Myth or Legend:

The Great Awakening and the American Revolutionary Spirit

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Jacob Rothman

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Abstract:

Religion was a pertinent, prevalent, and powerful force in the American Revolution. By examining the autobiography of Justin Hitchcock, the journal of Esther Edwards Burr from 1754 to 1757, and African-American/slave narratives by John Marrant, Briton Hammon, and James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, this thesis hopes to offer insight into how, for most people, the post-Great Awakening Puritan ethic (or in some cases, revivalist Calvinism) was an incredibly dynamic force that promoted both political change and traditional values. Much has been written on the evolving political ideologies of famous, white, male colonists during this period; this thesis explores the perspectives of those who were not as directly politically involved. A discussion on the presence and effect of religion in the colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as a description of post-Awakening evangelicalism and pre-Awakening liberalism, both supplement an analysis of the primary sources. The ultimate conclusion is that, in a way, Calvinism and the Puritan ethic were powerful revolutionary forces precisely because of their ambivalent natures.

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Introduction

The American colonies underwent a great social and political transformation in the middle and late decades of the 18th century. Central to this transformation was the legacy of Calvinist Puritanism; the First Great Awakening brought this legacy to the fore of colonial consciousness. By examining the autobiography of Justin Hitchcock, the journal of Esther Edwards Burr from 1754 to 1757, and African-American/slave narratives by John Marrant, Briton Hammon, and James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, this thesis hopes to offer insight into how, for most people, the post-awakening Puritan ethic (or in some cases, revivalist Calvinism) was an incredibly dynamic force that promoted both political change and traditional values. The primary sources used bookend the focus of the thesis between the years 1730 and 1789. George Whitefield's piety and widespread preaching is one proof that the North American Awakening was not limited in scope to Puritan New England, and was ultimately an evangelical Calvinist movement across colonial America; while the historical religious backgrounds of non-New Englanders were obviously different from that of the New England colonists, during the Great Awakening both groups underwent the same evangelical Calvinist movement. However, thanks to Jonathan Edwards the Awakening largely originated and was highly influential among New England Puritan descendants.[1] Two other factors justify using Puritan theology to explain responses to the Awakening that (in this study) are focused on but not limited to Puritan descendants: the close connection 17th century colonial Puritans had with the tenets of Calvinism, and the intellectual nature of Puritan society itself that gave rise to a well-researched, documented religion. This last reason is perhaps the most significant; in their theological formulations, the Puritans gave expression to and resolved ideological issues that had to be faced by any thoughtful Calvinist.

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1 Frederick V. Mills, "George Whitefield, 1714-1770," *New Georgia Encyclopedia,* 20 Jan, 20016, 19 March 2016, http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/george-whitefield-1714-1770; "Introduction", Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson, ed., in *Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962), xi-xxxix.

With some exceptions, this thesis will concentrate on the role of the Great Awakening among 18th century New England colonists–particularly those who were originally from Massachusetts.

A significant aspect of the Puritan legacy was the way in which it challenged how people conceived of their individuality and how this individuality related them to a greater community. The Puritan construction of identity was incredibly ambiguous: it favored personal value by, relationship to, and knowledge of God; it also embraced a person's "calling," or duty to embrace their vocation during their time on earth. While empowering, the notion of a "calling" also reinforced rigid social roles. Furthermore, the uncertainty of predestination cast the Puritan colonists and their successors into an existential crisis–characterized by both a resilient hope to be one of the lucky 'chosen' few who were saved and an ensuing desire to uphold the terms of the Covenant of Grace, and an acceptance of having no influence over God's arbitrary power to save and damn as He pleases– wherein the only constant was personal sin.[2] Thus were the Puritans constantly struggling to find religious justification for their personal self-value. These ambiguities were brought to the fore and became incredibly problematic during the first Great Awakening; more radical reinvigoration than reinterpretation of traditional Calvinist values, the Awakening had ideological consequences that became especially pertinent in the context of increasing political tensions between Great Britain and the American colonists. After the Revolutionary War, the effects of the Awakening were felt in the ambiguities of American social and economic life. Much has been written on the evolving political ideologies of famous, white, male colonists during this period; this thesis explores the perspectives of those who were not as directly politically involved.

In her argument for the powerful role that religion played in American history, Patricia Bonomi states "An eighteenth century of 'Enlightenment' skepticism coming between a 'Puritan'

2 Perry Miller, *The New England Mind,* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939,) 21-34.

seventeenth century and an 'evangelical' nineteenth century simply does not add up."[3] Indeed, the personal accounts surveyed here illuminate the dominant role of Christianity in the 18th century colonies. One of many branches of Christianity that were present in the New World, evangelical Calvinism held a special appeal; it mattered not whether one was white or black, man or woman, elite or poor. In addition to providing a variety of social perspectives on New World Calvinism, these five individual's stories indicate the prevalence of Calvinist-influenced religious piety throughout the entire 17th century. There is some overlap: James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw experienced and was educated about Christianity while in New York sometime between 1730 and 1747; Briton Hammon's account falls between the years 1747 and 1760, while Esther Edwards Burr wrote from 1754 to 1757; Justin Hitchcock was born in 1752 and dated the last entry of his autobiography in 1799, while John Marrant was born in 1755 and published his narrative in 1785.[4] There is some regional variety to the accounts as well, though each of the authors likely shaped his or her religious ideology in either New York or Massachusetts. The fact that the places where these individuals lived (outside of New York and Massachusetts) range

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3 Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America,* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988,) 220.

