132, and p. 181, and Edwards, Memoir, p. viii.

³Anderson, Joseph Bellamy, p. 193.

⁴Itineracy was a new phenomena in New England that the revival spawned, and was in turn spurred by it. Before the Great Awakening, ministers ventured beyond their pulpit only upon invitation from another congregation. Itinerant preachers ignored the contractual relationship between a minister and his congregation, and preached in fields, in the commons, as well as in churches. Ibid., pp. 329-331.

preach several times on the same day from different pulpits. Bellamy was a powerful preacher--his pulpit style and ability exceeded that of Jonathan Edwards' and, according to some contemporaries, surpassed even those of George Whitefield's.⁵

Bellamy and his fellow itinerants, Benjamin Pomeroy, Eleazar Wheelock, Jonathan Parsons, John Graham, and Jedidiah Mills, occupied a moderate position in the revival experience. They separated themselves from the enthusiastic lay exhorters, like James Davenport and Andrew Croswell, who had stimulated the negative reaction to the revival and to experiential religion. Bellamy saw these radical new lights spreading a "fanatical and censorious spirit, which seemed to put in jeopardy the best interests of the church."⁶ Their evangelizing fostered pride, ignorance, and spiritual quackery that moved Bellamy to end his itineracy.⁷ In 1742, he returned to his flock Bethlem, and initiated a program for preparing young men for the ministry. Bellamy led his students away from the "errors" of enthusiasm, into careful, systematic theology by reading, conversing, and writing upon the

⁵Ibid., p. 195.

⁶Bellamy, quoted in Sprague, Annals of American Pulpit, p. 405.

⁷Edwards, Memoir, p. xi.

important doctrinal questions. By this method, he emphasized experimental and practical religion, and retained the proper spirit of the Great Awakening. He probably directed more student's theological studies than any other divine in New England at this time, and consequently exerted his personal influence over the theology of the succeeding generation.⁸

Joseph Bellamy, in his writings that followed the Great Awakening, focused upon the radical new lights, or "refined Antinomians,"⁹ that appeared during the revival. These radicals preached a salvation by faith and dependence upon God's grace that Bellamy equated with the Antinomian heresy prevalent in Boston in the 1630's. Like their predecessors, the "refined Antinomians" held a false conception of the sacrifice that Jesus had made: Christ satisfied the entire obligation of the elect, so that nothing more was required of them than their assurance of personal salvation. Such preaching, he argued, emphasized a self-righteous grace that endangered true piety and experiential religion. Puritan doctrine denied that man

⁸Ibid., p. lvii.

⁹Bellamy coined the phrase "refined Antinomians" in his attack upon the "false piety" expressed by Andrew Crosswell. See Bellamy's tract entitled A Blow at the Root of the Refined Antinomianism of the Present Age (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1763).

could ever hold such assurance; rather man lived in ignorance of his actual future state. These new Antinomians misrepresented the true nature of religion and the gospel scheme of salvation.

Hence it is on the one hand that Arminian, Neonomian, and Pelagian errors have taken their rise and the Antinomian on the other. Wrong notions of God lie at the bottom; and then wrong notions of the law; and then wrong notions of religion in general; and all originally proceed and grow up out of the wrong temper of men's minds.¹⁰

Bellamy did not ignore the threat Latitudinarianism posed for orthodoxy, but reacted more strongly to the radical new lights, and the danger they presented to revivalism and emotional religion.¹¹ He reflected this concern in nearly all of the doctrinal and controversial works he published in the two decades following the Great Awakening. Fear of this radical threat modified his essentially Edwardsean Calvinism into a more optimistic theology.

Bellamy was not an original theologian, but primarily an interpreter of Edwardsean thought. He began his

¹⁰Joseph Bellamy, True Religion Delineated; or Experimental Religion, as Distinguished from Formality on the one hand, and Enthusiasm on the other, set in a scriptural and a Rational light (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1750), p. 68.

¹¹Bellamy's objections against the new light radicals were not unique. Jonathan Edwards addressed the same problem in identifying true religion in Religious Affections and True Grace, Distinguished from the Experience of Devils.

study of theology under Edwards' influence, and the master-pupil relationship continued after Edwards' death. Their correspondence began in January, 1741, and illustrated their warm friendship and Bellamy's respect and reliance upon his former teacher. They shared ideas, letters, and books; each sought the other's suggestions and approval for their major doctrinal works.¹² In 1750, when Bellamy finished True Religion Delineated, he sent the manuscript to Edwards for comment. The latter responded with hearty approval, and wrote a preface declaring the importance of this book, as false piety had obstructed revivals in religion since the Reformation.¹³

True Religion Delineated, the cornerstone of Bellamy's interpretation of the new theology, was a general defense of Puritan covenant theology. Bellamy asked rhetorically, what was true religion, and answered that it was both an understanding and a conformity to the law and to the gospel.¹⁴ He divided the treatise into two discourses to discuss essentially four issues: the being of God, the law of God, the ruin of man, and the salvation

¹²Anderson, Joseph Bellamy, p. 274, and Stanley T. Williams, Six Letters From Jonathan Edwards to Joseph Bellamy, p. 231.

¹³Jonathan Edwards, "Preface," True Religion Delineated, p. ii.

¹⁴Bellamy, True Religion Delineated, p. 2.

of man.¹⁵ The first discourse demonstrated the reasonableness of God and God's law, and the second demonstrated that covenant theology conformed exactly to the gospel and to reason. Bellamy intended this treatise to be theologically constructive, rather than controversial.¹⁶ He did, however, challenge Arminian and Antinomian errors in understanding God's law and their failure to conform to the gospel.