4 James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, As related by Himself*, (Bath: W. GYE, 1772,) in *Slave Narratives,* ed. William L. Andrews and Henry Louis Gates Jr., (New York, New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 2000,) 3-34; Briton Hammon, *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings, And Surprizing Deliverance of Briton Hammon, A Negro Man,- Servant to General Winslow, of Marshfield, in New-England; Who Returned to Boston, after having been absent almost Thirteen Years, (*Boston: Green and Russell, 1760,) 1-13, in "America's Historical Imprints: Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800," *NewsBank.Inc,* accessed 29 Nov. 2015, http://0-docs.newsbank.com.tiger.coloradocollege.edu/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/iw.newsbank.com:EAIX&rft_val_format=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&rft_dat=0F301528898EB378&svc_dat=Evans:eaidoc&req_dat=0E82BB92F252CBE0; Justin Hitchcock, *A Sort of Autobiography & Genealogy,* transcription, (Deerfield, MA: Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Museum, Papers of Justin Hitchcock, Folder 6), 1-36; John Marrant, *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, A Black, (Now going to Preach the Gospel in Nova-Scotia) Born in New-York, in North-America: Taken down from his own Relation, Arranged, Corrected, and Published By the Rev. Mr. Aldridge,* (London: R. Hawes, No. 40, Dorset Street Spitalfields, 1785,) 1-40, in "Eighteenth Century Collections Online," *Gale Cengage Learning,* 29 Nov. 2015, http://0find.galegroup.com.tiger.coloradocollege.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=colorado&tabID=T001&docId=CB3329852204&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE.

from New Jersey, to Bornu, to Havana to Charleston,[5] seems to have had little effect on an underlying current of 17th century Calvinist (albeit primarily Calvinist Puritan) thought. These firsthand, chronologically shaped and diverse perspectives can be woven into a narrative whole.

It may seem that the sources presented here provide too many unstable variables and too many avenues for comparison. Although this is a legitimate concern, for the purposes of this thesis having various moving parts is necessary. I seek to evaluate an underlying ethos that by definition must be experienced by different groups of people at slightly different moments in time; I do not intend to explicitly understand just one of the social groups (i.e. African American slaves, upper-middle class white women, or middle/lower-middle class white men) and their relationship to that ethos at one exact moment in time. True, studying one social group at one exact moment in time in terms of the question posed by this thesis merits at least one book; comparing the same social group to itself as it evolved over sixty years could undoubtedly fill several tomes, and comparing these results with the same studies of other social groups should be enough information to fill a shelf. With the caveat that one individual never represents an entire group, I hope that by focusing on different instead of similar perspectives I can draw attention to what different groups of people in a general time frame and place may have had in common. This proposed common ground–North American Calvinism and its offshoots, particularly New England Puritanism– may have shifted over time, but it remained a unified epistemological whole nonetheless. In consciously avoiding generalizations based on the research, this thesis will not force either individuals or groups into fixed, binary categories. As this research methodology shapes the structure of the argument, it reveals many potential comparisons. Although the focus

5 *The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr, 1754-1757* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984,) reprinted in *North American Women's Letters and Diaries: Colonial to 1950,* accessed 3 Nov. 2015, http://0solomon.nwld.alexanderstreet.com.tiger.coloradocollege.edu/cgi-bin/asp/philo/nwld/getdoc.pl?S14-D001; James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw,* 5; "Hammon, Briton," *BlackPast.Org,* accessed 15 Nov. 2015, http://www.blackpast.org/aah/hammon-briton; John Marrant, *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings,* 7.

of the thesis is not to make these specific comparisons per say, they are important to keep in mind; they, and the way in which I organize them in the thesis, serve the function of illuminating the common hold of Calvinism (mostly Puritan Calvinism) on various types of people in colonial North America.

All of these comparative points are within a chronological framework. First, the three African-American slave narratives are dispersed throughout the eighteenth century. James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw was born in "Bornou" (now Borno, Nigeria), in approximately 1710.[6] He was sold into slavery in 1730 and lived as a slave in both New York and New Jersey until the year 1747, when his master died; his master's will made Gronniosaw a free man. Although Gronniosaw traveled to England shortly after his master's death and remained there the rest of his life (including a visit to Holland), he learned about Christianity in the American colonies in the decades prior to the First Great Awakening.[7]

Following in order is the account of Briton Hammon, who with his master's permission left Marshfield, Massachusetts on a voyage to Jamaica. On the way his crew was attacked by Native Americans; killing all aboard they only spared Hammon, whom they took as a captive. Hammon escaped from the Native Americans when a Spanish schooner took him to Havana, Cuba, where he became a slave for the governor there. Hammon was soon thrown into jail for over four and a half years for refusing to serve in a press gang. After finally being released by the governor, Hammon unsuccessfully tried to escape several times before being ordered to work for a bishop traveling throughout the country. Shortly after the conclusion of this service, he escaped for good

6 James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw,*5; See, for instance, Jenn Williamson, "James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw and Walter Shirley, 1725-1786: A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, as Related by Himself: Bath: Printed by W. Gye, 1770: Summary," *Documenting the American South,* last modified 26 November 2015*,* accessed 26 November 2015, http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/gronniosaw/summary.html.

7 James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, As related by Himself,* 1-34.

aboard a British ship bound for Jamaica. Hammon stayed aboard the same ship to end up in London; after being wounded in a naval engagement with the French (on a different British war ship), he eventually sailed back to Boston as a cook on the same ship that his old master ("General Winslow") was a passenger on.[8] In describing his struggles as a slave, prisoner, and survivor, Hammon appeals to the Christian values he learned in Marshfield; values that were then experiencing the intense theological pressures of the Great Awakening.

The last slave narrative I intend to examine is that of John Marrant. Marrant was born in New York and moved to Charleston when he was eleven years old. Upon encountering a sermon being delivered by George Whitefield, he converted. Later, rejected by his family for his intense spirituality, Marrant traveled in the wilderness until he was captured by a Cherokee tribe. He converted these Cherokee and then traveled to Creek, Caracaw, and Housaw tribes, missionizing as he went. After several years in the wild, Marrant returned home, unrecognizable to his family; he continued to missionize in Charleston, particularly directing his efforts towards enslaved African-Americans. He then served the British Navy during the Revolutionary War. Marrant's narrative concludes with him being ordained and sent to Nova Scotia to minister to African Americans living there.[9] Marrant's autobiography was published in 1785; because he did not convert until he was at least eleven, in the year 1766, his religiosity is expressive of the years after the Great Awakening through the conclusion of the Revolutionary War.