Bellamy's search of the scriptures uncovered in Matthew 22:37-39, the only law that God gave to man:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind...and the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

He stated that Adam's violation of this commandment caused mankind's fall, and Christ's completion established the new covenant of grace. God's law could not have changed between the fall of mankind and Christ's atonement; the law was as infinite and unchangeable as God Himself. To change the law required a change in the nature of God, an idea that Bellamy held too impossible to suppose.¹⁷

Bellamy deviated slightly from Puritan orthodoxy in his

¹⁵Anderson, Joseph Bellamy, p. 692.

¹⁶Frank Hugh Foster, Genetic History of New England Theology (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), p. 108.

¹⁷Bellamy, True Religion Delineated, pp. 63-64.

interpretation of the being of God. God was as absolute and as infinite for Bellamy as for traditional Puritanism, but He could neither be arbitrary nor unreasonable. God's law commanded men to love Him with all their hearts, souls, and minds, but did not demand any absolute standard of conformity for all men. His law accepted the natural variance in men's abilities, and therefore, placed perfect obedience to that law within the abilities of all men.¹⁸ Bellamy here demonstrated the fundamental shift from the scholastic view of man to that held in the eighteenth century. He witnessed the dignity of the individual, with distinct abilities and differences, and adapted God's law to this conception.

Throughout the treatise, Bellamy referred to God as the moral governor of the world, rather than God the sovereign or God the judge. The term "moral governor" moderated between these extremes; God determined and constituted the law absolutely, because the nature of the law and the being of God demanded it. Only an infinite, all-powerful being could establish an infinite law beyond the limitations of the finite creature.

¹⁸"And it is plainly the case, that all mankind, as to their natural capabilities, are capable of a perfect conformity to the law, from this, that when sinners are converted they have no new natural faculties, though they have a new temper." Ibid., p. 99.

God knows infinitely the best what to do with what he has, that there is no motive from without to excite him to act, it is infinitely fit he should be left to himself, to act according to his own discretion.¹⁹

On the other hand, Arminians insisted that God act only as a judge--to judge individuals according to their merits, rather than hold their future state dependent upon an absolute decree. Dr. Samuel Johnson referred to God as the "moral governor" as well, but connoted only God's judgeship.²⁰ Jonathan Edwards' sovereignty of God matched the traditional Calvinist view, and held that God acted according to his absolute decree.²¹ Bellamy's position stood midway between these two views: God established the law absolutely, but judged man's performance to the law according to his individual abilities.

Bellamy reflected the traditional Puritan position that God acted sovereignly because of His infinite ability and foresight. Yet, "moral governor" tempered this traditional view, so that God could not act either arbitrary or unreasonably; therefore, sin, or the violation God's infinite law, was an infinite evil and deserved eternal damnation. Man sinned by refusing to love God with all his heart, mind, and soul; this refusal was en-

¹⁹Ibid., p. 37.

²⁰Supra, p. 35.

²¹Supra, pp. 94-95.

tirely voluntary and did not stem from any polluted nature or inability of man to conform to the law.²² Damnation, then, was not an arbitrary punishment, but one levied by a reasonable God. God's infinite being required that He act absolutely, but likewise His infinite reason demanded that He not contradict reason.

In the second discourse, Bellamy applied the reasonableness of God and God's law to those doctrinal questions connected with covenant theology. He maintained the federal relationship of Adam and Christ as the physical and spiritual heads of mankind, and consequently the doctrines of original sin and salvation by faith alone. However, he did not retain the traditional, Augustinian imputation of sin, passing from the body of Adam to his posterity through his polluted seed. Man, according to Bellamy, sinned voluntarily, following the free, spontaneous inclinations of his heart. Man did derive a polluted nature from Adam, mankind's legal representative, but that legal guilt did not restrict man's ability to conform to God's law.

Now it is true, we did not personally rise in rebellion against God in that first transgression, but he who did do it was our representative. We are members of the community he acted for, and God considers us as such; and there-

²²Bellamy, True Religion Delineated, p. 106.

fore looks upon us as being legally guilty.²³

Arminians and liberal Puritans denied the federal nature of Adam as man's representative, because those that he represented did not determine his selection. They argued that mankind could not be legally responsible for the actions of an agent determined by an absolute decree, without free choice.²⁴ Bellamy countered this view, stating that God had as much freedom and right to legally appoint Adam the physical head of mankind as He did to appoint Christ, or the second Adam as the spiritual head. If God could not appoint the first, then, reasonably, He could not appoint the second.²⁵ Again, Bellamy emphasized both the absolute and reasonable nature of God; He acted with divine authority, but His actions conformed to reason. Bellamy argued the necessity of the federal relationship, so that Christ completed the same law that Adam had violated. Federal theology, then, maintained the correct perspective of the nature of sin, the performance by Christ, and the promised salvation through grace. Both Arminians and Antinomians lost this necessary perspective,

²³Ibid., p. 256.

²⁴Supra, pp. 89, 93, and p. 101, for Daniel Whitby's and John Taylor's discussion of the necessity of man's volition in moral agency.

²⁵Bellamy, True Religion Delineated, p. 264.

and therefore, did not understand either the true nature of God, or of religion.

The first covenant between God and Adam still existed after the fall and needed to be fulfilled. God's law was infinite and unchangeable; man's obligation to love God was the same after Adam's fall, as after Christ's performance as man's surety. Bellamy stated that both Arminians and Antinomians misunderstood the necessity of God's great sacrifice: the former saw the abatement of the law and Christ's satisfaction for their imperfections, and the latter, Christ's dying for them in particular, resulting in their absolute election.²⁶ Neither heretical group understood the actual need for Christ's atonement. His performance proved that God's law was just; His satisfaction of the justice of the law magnified the evil nature of sin, and made the law honorable. Christ did not abate the law, but established it, and disclosed the means for sinners to turn from sin towards God.²⁷

In True Religion Delineated, Bellamy was particularly concerned over the Antinomian tendencies of the new light radicals' view of the atonement. They considered God to be a creditor and man a debtor.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 311-312.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 328-329.