The writings of Esther Edwards Burr and Justin Hitchcock also give alternatives to the more commonly heard religious and political perspectives in the American colonies during the period from 1730 to 1789. Whereas the African-American narratives differ from more popularized perspectives in terms of race, Esther Burr and Justin Hitchcock offer perspectives that differ in

8 Briton Hammon, *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings, And Surprizing Deliverance of Briton Hammon,* 1-13.
9 John Marrant, *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, A Black,* 1-40.

terms of gender and class. Esther Burr's perspective comes in the form of a journal consisting of a series of letters she sent in packets to her best friend, Sarah Prince, between the years 1754 and 1757.[10] Much of the content of these letters is religious discourse. Unfortunately, Sarah Prince's responses have not survived. Born in Northampton, Massachusetts to the infamous Jonathan Edwards and his wife Sarah Pierpont Edwards in 1732, Burr was as engrained into an "awakened" Puritan Calvinist religious culture as any American colonist possibly could have been. In 1752 she married Aaron Burr, the minister of a Presbyterian Church in Newark and the president of the College of New Jersey.[11] Having spent her first twenty years in Northampton, she would spend the rest of her life in New Jersey. (In 1756, due to the college changing location to what would become its namesake, Princeton, Esther moved with Aaron and the rest of her family from Newark to Princeton.) She died of a fever in 1758.[12] Burr's journal may offer insight into "both the public and private life of an articulate and spirited eighteenth-century woman," but it is not an accurate representation of most contemporary colonial women: "Burr was born into one of New England's elite families, and she married into another…At a time when few females were able to acquire more than rudimentary skills in reading and writing, she received an education in her home which rivaled that of the majority of colonial men."[13]

Opposite of Esther Burr, the autobiography of Justin Hitchcock is written by a male from a middle/lower economic class and (compared to some more well-known contemporary colonial men) a sub-elite scholarly class. Hitchcock lived from 1752 to 1822, mostly residing in Deerfield, MA. He was a hatter by trade, but throughout his life he was also a farmer, a Church Deacon, a music teacher, a soldier, and a town clerk. He participated in both the Revolutionary

10 Editor, "Introduction," in *The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr, 1754-1757,* 1.

11 This Aaron Burr is not to be confused with his and Esther's son, Aaron Burr junior, who would become famous for shooting Alexander Hamilton.

12 Editor, "Introduction", 1-4.

13 *Ibid.,*1.

War and Shay's Rebellion. Hitchcock decided to keep a record of his life; although when he started writing is unclear, the last entry of his "A Sort of Autobiography" dates from 1799. The autobiography is historically valuable because it details Hitchcock's political and religious ideals as well as his personal life. It reveals his approbation of the Revolutionary War and George Washington, his disdain of Shay's rebellion, and his tenacious commitment to traditional Puritan Calvinism in the face of shifting social values.[14]

For these chronological and comparative reasons, the primary accounts of this thesis will be addressed in this order: James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, Briton Hammon, John Marrant, Esther Burr, and finally Justin Hitchcock. Each account will be examined twice; once according to how it fits into a pre-Great Awakening ideology, and once according to how it conforms to the "new light" ideas that emanated from the Great Awakening. Prior to each set of comparisons, there will be a brief discussion on "old light" versus "new light" ideology. Before examining these narratives, it is vital to appreciate the vitality and influence of 17th and 18th century Calvinist Puritanism in New England.

Chapter One: Religion and Writing in the New England Colonies

14 Justin Hitchcock, *A Sort of Autobiography & Genealogy,* 1-36.

Puritanism in the New England Colonies: A Brief Background

Religion was a powerful, ubiquitous force in the New England colonies during the 18th century. The 17th century Puritan influence continued to shape cultural life, even as various Christian sects began competing with each other over doctrine and membership. To understand the nature of this influence requires some context on the 17th century New England Puritans. Most important is the fact that these early New England colonists were much more religiously uniform than their North American counterparts. However, "even the highly motivated Puritans had much to overcome in order to plant their garden in the wilderness;"[15] in their obsession over social order and its (ostensibly) requisite social conformity, the Puritan leaders struggled to create a powerful, centralized religious institution. Indeed, they–not unlike other early colonists to the New World from different denominations– believed that church and state were not separate but should mutually reinforce each other. The established Congregationalist Church would enforce morality and discourage religious or civic strife, thereby ensuring the survival and prosperity of "those imperial outposts situated so precariously on the rim of the civilized world."[16] For 17th century Puritans, questioning Puritan doctrine was simply not an option; the will of God was not meant to be comprehended, but simply trusted as the ultimate good. For these Puritans the primary characteristic of God was his omnipotence: lest they "sacrifice other attributes to their glorification of the one," they believed that rather than God willing things because they were "good," things were inherently "good" because they had been willed by God.[17] God always trumped "goodness." Given this rationale, any attempt at actually trying to reason–and, more importantly, question–the Puritan establishment's interpretation of the Word of

15 Patricia Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America,* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1988, 19.
16 *Ibid*., 13; 14.
17 Miller, *The New England Mind,* 17; *Ibid*., 18.

God as expressed in the bible was borderline heresy. "Puritan thought was incurably authoritarian and legalistic,"[18] and obedience and conformity therefore defined the society the early Puritan immigrants imagined as they sailed to North America.

However, in the New World the beliefs of the religious elite frequently did not match the beliefs of the common people or laity. Some colonists may have even privately held pagan beliefs.[19] This religious permissiveness was initially caused by a lack of ministers and was further engendered by individuals such as Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams, along with various radical sects; to resolve the situation, by the 1640s the New England Puritan elite had made Church membership much more selective and had welcomed in so many ministers from the old world that "the high ratio of ministers to inhabitants was one of the most striking features of New England society."[20] The initial lack of clergy thus ushered in an early stabilization and centralization of ecclesiastical authority. That a Quaker meeting wasn't officially allowed in New England until 1697 is indicative of how slowly the Colonial Puritans released their vise-like hold on religious toleration.[21] In fact, as Bonomi asserts, it was only in Rhode Island and among the Quaker colonies in East and West Jersey and Pennsylvania that religious freedom was established on "principle."[22] The Puritans went to extreme lengths in attempting to ensure that their culture would survive unaltered well into the 18th century.