When Christ upon the Cross said, it is finished he then paid the whole debt of the elect, and saw the book crost [closed], whereby all their sins were actually blotted out and forgiven.²⁸

This Antinomian view was without basis in the gospel, said Bellamy. The sacrifice of Christ did not merely open the salvation to the elect, but opened a wide door for the exercise and display of divine mercy.²⁹

Christ's merit lays the foundation for a general resurrection, and all that believe and repent shall be raised up to Glory and compleat blessedness, and all that die in sin shall be raised up to shame and compleat misery.³⁰

At this point in the treatise, Bellamy departed significantly from Edwards and from traditional Puritanism, by postulating a general call for the redemption of mankind. Edwards, while not maintaining strictly the Calvinist doctrine of predestination³¹, did confine redemption to God's elect. Bellamy, in responding to the new light radicals, stated that the law posited by God and completed by His son, did not reasonably exclude any man's performance should he voluntarily choose to follow Christ's example. Christ's performance demonstrated the means to salvation--total commitment of heart, mind and soul to God--without restriction to any portion of mankind.

²⁸Ibid., p. 336.

²⁹Ibid., p. 344.

³⁰Ibid., p. 364.

³¹Supra, p. 128.

Bellamy's general call placed salvation within the abilities of all men and advanced the role volition played in either salvation or damnation. But his general redemption differed substantially from the universal redemption demanded by John Beach, Samuel Johnson, and other Arminians. Bellamy stated that salvation was totally by grace-- Puritan saving grace, not common, universal, or general grace given to all mankind.³² His salvation scheme still required election, as man needed the proper temper of mind (saving grace) to perform the only works required by God's law: faith in Jesus Christ and love for God above love for self.

Bellamy's treatise defended traditional Puritan doctrine, but his demands for the reasonableness of God and of the gospel tempered the pessimism and restrictiveness of man's future state. God was not an arbitrary or vengeful tyrant, but the promulgator, through His infinite wisdom, of the best possible world order. Bellamy offered a rather optimistic scheme within the confines of Puritan doctrine, but he retained one major obstruction to the encouragement of all men: the great punishment mankind deserved for Adam's original sin. He had denied the actual pollution of this sin, but substituted a legal

³²Supra, pp. 39-40.

guilt that was no less damning for Adam's posterity. Man's tainted nature consisted of a temper or state of mind that turned man from God toward sin. Man was not so much bathed in sin, as he was wont to sin by his own natural inclinations.³³ Preceding from corrupt motives, man after the fall could not perform holy and righteous acts. Bellamy's legal guilt and Puritan actual guilt had the same effect; without the saving experience of God's grace, mankind could not complete God's law and gain salvation.³⁴

Because of Bellamy's evangelical position, he retained the doctrine of original sin. Genuine repentance required the sinner's knowledge of the infinite evil that sin presented to God, and that he justly deserved damnation and God's wrath. Man could not understand the whole of God's plan or the great sacrifice that Christ had made unless he opened his heart and mind to the evil of sin. The saving experience was not as the Antinomians claimed, the realization that God had saved them specifically, but the understanding of their enormous personal guilt for their depravity. The nonrepentant sinner, when confronted with the reality of his future state,

³³Bellamy, True Religion Delineated, p. 152.

³⁴Ibid., p. 256.

would curse and blame God wrongly for his condition. Whereas the truly repentant sinner would humble himself before God and praise His beauty and purity.³⁵

God had allowed the entrance of sin into the world for some greater purpose than simply the damnation of part of mankind. Bellamy expanded upon this theme on May 30, 1753, when he preached The Great Evil of Sin, As Committed Against God, before the Consociation of Litchfield County. He repeated the hateful nature of sin to God; sinners broke God's law, but more importantly, they went against the very nature of God.

All sin is forbidden by His authority; and therefore every act of sin is considered as an act of rebellion against the Lord, and sinners have the character of rebels.³⁶

As in True Religion Delineated, he described sin as a means to true evangelical repentance. Sin, the voluntary action of man against God, was inimical to Him, yet it served God's greater purposes and aided in the determination of His elect. Without sin, man could not clearly understand the nature and beauty of God and the depravity of man. Realization of the nature of sin "immediately affects the heart with sorrow, and humbles and abases the

³⁵Ibid., p. 45, and passim.

³⁶Joseph Bellamy, "The Great Evil of Sin, As Committed Against God," The Works of Joseph Bellamy, Tyron Edwards, editor, vol. 1 (Boston: The Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), p. 469.

soul before the Lord."³⁷ Only through sin did God reveal to man any understanding of the divine plan.

In both the sermon and the larger treatise, Bellamy sidestepped an important issue raised by the liberal Puritans. If God hated sin, because it violated His law, authority, and government, then why did He not merely forbid sin? The liberals posed this query to the orthodox position which, like Bellamy's, had not explained the presence of sin in a world dominated by an all-powerful God, unless He had willed men to sin. Bellamy admitted that God had the authority to forbid sin and thus insure the salvation of all men, but he stated that the presence of sin must better serve the divine plan. He explained that God's scheme, as revealed in the scriptures, pointed to "some greater good than human happiness."³⁸ "He judged it best to permit the Angels to sin and man to fall, and so let misery enter into His dominion," because the consequences of sin contributed to purposes unknowable to the finite creature.³⁹ Bellamy described only vaguely how sin benefitted the divine plan, asserting that the answer was beyond man's understanding. This response was

³⁷Ibid., pp. 463-464.

³⁸Bellamy, True Religion Delineated, p. 44, and passim.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 43-44.

inadequate in an age celebrating human reason, and, in light of Bellamy's demands that God act reasonably, the mystery of God's permission of sin seemed incongruous.

Notwithstanding this mystery, Bellamy's True Religion Delineated received wide acceptance throughout the colonies, in England, and in Scotland. Jonathan Edwards, after giving the manuscript his explicit approval, sent a copy to John Erskine⁴⁰ in Scotland, where it was subsequently reprinted. In 1752, Samuel Davies, the new light leader in Virginia, wrote Bellamy that in his colony the treatise was widely read and circulated. William B. Sprague, writing a century later, wrote:

With the single exception of Edwards' book on the Religious Affections, perhaps no book in the language, on the same general subject, has been more widely known, or more highly and generally prized.⁴¹

And in this century, Edwin S. Gaustad, when referring to its circulation, called it "the Pilgrim's Progress of New England."⁴² An important reason for the agreement of

⁴⁰John Erskine (1721-1801), Scottish minister at Culross and later Edinburgh, was a correspondent of many of the New Divinity leaders. Bellamy and Erskine corresponded for over thirty-five years, frequently exchanging books of common interest.

⁴¹Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, p. 405.

⁴²Edwin S. Gaustad, "The Theological Effects of the Great Awakening," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, vol. 40 (1953-1954), p. 697.

these assessments lay in the nature of the treatise. Like his teacher's system of theology, Bellamy presented basically a strict Calvinist interpretation. He had, however, tempered the absolute determinism of God's sovereignty and man's redemption, and elevated human dignity in the gospel scheme. He described God as the moral governor of the world and demanded that He act reasonably and argued that salvation was not restricted, but open to the abilities of all men. He brought an essentially pessimistic doctrine into line with the eighteenth century.

In 1758, Bellamy defended the role of original sin in Puritan redemptive scheme, during the controversy between Samuel Webster and Peter Clark that had begun the previous year. His reply to Webster asserted God's sovereignty and man's legal guilt for Adam's sin.⁴³ Realizing that the liberals were avoiding the major issues of the controversy, he published Four Sermons on the Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin in the same year as his letter to Webster. In these sermons, Bellamy explained more completely why an omnipotent, absolute sovereign, who hated sin, permitted man to violate His law. First, he answered the Arminian claims that the Puritan God fore-ordained sin⁴⁴, and second, demonstrated that God's

⁴³Supra, pp. 115-116.

permission of sin occasioned the greatest happiness and virtue in the world. In this manner, Bellamy converted one of the most hopeless doctrines in traditional Puritanism into one that promised greater felicity for the whole of mankind, than if God had absolutely forbidden sin.

In disputing the Arminian claims against the Puritan God, Bellamy borrowed heavily from Edwards' treatise on the Freedom of the Will. Bellamy, like Edwards, insisted that God's permission conformed perfectly to reason, divine reason that was infinitely superior to human reason. Man could see the wisdom of God's actions only through hindsight. The Bible aptly chronicled the inability of man to decipher God's plan prior to its completion. In Genesis 50:20, Joseph answered his brothers, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me: but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."⁴⁵ God permitted Joseph's brothers to sell him into slavery, an act of evil intention, for without the commission of that sin, Joseph would not have risen to the governorship of Egypt. God permitted a sinful act,

⁴⁴Foster, Genetic History of New England, p. 19.

⁴⁵Edwards used the same biblical passage in Freedom of the Will in a similar manner to describe the permission of sin. Supra, pp. 93-94.

and through that act increased:

the belief of the being and perfection of God and of His government of the world; and to give him an affecting, ravishing sense of the holiness, wisdom, goodness, power, and faithfulness of the God of Abraham.⁴⁶

The passage from Genesis demonstrated that the permission of sin did not lessen the great evil of sin. The act of Joseph's brothers was still hateful to God, but worked greater good than if God had denied its commission. Because God turned the sin into benefit for mankind, the executors of sin deserved no less God's complete wrath and damnation. Further, human reason could not understand the beneficial effects of that permission until the act was completed; God's ultimate purpose remained hidden from the finite creature until He chose to reveal it.

In True Religion Delineated, Bellamy stated that God had some higher objective for the world than human happiness, and that the permission of sin aided, rather than hindered the completion of that goal.⁴⁷ The story of Joseph in Genesis was only one example of the frustration of human happiness for some higher purpose, not imme-

⁴⁶Joseph Bellamy, Four Sermons on the Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1758), pp. 75-76.

⁴⁷Bellamy, True Religion Delineated, p. 42.

diately knowable to man. The first five books of Moses demonstrated similar frustrations: the evil committed against the Israelites by Pharaoh, the destruction of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea, and the hardships of the forty year trek to Palestine. In each case mankind could perceive only misery and not God's higher intention, because human reasoning was limited to those parts of the divine plan already revealed. Thus, man could visualize the wisdom of the whole of God's plan only through the nature of those revealed parts. If they conformed to reason and demonstrated God's divine wisdom, as in the examples Bellamy cited, then one could conclude that the whole must conform in the same manner.⁴⁸

God, by allowing sin, clearly displayed His power and glory before man, and furthered man's knowledge of the divine system. Bellamy agreed that God could have exposed His scheme through revelation, but knowledge obtained in that manner would not have had the desired effect. "Nothing could teach them like experience."⁴⁹ Sin, and its corresponding misery, disclosed explicitly the purity and beauty of God and the baseness of mankind, and revealed God's right to command and man's obligation to

⁴⁸Bellamy, The Wisdom of God, p. 106.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 138.

obey. As man's knowledge of God increased, he experienced an elevation of humility, holiness, and happiness.⁵⁰ Thus, the experience of sin, while revealing man's depravity and desert of damnation, actually benefitted mankind and raised the general level of happiness in the world. Bellamy acknowledged that to sinful man, the permission of sin appeared dark and gloomy rather than glorious and beautiful. However, man's view of God was imperfect, and wicked men viewed only the evil and wickedness in God's acts, not their beauty and wisdom. They saw only "the wanton destruction of Pharaoh rather than the greater good in saving Israel and exposing God's divine power."⁵¹ God's elect, on the other hand, gained a clearer vision of God's perfection through the presence of sin, than possible in a sinless world.