However, other religions besides Puritanism were prevalent across colonial North America. Bonomi makes the case that "…in eighteenth-century America–in city, village, and countryside–the idiom of religion penetrated all discourse, underlay all thought, marked all

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18 *Ibid*., 20.
19 Bonomi, *Under The Cope of Heaven*, 14.
20 *Ibid*., 19.
21 *Ibid*., 29.
22 *Ibid*., 33, 35.

observances, gave meaning to every public and private crisis."[23] Bonomi strives to portray an equal representation of all the colonies; for instance, in investigating the 18th century clergy, she looks at the Anglican Church present mostly in the southern colonies, the Lutheran and German Reformed Church of the middle colonies, and the Congregationalist church that mostly dominated New England.[24] Bonomi notes that in New England, even though the percentage of graduates from Yale and Harvard who went on to join the ministry dropped significantly from 1730-1760, the "graduates entering the ministry outnumbered by more than three to one those choosing careers as either doctors or lawyers."[25] This lack of career diversity was solved by the northern clergy's wide range of skills and deep cultural entrenchment: ministers played an " often indispensable part" in "both the spiritual and secular lives of their parishioners."[26] Despite the contests over centralization between the Church of England and its colonial adherents, and despite the overwhelming plurality of Christian religious sects in the Middle Colonies, (Anabaptists, Quakers, Dunkers, Seventh-Day Baptists, Mennonites, and Presbyterians are just a few)[27], by the mid-18th century the sects of the Middle and Southern colonies were approaching the formal established nature of Congregationalism in the North. Religion as a whole had a powerful and structurally sound grip on the lives of most colonists: "Ministers were visibly present in every section except the far frontier, and ecclesiastical consolidation was well under way in all denominations. Churches were being built or enlarged everywhere…Nor did the churches fail to attract a wide following among the people of provincial America."[28]

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23 *Ibid*., 3.
24 *Ibid*., 39-85.
25 *Ibid*., 70.
26 *Ibid*., 72.
27 *Ibid*., 73-74.
28 *Ibid*., 84-85.

Ecclesiastical structures stabilized throughout the colonies during the 18th century, and New England was unique because of its particularly strong attachment to Calvinist Puritanism.

Within the context of established religion and willing adherents, the New England Puritans–as most strongly represented by the Congregational Church–had a strong following at the turn of the 18th century. Going to Church was made a more convenient, pleasurable experience via such innovations as putting foot stoves in freezing, mid-winter churches, decreasing the time between the two meetings on the Sabbath (so that families could reach home before dark), introducing musicality to shorter, more personalized sermons, and performing wedding and funeral services in addition to the typical sermon.[29] Such changes made the church experience more than an expression of piety; it became part of the New Englander's cultural identity: "…in New England as elsewhere churchgoing had a social dimension, as parents discussed the news of the day and children and youths gave vent to high spirits."[30] Throughout the colonies, this mixing of the secular with the strictly religious positively impacted church attendance. Citing the statistics and observations of missionaries, Bonomi states "Recent estimates suggest that a majority of adults in the eighteenth-century colonies were regular church attenders."[31]

The colonists valued the religious aspect of going to Church because they loved listening to a good sermon. If they couldn't witness a sermon firsthand, they could easily read it; astonishingly, "even during the Revolutionary Era" "sermons, devotional writings, catechisms, pious legends, and theological treatises formed …the biggest category of printed matter in colonial America."[32] Religion was as popular for the lower class as it was for the educated elite

29 *Ibid*., 67-69.
30 *Ibid*., 67.
31 *Ibid*., 87.
32 *Ibid*., 4.

seeking to join the ranks of the ministry. Bonomi offers the striking example of a farmer who had fought at Concord Bridge in the Revolutionary War, who despite the prevalence of politically liberal theories in the colonies at the time, had "never heard of Locke or Sidney" and had only ever read "the Bible, the Catechism, Watt's Psalms and Hymms, and the Almanac."[33] Secular education (as shall be discussed later) was widely available in the colonies, but knowledge was clearly still centered on religion for most people.

Established religion, depending on the time and the place, was democratic in its appeal to many different social groups. In addition to the rural poor, other members of the sub-elite class were occasionally given opportunities to join the prescribed religion: the strongest example Bonomi gives is that of African American slaves. Overall, whites were more open to "slave conversion" the lower the proportion of blacks to whites in the population;[34] therefore it is no surprise that in the North, "more slaves became church constituents…than in the South." American Indians were missionized as well, though they usually "proved more resistant than blacks" to conversion.[35] Additionally, northern colonial women were apparently highly pious: according to some attendance polls in Massachusetts and Connecticut from 1630 to 1759, women frequently bested men in Congregational Church membership.[36] The "vestigial values" of Puritanism (perhaps best termed a "Puritan Ethic" [37]) were present not just among different social groups but among different religious sects, too. Indeed, the original form of Puritanism did not survive unaltered much past the year 1720.[38] Edmund Morgan points out that the vestigial "Puritan ethic" was strongly present among Presbyterians in addition to Congregationalists, and

33 *Ibid.,* 5.
34 *Ibid.,* 119.
35 *Ibid.,* 121.
36 *Ibid.,* 111.
37 Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution," *The William &Mary Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (October 1967), 3.
38 Miller, vii.

was more latently present among Anglicans and Deists.[39] A common root in Calvinism was probably the link; this is greatly evidenced by the Great Itinerant's Calvinist beliefs, despite his Anglican roots.[40] Jon Butler, in his interpretation of religious history in North America from the earliest years of European contact to the conclusion of the Civil War, sympathizes with the view that European religious systems (ie in this context, Calvinism) played an important role in colonial life: "Much mythology to the contrary, the close connections between early modern Europe and America…make it impossible to understand America's religious origins apart from Europe."[41] This may seem obvious, but in light of Butler's thesis that religion in North America was a dynamic, unpredictable, force often independent of European or even Puritan influence, it is a significant concession.[42]

Bonomi emphasizes that religion was alive and well in 18th century colonial America to the point of it being in a state of "proliferation and growth."[43] Religion was not just a standby to liberal, enlightened thought in the years leading up to the Revolution; it was gaining momentum and was a potent force of greatly transformative energy. However much "doctrinal rigor" may have started to fade, the increasing formality and structure matched the increasing vitality of religion throughout the 18th century. [44] Thus does Bonomi prefer to focus more on religious attitudes of colonial American than actual theology.[45] The number of Congregational Churches increased at an astonishing rate: between 1700 and 1750 the number of churches in New England increased from roughly 140 to over 450.[46] Whether in secular life, diverse social classes, or

39 Morgan, 6.
40 Frederick V. Mills, "George Whitefield, 1714-1770."
41 Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People,* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990,) 5.
42 *Ibid.,* 6.
43 Bonomi, 6.
44 *Ibid*., 8.
45 *Ibid*., viii.
46 *Ibid*., 72.

various Protestant sects, Puritan values and the religious culture they informed played a shaping role in 18th century colonial American life.

Against the backdrop of the predominance of religious life in New England and the other American colonies, it is possible to explore the nature of the Puritan Ethic. In examining Puritanism at its most existential core, one can better sympathize with the relevance these colonists attached to theological debates at both the denominational and the individual level; debates that, come 1775, would have explicit political overtones. In *The New England Mind,* a work that pioneered the study of the New England Puritans, Perry Miller delves into the fundamental spiritual yearnings of the Puritans. He states that at the core of Puritan piety was a desire to gain a knowledge, however imperfect, of God. This desire in turn stemmed from a fundamental existential anxiety: building off an Augustinian tradition of finding secular life to be illusionary and of thirsting for divine truth, the "real being" of Puritanism was "not in its doctrines but behind them; the impetus came from an urgent sense of man's predicament, from a mood so deep that it could never be completely articulated."[47] Puritans were pious because they were worried about their (and all of mankind's) inherent sinfulness and imperfection. In discovering divine truth, in having faith that is itself given only by God's grace in the process of regeneration,[48] a Puritan hoped to somehow "transcend his imperfect self, to open channels for the influx of an energy which pervades the world, but with which he himself is inadequately supplied." This "energy" "takes flight from the realization that natural man…is not only minute and insignificant, but completely out of touch with both justice and beauty."[49] The pervading idea of mankind's innate sinfulness, and the accompanying resilient hope for redemption from an omnipotent God, underlies Miller's thesis that the concepts of God, Sin, and Regeneration were

47 Miller, 4.
48 *Ibid*., 27.
49 *Ibid*., 8.

the emotional underpinnings of the Puritan faith.[50] Other scholars have expanded on the notion that anxiety was at the root of the Puritan creed.

Michael Walzer is one such scholar. In his essay "Puritanism as a Revolutionary Ideology," Walzer discredits both a Marxist and a Liberal approach as being adequate explanations of this deep religious "anxiety". Using exclusively English history, Walzer elucidates that this religious anxiety was related to and catalyzed by the anxiety produced by socioeconomic, historical factors. These factors, according to Walzer's generalizations, are the growth of urban environments in England (particularly London) and increased individual social and economic mobility. Such threatened change of the old social order incited fears of exile and alienation common to all early Puritans: Puritanism was "a peculiarly intense response to the experience of social change itself, an experience which…set groups of men outside the social order…this may be the result of either 'rising' or 'falling' in economic terms; mobility itself is the key, especially if the old social order is…dependent for its stability on popular passivity."[51] These social changes created a sense of existential crises, which in turn engendered greater contemplation of death. Extending Miller's philosophy, Walzer explains that the Puritans obsessed over their innate depravity precisely because they were constantly worried about their mortality. Engaged in a "constant warfare" against sin and chaos (the "innate depravity"), the Puritans sought to repress an "anxiety of a special sort; it is not the fear of death and damnation, but rather the fear of sudden and violent death."[52] Thus did John Calvin exhort his followers to focus on life on earth rather than in heaven; the "saints" struggled against their flawed human natures not to have a better afterlife but to achieve "'present 'tranquility'" and "peace of mind."[53]

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50 *Ibid*., 3-34.

51 Michael Walzer, "Puritanism as a Revolutionary Ideology," in *Revolution of the Saints,* (Harvard University Press, 1965), reprinted from *History and Theory,* (Vol. 3, No. 1, 1963,) 88.

52 *Ibid*.,79.

53 *Ibid*.,80.

Even more than being fearful of going to hell, Calvin and his Puritan followers dreaded not having the opportunity to live a life free of temptation and sin, fully cloaked in God's will and light. Walzer argues that although it did not contribute to any sort of "progress" in the liberal sense of the word or "capitalism" as we now understand it, Puritanism was a political force because it helped in "the destruction of the old order…Their extraordinary self-confidence… makes them capable finally of killing the king."[54] As evidenced by Cromwell and the short-lived Holy Commonwealth, Puritanism on its own terms manifested as a political force based primarily on repression and control.[55]

The 18th century New England colonists are testimony to the deeply political nature of Puritanism. More so in the 18th century colonies than in early Puritan England, the Puritan ethic and the political change it engendered was as much a motivation in itself to solve certain social anxieties as it was a result of the "anxiety" arising from economic sources. The Puritanism of the 18th century colonies was established enough to be a force in itself, rather than merely a reactionary impulse with political results. This is obviously not to say that socio-economic factors played no role in the American Revolution. Rather, it suggests that Puritanism stood on its own ground for inciting change and, unlike in England prior to that country's Civil War, did not depend on extrinsic socio-economic factors. Indeed, the pre-revolutionary colonial situation was not as bad as one might expect: "…the social conditions that generally are supposed to lie behind all revolutions–poverty and economic deprivation–were not present in colonial America…the white American colonists were not an oppressed people…they were freer, more equal, more prosperous…than any other part of mankind in the eighteenth century."[56]

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54 *Ibid*.,89. This is referring to the execution of Charles I at the conclusion of the English Civil War.
55 *Ibid*.,84-85.
56 Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1992,) 4.