The apostasy of the angels and man has given the moral governor of the universe an opportunity to set all his moral perfections in the clearest and most striking point of light; and, as it were, to open all His heart to the view of finite intelligence.⁵²

Bellamy stated that one could best explain the beneficial effects of God's permission of sin by comparing the relative value of good in a world containing sin,

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 153.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 111-112.

⁵²Ibid., p. 159.

and one without sin. He concluded that the permission of sin, including the damnation of a portion of mankind, had two distinct advantages. First, only through sin, could man realize the power and the glory of God by actual experience. By suffering under God's power and witnessing His divine justice in the treatment of sin, man clearly obtained an understanding of God's design and perfection. Revelation or logic could not have produced the same results as God's touching man's very soul.⁵³ The permission of sin, then, was the best possible means for God to uncover or expose His intentions to the world, and to bring honor and glory to Himself. Secondly, the damnation of part of mankind created greater happiness among those that were saved. The regenerate, realizing the great difference between man's moral state and God's, fell upon their knees and honored God for His perfections. Damnation expanded God's glory and concomitantly, human happiness and holiness.

Bellamy included a rather specious statistical argument demonstrating the greater good resulting from God's permission of sin. He supposed that if the entrance of sin damned one-third of mankind, and if by that act the relative level of holiness and happiness in the two-

⁵³Ibid., p. 135, and p. 153.

thirds saved increased a hundred-fold, and the misery of the damned decreased by a like amount, then one could readily visualize the advantage that sin created. In a world unstimulated by sin, the relative value of happiness remained at a constant value of three (one degree of happiness per individual), while in a world stimulated by sin, the value of those saved increased by two hundred, and the misery of the one-third damned increased by one hundred, plus the loss of the one degree of happiness that the damned originally had. Thus, in this abstraction, the presence of sin gave mankind a clear ninety-nine degrees improvement, even though one-third of the world received damnation. Stated slightly differently, a world containing sin held thirty-three times as much happiness and holiness than in one not stimulated by sin.⁵⁴

Bellamy overstepped his conclusions with this quantitative approach; the figures were arbitrary and he had attempted to quantify something that he even admitted was beyond man's complete understanding. However, such a demonstration indicated the faith of the age in mathematical truths. While the demonstration smacked of counting angels, it revealed confidence in science and mathematics to explain those things beyond human experience. For

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 184n.

Bellamy's purposes, the effort did demonstrate God's "proposing the best ends, and choosing the best means for their accomplishment."⁵⁵

No distinction was made, in these sermons or Bellamy's earlier treatise, between man's first sin and all subsequent sins. In all cases, sin was voluntary and resulted from God's permission, or "merely not hindering the activity of sin."⁵⁶ Adam's first sin was not predetermined, any more than later sinful acts, but all followed the free inclinations of the individual. Bellamy's Four Sermons on the Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin complemented his earlier optimistic proposals on man's salvation. Bellamy's conclusions conformed to the reasonable philosophies of the Enlightenment, and his Wisdom of God had a distinctly Leibnitzian flavor.⁵⁷ God proposed the best possible ends for the world, and chose the best means for their accomplishment. For Bellamy, the permission of sin best demonstrated those means, and displayed God's infinite justice and mercy, and stimulated honor and worship to Him in the best of all possible man-

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 154.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 74.

⁵⁷Foster, Genetic History of New England, p. 120. Foster believes that Bellamy had read Leibnitz before 1759, although there is no record that he had.

ners.

Bellamy had departed significantly from his teacher in the sermons on the permission of sin. Edwards had insisted that God's last end in the creation of the world was the glory of God and not the happiness of man.⁵⁸ Bellamy concluded that these ends were not mutually exclusive, for the glorification of God stimulated human happiness. In any case, Bellamy's more optimistic scheme provoked response from the more traditional Puritan position. Samuel Moody published anonymously An Attempt to Point out the Fatal and Pernicious Consequences of the Rev. Mr. Joseph Bellamy's Doctrines in 1759.⁵⁹ Moody charged that Bellamy was "being overly curious and positive in doctrines and dispensations obtuse and mysterious."⁶⁰ He, like most earlier Puritans, was content to allow God alone understanding of some parts of His divine plan. Moody was more willing to accept Arminian free will

⁵⁸Haroutanian, Piety Versus Moralism, p. 34.

⁵⁹Samuel Moody (1726-1795), the first master of the Dummer Academy, received his B.A. from Harvard in 1746 and M.A. three years later. Moody entered the ministry, but by 1759, had found that vocation unsuitable. On February 27, 1763, he became the master of the Dummer "Free Grammar School." Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, vol. 12, pp. 48-50.

⁶⁰Samuel Moody, An Attempt to Point out the Fatal and Pernicious Consequences of the Reverend Mr. Joseph Bellamy's Doctrines (Boston, 1759), p. 6.

than Bellamy's permission:

I conceive, with safety and certainty that all we can affirm with regard to sin, is, that it is in the world;--that God is holy;-- hates sin--cannot be the author of it; and therefore the creature must. And is this not enough?⁶¹

Bellamy's scheme, to Moody, overbalanced sin in relation to good; one might assume that the earth, complete with sin, was more holy and happier than heaven without it. Also, one could likewise assume, from Bellamy's sermons, that sinners advanced the glory of God and general good in the world to a greater degree than did the most eminent saints. "Is the greater the moral evil, the greater the moral good?"⁶² Thus Bellamy had placed God in a more unfavorable light than he had Satan. Moody argued that if God allowed sin because it advanced His glory and universal good, then He must necessarily will and choose sin to enter into the world. And further, Satan, the author of evil, became the primary instrument for advancing God's honor and perfection.⁶³

Moody had misrepresented Bellamy's sermons, had twisted Bellamy's points to serve his own ends, and had misunderstood the whole argument for permission of sin.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 8n.