Important to note here is the fact that many of these key elements of early Puritanism were still adhered to by their 18th century inheritors, particularly during the years of the Great Awakening. Jonathan Edward's infamous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" is proof enough, given his influence on the Great Awakening, that many of the aforementioned Puritan principles survived into the late colonial era in North America. In this sermon, Edwards reveals both an underlying sense of human sinfulness and a manic fear of God's displeasure and subsequent punishment. He expresses human depravity thus: "There is laid in the very nature of carnal man, a foundation for the torments of hell. There are those corrupt principles, in reigning power in them…that are seeds of hell fire…if it were not for the restraining power of God upon them, they would soon break out…"[57] Edwards does not explicitly state that his fear of eternal damnation is tied to, if not superseded by, his fear of death; however, in his colorful portents of God's wrath there is the old Puritan flavor of abrupt, unpredictable death and chaos: "It is no security to wicked men for one moment, that there are no visible means of death at hand…man is not on the brink of eternity…Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen."[58] And, later in the sermon: "There are black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads…The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays his rough wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff of the summer threshing floor;" and lastly "You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to

57 Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," in *Jonathan Edwards,* ed. Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962,) 158.

58 *Ibid*., 159.

singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have… nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment."[59]

However, despite the similarities between the Puritanism expressed by the New Lights of the Great Awakening and their 16th and 17th century English antecedents, the political activity that Puritanism incited in the 18th century colonies was radically different from the "repression and control" that motivated Cromwell and his followers. This is due to the fact that whereas in England–as in the earliest Puritan settlements in New England–religion was a motivation as well as a result of political action, the American Revolution strove to parse out religion and politics. However much religion was a motivating factor for the colonists, the revolution was essentially political–not social (i.e. religious). This almost paradoxical distancing in religion of cause and effect is one of the crowning achievements of the Revolution.

Gordon Wood elaborates on the central role of politics in the American Revolution. He illuminates how, unlike most other revolutions, the American Revolution was neither strictly social nor a mere conservative, intellectual exercise. He claims that though the American Revolutionaries are not comparable to the idealists of social revolutions (the French Revolution probably being the most relevant contemporary example), the American Revolution was "radical and social in a very special eighteenth-century sense."[60] Despite a lack of social concerns, the colonists had plenty of political complaints. These complaints had social consequences in that they forever changed social relationships; the political and the social were mixed in the first place because "most people…could not as yet conceive of society apart from government… Social honors, social distinctions…all social evils and social deprivations...seemed to flow from connections to government…in destroying monarchy and establishing republics were

59 *Ibid,* 163; 165.
60 Gordon Wood, 3-5; *Ibid,* 5.

changing their society as well as their governments, and they knew it."[61] The American Revolution was, true, social in its consequences, but it was ultimately a revolution of ideas. Some historians may try to argue that "social consequences" would have occurred regardless of the political revolution, but as Wood points out, we can only study the revolution and the social change that accompanied it as a unit because that's what actually happened.[62]

However, this is not to discredit the prominent role religion played both for and against the Revolution that is the focal point of this thesis. The Revolution was not anti-clerical–because of it's aid in the revolutionary cause "there was no impediment to religion's assuming the unique and respected position it would shortly occupy in the life of the new republic"[63]–yet religion also somehow played a decisive role without being the primary impetus for (or reaction of) change. The American Revolution cannot be properly termed a "religious revolution" because religion was neither a primary cause nor a result, whether that result be the destruction of an established religious order or the imposition of a new one. The undeniably vital, unique place that the Puritan ethic *did* occupy in the American Revolution, as a force of change as well as traditionalism, will be investigated in the following pages.

Spiritual Autobiographies as a Genre

The North American colonists expressed their Puritan piety through the written as well as the spoken word. To be sure, in the years of the Great Awakening New Light preachers accentuated the power of physically experiencing a sermon.[64] However, this did not outweigh the influence of spiritual autobiographies, journals, and diaries that were meant to be silently read at least just as much as they were meant to be spoken aloud. African-Americans were able to stop

61 *Ibid*., 6; 5.
62 *Ibid*., 7.
63 Bonomi, 222.
64 Heimert, 19-21.

being "passive receptors" of Christian preachers when they learned to read, first-hand, the bible and other religious documents; reading was essential to those slaves who in learning Christianity (particularly the Puritan creed during the Great Awakening) "not only consumed texts but produced their own meanings, often reaching conclusions very different from those intended."[65] Writing was often viewed as being just as important to piety as were listening and reading. In North America, at any rate, this form of personal expression survived from the earliest days of Puritan immigration to past the conclusion of the Revolutionary War. Although because of its nearly diurnal, first person, highly personal nature, the most obvious example here will be the Letters/Diary of Esther Burr, the idea that recording personal experience is itself an aspect of faith is apparent in the less personal autobiography of Justin Hitchcock and in the narratives of Briton Hammon, James Albert, and John Marrant. The Puritan genre set a powerful precedent that was imitated by future North American Protestants who had ties to Calvinism, no matter how direct these various people's relationships to the Puritans were.

Spiritual autobiographies became very popular between the years 1650 and 1700. These writings were one result of the Puritan theology, eventually championed by New Lights in the North American colonies, that God "called everyone individually;" therefore, "each saw some aspect of His glory that was hidden from others…it was therefore possible to have as many variations as there were believers, and so the conditions were present for …an accepted literary form."[66] Writing was a means of making concrete these multiple perspectives, and was viewed as a viable alternative to the more traditional methods of communicating with God. For instance, pre-Reformation the ecclesiastical hierarchy was valued so much that it was seen (much of the

65 Frank Lambert, "I Saw the Book Talk: Slave Readings of the First Great Awakening," *The Journal of Negro History,* Vol. 77 No. 4, (1992), accessed December 12, 2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3031473, 186.