⁶²Ibid., p. 18.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 16-17.

Bellamy had not argued that the earth was holier than heaven, but that the presence of sin increased the glory of God in a manner not possible without it. Secondly, sinners had not advanced the glory of God, but the saints, in viewing God's perfection, praised God and worship Him. The action of the saints was occasioned by the presence of sin. Further, Moody had misunderstood permission, and insisted that God's permission required His activity. He argued that Bellamy's scheme made God the author of sin, and by attempting to explain things beyond human reason, blasphemed God. Better that man accepted sin as a result of the free will of man, than to create an odious God as Bellamy had done.⁶⁴

Bellamy answered Moody's Attempt the following year, concentrating on the nature of God's permission. Moody had claimed that Bellamy created a false view of the nature of sin: sin was a benefit and not the great evil committed against God. Moody argued that sin was not a part of God's scheme, but only a device of the devil. Bellamy answered that if God had not permitted the entrance of sin into the world, then the devil caused man to sin over the objections of God. Moody's reluctance to allow the permission of sin dishonored God to a greater degree

⁶⁴Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, vol. 12, p. 49.

than did permission. Bellamy declared that the question between them was not who sinned, God or man, but why did the "holy and infinitely wise creator and governor of the world permit the creature to sin, when he could have easily hindered it [?]"⁶⁶ If one admitted that sin was in the world, then one must explain its entrance over the divine will. Permission was the only reasonable means that sin could gain entrance. Bellamy turned to Genesis 50:20, and stated that if God in this one instance permitted sin for wise and holy ends, then "it is at least possible, that He may have done so in all instances."⁶⁷

Bellamy's Four Sermons on the Wisdom of God also evoked the publication of a tract by Samuel Hopkins, another student and associate of Jonathan Edwards.⁶⁸ Hopkins agreed with Bellamy that the permission of sin was the occasion of great good. He claimed that every sin that had taken place in the world had been overruled by God in order to answer some good end. "Sin is not in its own nature such a thing, as that it cannot be improved by in-

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 68.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 51.

⁶⁸Samuel Hopkins, a major leader in the New Divinity School, was at least as important as Bellamy in the modification of Edwardsean thought. Hopkins has not received the same attention and detail here as Bellamy, primarily because the majority of Hopkins' controversial and doctrinal work lay outside the time period of this investigation.

finite wisdom to bring about some good."⁶⁹ Man could not just assume that God acted in this manner, but must declare that in every instance, He acted precisely in this manner. "This is the way Christ bruises the serpent's head, viz. by bringing good out of evil."⁷⁰

Hopkins' Sin, Through Divine Interposition consisted of three sermons. In the first, he drew from the background established by Bellamy and Edwards: God permitted the occurrence of sin in the world in order to create greater good. Hopkins' emphasis changed slightly from Bellamy's; God was more authoritarian, and actively drew good out of evil acts. Bellamy inferred that the benefit from sin required no active participation by God, and thus, did not deprive the sinner's freedom and liberty.⁷¹ Hopkins' God was not as passive and interfered with the results of sin after its commission. In the last two sermons, he tempered the advantage gained from the permission of sin. He warned against encouraging sin for the

⁶⁹Samuel Hopkins, Sin, Through Divine Interposition, An Advantage to the Universe, and yet this is no Excuse for Sin, or Encouragement to it, Illustrated and Proved (Boston: 1758), p. 8.

⁷⁰This referred to Genesis 3:15. Man's original sin, inspired by Satan (the serpent) was turned to good by God; man fell, but by that fall, opened the way for Christ's redemption. Ibid., p. 14.

⁷¹Bellamy, Wisdom of God, p. 74.

greater good that would follow. The nature of sin was exceedingly criminal and dishonorable to God, so that even though it brought about good ends, the evil of sin had not diminished.⁷²

Those instances of sin which have been the occasion of the greatest good, were at the same time very offensive and provoking to God, and brought his awful judgment on those who were guilty of it.⁷³

Hopkins agreed that God's divine plan was optimistic, but insisted that man did not share in the benefits of God's optimism. The greater good reflected to God and not to man. Bellamy's interpretation of the divine scheme was more mechanical and guided by a reasonable God, while Hopkins' maintained a more traditional conception of God's sovereignty.

Bellamy re-interpreted Edwardsean thought to preserve the balance between religion of the heart, and religion of the mind. When he left itineracy in 1742, he perceived the greatest threat to experiential religion arising from the radical new lights and their "refined Antinomian" doctrines. For the next two decades, he consistently reacted to that threat. True Religion Delineated, undoubtably the most important of his writings,

⁷²Hopkins, Sin Through Divine Interposition, pp. 30-31.

⁷³Ibid., p. 26.

sought to describe the balance between formalism (Arminianism) and enthusiasm (Antinomianism). More than any other new light leader, Bellamy sensed his median position, and as a result, modified Edwardsean theology into a more optimistic promise for mankind.

By 1760, Bellamy had limited God's sovereignty, so that He could not act unreasonably, posited a general call for redemption, placed salvation within the reach of all men, and described the effects of original sin as a benefit and means to true piety. This optimistic scheme was an outgrowth, and not a rejection of traditional Puritan principles. He had maintained the fundamental doctrines of the Reformation, but had adapted them so that they were consonant with the dignity of man in this reasonable age.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The Great Awakening in New England attempted to end the depersonalization of religion that had occurred in the previous half-century. As a reform movement, the Awakening sought the piety and spirituality of the Puritan founders outside the institutional framework of the church. The reform was individual, operating on the heart of the sinner, revealing his natural depravity, and turning him toward the beauty and purity of God. This renewal, accepted initially as an outpouring of the spirit of God, received relatively little criticism for nearly two years, 1739 to 1741, before reform conflicted with the institution of the church over questions of itineracy and enthusiasm. Opposing views developed, created schism within the Puritan Church, and introduced a new phase of reform, the embodiment of the spirit of renewal into the doctrine and practice of the church. In the institutional phase of reform, three clearly discernible doctrinal groupings appeared. The moderate, or centrist position occupied by Dickinson, Edwards, and Bellamy, endeavored to

preserve both the spirit of the revival and traditional Puritan doctrine. They conflicted with both the liberal wing of the church and with the radical new lights, in seeking the tenuous balance between religion of the heart and religion of the mind.

The motivation of Jonathan Dickinson was precisely the same as that of Edwards and Bellamy. All three Puritan divines had a deep personal involvement in the revival experience, and felt that their antagonists threatened not only that single revival, but the entire Protestant Reformation. Dickinson especially attacked the Anglican Arminians as apostates to popery. Their denial of the sovereignty of God, of the doctrines of justification by faith alone, and the pollution of original sin, rejected the essential dogma of the Protestant Reformation. Dickinson defended these doctrinal positions in the language of that Reformation, without regard to the difference in epistemology between Arminianism and traditional Puritanism. The logical systems were not at stake, but instead, the very principles of the Reformation. Further, Dickinson did not address his arguments to New England Congregationalists or Presbyterians, but to Anglicans-- Anglicans who admitted their Arminianism. That he ignored the reasonableness of their arguments was understandable, for he felt the unified support of New England Puritanism

sustaining him.

Between Dickinson's death in 1747 and Jonathan Edwards' publication of Freedom of the Will in 1754 and Original Sin in 1758, one could no longer presume unified support for traditional Puritan dogma. Many opposers of the revival now moved into open heterodoxy, supporting mild forms of Arminianism, Arianism, or Universalism. They borrowed from the polemical assertions of the English divines, Daniel Whitby and John Taylor, against Calvinism, and overbalancing religion of the mind. The traditional Puritan response to these heresies no longer sufficed; Lockean reasoning and Newtonian science had replaced older scholastic conceptions, so that religious questions, formerly withheld from human understanding, could not now reasonably remain hidden. Puritanism after 1750 could not merely re-affirm the five articles of the Synod of Dort, but had to conform to the mood demanded by the eighteenth century.

Jonathan Edwards answered these needs of New England Puritanism. Sydney E. Ahlstrom called him a "Dortian philosophe," because he fused the seminal ideas of the Enlightenment with the major principles of the Reformed Church.¹ He defended the sovereignty of God and man's

¹Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "Theology in America: A Histor-

pollution from original sin and demonstrated that the Arminian scheme contradicted reasonable Lockean thought. Edwards did not attempt to posit an optimistic religious view in these treatises, but to re-establish traditional Puritan doctrine upon a modern basis. He directed his polemical attacks upon those English Arminians who favored an intellectualized religion, divorced from emotion. With Edwards, no contradiction arose between emotional and reasonable religion, for without touching the heart, religion lost its essential pietical spirit, and led to a sterile faith. Within Edwards' scheme, a unity existed between Enlightened thought and his redefined Calvinism, a unity that strengthened the revival experience.

The New Divinity theologians, especially Joseph Bellamy, were not able to maintain the balance that their teacher had established. Edwards was involved primarily with the liberal or Arminian attack upon the centrist position. Even his treatise on Religious Affections resulted from his controversy during the Great Awakening with Charles Chauncy, the liberal. Bellamy in True Religion Delineated, a treatise on the same subject which drew heavily from Edwards' work, reacted more

ical Survey," The Shaping of American Religion, edited by James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jameson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 245-246.

strongly to the danger presented to orthodoxy by the radical new lights than by the Arminians. His unique revival experience explained this fear. More than either Edwards or Dickinson, Bellamy reacted negatively to the excesses of the revival and left itineracy because of the diffusion of false religion. These radicals overbalanced religion of the heart; salvation required only that man knew, from the emotional experience of conversion, that he was of the elect. Sanctification played no part in their "refined Antinomianism."

The impulse causing Bellamy to modify Edwardsean theology came from this threat that he perceived from the radical new lights. In 1750 in True Religion Delineated, Bellamy described a general redemption, available to all men, in order to emphasize the importance of sanctification in the salvation scheme rather than justification. The radicals had argued that Christ's atonement paid the elect's whole debt for Adam's and man's sins, and required no further duties. Bellamy argued that justification gave man only a new temper, so that he could turn from sin to God. Sanctification, the actual use of that new temper in the process of purification, was completed only in heaven. He tempered this call for a general atonement, stopping short of Arminianism, by insisting that the change in man's disposition required

the particular workings of saving grace, not common or universal grace. However, even by qualifying the compass of Christ's atonement, he offered a significant change:

This affirmation of a general atonement meant that the elect now were seen as those who chose God, and not those chosen by God in the sense that some were to be saved while others were to be damned.²

In this same treatise, Bellamy stated that God had some greater purpose in sin, than merely the damnation of some of mankind. Eight years later in The Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin, he again modified Edwards to explicate that greater good. Sin was advantageous for the whole divine scheme, and benefited man more than if God had forbidden the entrance of sin into the world. Sin was the best possible means for demonstrating God's glory and uncovering His grand design. Bellamy's mediation of Edwards' Calvinism moved away from those Dortian principles that Edwards had preserved. Specifically, he had modified man's total depravity and the limited nature of atonement outlined by the Synod of Dort in 1618.³

Bellamy's optimistic interpretation of man's first

²Anderson, Joseph Bellamy, p. 887.