66 Owen C. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience: Studies in Spiritual Autobiography,* (New York: Schoken Books, 1972,) 2.

time) as a necessary intermediary between laity and God. Rather than communicating directly to God, an individual had to give an oral confession to a priest. With the Reformation's discarding of oral confession, however, writing became more than just an expression of people's unique relationships to the supernatural; it became (for Protestants, at any rate) itself a means of confession.[67] Spiritual autobiographies, journals, and diaries were–like the commonplace "doctrinal, devotional," and "practical" works–intensely utilitarian for other reasons, too: "… they valued literature not for its own sake, but just in so far as it promoted right attitudes and right conduct."[68] Even given its non-ascetic approach, literature was ultimately only a crutch to reality; writing too much could detract from '"works of greater moment'"[69] and could lead to vanity.[70] Real life experience was irreplaceable.

This peculiar Puritan genre was a pedagogical tool that relied on and attempted to direct individual lives. The Puritans believed that no art could match that of living, and that only a human life could achieve such a standard;[71] thus the closer a literary work came to capturing real life, the more it was valued. The devout (at least in outward appearance) did not first take religious ideals, "right attitudes and moral conduct," and project them onto reality; they started with reality and infused it with their religious values. Instead of being representations of Christianity forcing its way into and pervading all aspects of people's everyday lives, the writings were meant to "offer experimental proof of some of the eternal truths of Christianity."[72] Before offering their "proof," the Puritan writers who participated in this genre needed to experience the "truths" they taught. Thus did John Rogers write: '" Now to a poor soule…all

67 *Ibid.,* 18.
68 *Ibid.,* 1.
69 Baxter, in Watkins, 23.
70 Watkins, 23.
71 *Ibid.,* 1.
72 *Ibid.,* 2.

such things as are in the soule, are made known by *experiences; experience,* we say, *proves principles.*"[73] Real life was the best proof of religion, and the writings that most accurately reflected reality were thereby the best tools for imparting and memorializing that proof. This notion was echoed in the fundamental Christian belief that the bible is an accurate recording of God's doings throughout human history; a compilation of his works as witnessed by many different people and saints. Genesis, it was believed, was "God's own diary of the creation of the world, and…Moses kept a journal of the Israelites' wanderings in the wilderness." Cowering before the might of God at the expense of their own depravity, the Puritans felt they had a duty to imitate this biblical tradition and duly record every one of "God's mercies;" this was the only way by which "The God who numbered the hairs of a man's head" and therefore "could not fail to be concerned with every detail of his existence"[74] could ever be satisfied.

However much the Puritan literary genre was a result of the direct relationship the Puritans believed God had with an individual, it still insisted on accurate knowledge of the Puritan creed and of God. It was impossible to experience the truths of Christianity if one was unaware of what "truths" to look for in the first place. Faith logically relied on these personal experiences of truth: "Since faith was a response to the acts of God, it had to be based on accurate knowledge of what these acts were."[75] Faith, knowledge, and obedience were all tied together. Walzer quotes Dr. J. I. Packer: '"For the Puritans…true Christianity consisted in knowing, feeling and obeying the truth; and knowledge without obedience…or feeling and acting without knowledge were all condemned as false religion and ruinous to men's souls."'[76] It was because of this high regard for actual theological knowledge as well as real life experience

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73 *Ibid.,* 15.
74 *Ibid.,* 23.
75 *Ibid.,* 4.
76 Packer, in Walzer, 5.

that the personal recordings of famous Puritan preachers were widely read and received, particularly at their funeral sermons.[77] This practice also proves the overall popularity and approbation of the genre.

The Puritan spiritual autobiography was as applicable to the Puritans of the New World as it was to Old World Puritanism. One example of how the general obsession with not necessarily biblical, but recorded, legitimate spiritual knowledge (though not necessarily the equal obsession with "experience") was popular in the colonies is the fact that after Aaron Burr Sr., Presbyterian preacher and President of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton) died, Esther Burr distributed his last funeral sermon–done in honor of the deceased New Jersey Governor Jonathon Belcher–as an attachment to two friends in letters dating from December 22, 1757 and January 2, 1758. Burr hoped to memorialize her late husband's last attempt to religiously edify the people around him.[78] Needless to say that although Esther Burr shared a consciously public, purposefully instructive document, in so far as Aaron Burr preached after the Great Awakening this funeral sermon was at least somewhat imbibed with the personal and the extemporaneous. In other words, it likely carried elements of the Puritan spiritual autobiography. Samuel Morison gives important contextual background specific to the North American colonies by illustrating how, in the new world, Puritanism engendered a vibrant intellectual climate that endorsed this particular genre.

Morison explains that Puritan's distinctive non-ascetic attitudes engendered an intellectual activity that was not necessarily limited to theology. He reveals that by 1646, one in forty or fifty families who emigrated from England had been trained at universities.[79] In addition

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77 Watkins, 24.

78 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to William Hogg,* December 22, 1757, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984, Document 30,) reprinted in North American Women's Letters and Diaries: Colonial to 1950, accessed 8 March. 2016; Esther Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr (to unknown),* January 2, 1758, Document 31.