³Ahlstrom, Theology in America, p. 246. The five points included, besides total depravity and limited atonement, unconditional election, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints.

sin differed substantially from that of Samuel Hopkins', especially with regard to the sovereignty of God. Again, Bellamy reacted more strongly to the opposition from the radical new lights, and softened God's sovereignty in order to increase man's role in damnation as he had in salvation. He expanded Jonathan Edwards' statements on God's permission of sin; man's free acts brought sin into the world, unhindered by God's agency. Hopkins, on the other hand, was more the "consistent Calvinist,"⁴ and pushed the absolute nature of God almost to the point of making God the author of man's sins. Consequently, Hopkins did not describe the same benefit of sin to mankind that Bellamy did; God alone benefitted from the presence of evil in His divine plan.

Bellamy, in defending the spirit of revivalism, observed critics at both extremes of his moderate position. His ends were the same as Edwards' and Dickinson's, but his recognition of the danger from "refined Antinomianism" led him to reject much of the negative or pessimistic dogma within the Puritan creed. He did not confine his concern only to this radical position. In the years that followed the publication of The Wisdom of God (1760 to 1763), he became involved with Moses Mather, pastor of

⁴Ibid., p. 256.

the church in Middlesex, over the nature of the covenant. Bellamy, like Edwards, sought to remove those obstructions to true piety and experimental religion, the Half-Way Covenant and Stoddardism. Both denigrated the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, by opening their celebration to the unconverted. In this controversy, Bellamy's opponent was one of the old light opposers to revivalism. At the same time, he was also engaged in controversy with Andrew Crosswell, a new light radical, over the nature and glory of Jesus Christ. Although these controversies led in different directions, Bellamy's goal was constant: to defend revivalism and the true understanding of the gospel and the promises of God. Because he was truly in the middle, his Edwardseanism received greater modification than that of other New Divinity theologians.

The impact of Bellamy's scheme of theology is more difficult to assess than to describe. His system of training students in theology, and the institution of the first "Sunday School" at Bethlem, must have given wide reception to his dogmatic religious views. He personally had trained at least sixty ministers, and when Hopkins, Nathaniel Emmons and Jonathan Edwards, Jr.⁵ are also con-

⁵Jonathan Edwards, Jr. was trained by Joseph Bellamy at Bethlem, whereas Nathaniel Emmons had not trained under Edwards or his students; he was nonetheless a thor-

sidered, the number of clerics trained by these four New Divinity leaders exceeded one hundred-fifty.⁶ Edmund S. Morgan stated "the New Divinity had a consistency and vigor that young intellectuals found challenging," and as a result by 1792 they had claimed one-half the pulpits in Connecticut, and an increasing number throughout New England.⁷ The expansion of the New Divinity in Connecticut undoubtedly reflected the personal influence of Joseph Bellamy, "the Pope of Litchfield County."⁸

Although the number of clerics converted by Bellamy and others was large, Morgan argued that their success was not matched among the populace at large. "Their sermons became complex, abstruse, metaphysical [and] devoted to details of theology that the layman found incomprehensible."⁹ Their theology required a subtle mind and a deep religious motivation, so that they addressed their "fear-

ough-going Edwardsean. Hopkins and Bellamy were the more important New Divinity leaders immediately after Edwards' death, but shared that leadership towards the end of the century.

⁶Ahlstrom, Theology in America, p. 255.

⁷Edmund S. Morgan, "The American Revolution Considered as an Intellectual Movement," Paths of American Thought, edited by A. M. Schlesinger, Jr., and Morton White (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), p. 19.

⁸Ibid., p. 18.

⁹Ibid., p. 20.

less, intransigent, ridiculous brand of Calvinism" to other bright young clerics, rather than to their congregations.¹⁰ The alienation of the New Divinity minister from his congregation did not modify his doctrine; he was unwilling to appease the unconverted, in order to increase the size of his congregation.¹¹

Morgan declared that this alienation explained the shift from the dominance of New England society by the clergy in 1740, to control by statesmen in 1790. His assessment has more validity than that offered by Alan Heimert, who argued that no such shift occurred. The later described an unusual development on the American Revolutionary mind in the late 1750's, emanating from Bellamy's sermons on The Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin and The Millenium. Heimert indicated that Bellamy's call for the enlistment of all men as volunteers in the church militant against the Antichrist aroused the revolutionary fervor of the 1770's.¹²

¹⁰Edmund S. Morgan, The Gentile Puritan, A Life of Ezra Stiles, 1727-1795 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 314.

¹¹Ibid., p. 314.

¹²Alan Heimert, Religion and the American Mind (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966). Heimert discussed the relationship between the church militant and the revolution, pp. 339-350.

What had begun was the long process, to be completed neither in the Revolution nor even in 1800, of making men's wills the ultimate guarantor of the collective happiness and the general welfare.¹³

Heimert overplayed the influence of religion on secular political science. The Enlightenment, an essentially secular intellectual movement, did not arise out of a change in New England theology, but rather stimulated the religious change that occurred in the 1750's and 1760's.

The Wisdom of God had a more restricted appeal than True Religion Delineated, as the former was "complex, abstruse, and metaphysical." No solid indication exists that its influence extended beyond the 1760's and the controversy that had stimulated it. However, that was not the case with True Religion Delineated. In that treatise, Bellamy defended revivalism in extremely simple terms (merely man's love to God), and in a manner that was widely read and studied. Timothy Dwight, the New Divinity president of Yale College who succeeded Ezra Stiles in 1795, stated that during the Second Great Awakening of 1802, Bellamy's treatise accelerated the spirit of revival that swept through Yale.¹⁴ His most important

¹³Ibid., p. 350.

¹⁴Tyron Edwards, Memoir of Joseph Bellamy, p. lxi.

and longest lasting effect was defending revivalism and mediating Edwardsean theology to conform to the optimistic demands of the eighteenth century.

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