79 Samuel Morison, *The Intellectual Life of New England,* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 18.

to continuing the debate over Protestantism and Catholicism that had been driving the intellectual life of Puritans in the 17th century, this educated class of Puritans facilitated their fellow immigrants' ability and willingness to retain elements of the classical culture they came from.[80] Perry Miller, in his discussion of the intense intellectualism that was a prerequisite for the creation of the theory of a Covenant of Grace, claims too that "Even at its highest intensity, Puritanism had never cast off a rich and complicated intellectual heritage…Puritans still believed not only in their religious creed, but in reason, logic, and the arts."[81] With little energy leftover after struggling to survive in a new "wilderness," the Puritans had the "emotional drive" to promote a long-lasting intellectual life. This was due to the hard-working, disciplined nature of Puritanism itself: "Puritanism…throve under conditions of vigor, hardship, and isolation; hence the New England colonies were able…to create and support a distinct way of life that showed an unexpected vigor and virility long after English puritanism had been diluted or overwhelmed."[82] The unique nature of the Puritan colonies is highlighted in comparison to other colonies, which after survival devoted their energies to trade and making money. No other colony could match Massachusetts Bays' claim that "within ten years" it would have "a vigorous intellectual life of its own, expressed institutionally in a college, a school system, and a printing press; applied in a native sermon literature, poetry, and history."[83]

Morison further elaborates on the educational systems set up by the Puritans in colonial New England. Cambridge, Massachusetts figures prominently in Morison's proof that colonial New England prized higher education; he explains the effort the New England Puritans put into establishing Harvard University as early as 1636 and the sacrifices they made to ensure its

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80 *Ibid.,* 21; 17.
81 Miller, 396.
82 *Ibid.,*16.
83 *Ibid,*15-16.

survival during severe economic struggles.[84] Morison claims that at Harvard "The humanist tradition, one of the noblest inheritances of the English race, went hand in hand with conquering puritanism into the clearings of the New England wilderness." [85] Students at Harvard studied not just theology, but Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Geometry, and Astronomy as placed within the "Three Philosophies" of Metaphysics, Ethics and Natural Science.[86] The surprising openness of the curriculum, and the assumption that educated young men were proficient in Greek as well as Latin and Hebrew, is proven by finds of student-owned works such as Theocritus's *Idylls* and the *Iliad,* which found its way to Harvard in 1684 and was subsequently used by seven different students.[87] This academic interest was present in the colonies at the individual as well as the institutional level. Regarding private libraries in colonial New England, Morison confidently states "there was little of importance in the English literature of the seventeenth century outside the drama that did not reach New England within a few years of publication…educated New Englanders shared with their English contemporaries a healthy curiosity concerning modern literature, philosophy, and science, and a deep love for the literature of classical antiquity."[88]

The earliest New England Colleges should not overshadow the accomplishments of their primary school counterparts. Morison elucidates how, in England, elementary schools prospered under Protestant political leadership: "Under the puritan ascendancy much was done to improve the grammar schools and make them more available for the common people…The overthrow of

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84 *Ibid.,* 37-40. The other most noteworthy example of an early colonial college founded on Puritan values is Yale University, established in 1701. See "Traditions and History," *Yale,* accessed 3 April 2016, http://www.yale.edu/about-yale/traditions-history. I am also indebted to Barbara Matthews for clarifying some misconceptions I had about the earliest New England colleges.

85 *Ibid.,* 55.

86 *Ibid.,* 42.

87 *Ibid.,* 46-48.

88 *Ibid.,* 150-151.

the puritan regime in England dealt the cause of free, public education a blow from which it did not recover until the nineteenth century."[89] In New England, primary education became so popular that very early on common (what we would now call "elementary" or "primary") schools were "taken for granted."[90] In fact, by 1642 the Massachusetts Bay Colony had instituted an act requiring heads of families to insure elementary education for their children; in 1647, Massachusetts made providing of common schools and grammar schools compulsory (an act that was quickly imitated by Connecticut in 1650); Justin Hitchcock would have benefitted as a child from the Connecticut Valley's early acquisition of lands for schools in places like Springfield (1653), Northampton (1664), Hadley, (1665), and Hartford (1642).[91] Morison asserts that such an intellectual tradition ultimately had huge implications. By 1701 the New England colonists "were as well prepared as any people in the world to be quickened by new ideas, and to play their part in the coming drama of the Rights of Man."[92] The goal of this thesis is to examine a few 18th century colonial autobiographies that, despite all their ideological ambiguities and because of their focus on reality and individualism, helped bridge the gap between the colonist's "intellectual tradition" and the actual reality of the Revolution.

89 *Ibid.,* 61-62.
90 *Ibid.,* 64.
91 *Ibid.* 66; 69; 73.
92 *Ibid.,* 274.

Chapter Two: The New Light

The "Calling"

The individualistic, theological underpinnings of Puritanism were experienced in the 18th century colonist's everyday realities. One way this occurred was by virtue of the idea of a "calling." Besides having faith in the concept itself, the Puritans believed that they needed to be industrious and frugal in the pursuit of their "calling," and that they would have to overcome divinely ordained adversity in that pursuit as well as in other aspects of their lives. However much the seventeenth-century Puritanism that defined this "calling" no longer existed by the time of the Revolution, it remained a relevant, widespread force nonetheless thanks to the Great Awakening. From the earliest days of English colonization onward, it informed the value systems of the North American colonies.[93]

Drawing on Puritan theology, scholar Edmund S. Morgan claims "The values, ideas, and attitudes of the Puritan Ethic…clustered around the familiar idea of 'calling.'"[94] The Puritans accepted the fact of their physicality and, rather than using it as an excuse to turn from religion, found a means of powerfully reconciling their faith and their mortal lives. John Cotton was a famous minister of New England who lived from 1584-1652;[95] his teachings are direct insights into the exact nature of this "calling." One sermon, "Christian Calling," reveals that central to the Puritan's belief system was not only the fact that God is omnipotent and omniscient; he is always present, too.[96] A good Puritan sought to "bring in God any service" so that, at the end of his life, he may be comfortable in the fact that his service "was a lively worke in the sight of God, and so

93 Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution," 3-4.

94 *Ibid.,* 4.

95 *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of their Writings,* ed. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, (New York, New York: Harper and Row,) 1963, 207-208.

96 John Cotton, "Christian Calling," in *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of their Writings,* ed. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, (New York, New York: Harper and Row,) 1963, 319-327.

it will be rewarded," and that he "may with courage looke up for recompence from Christ."[97] Cotton also interprets God's preferential treatment of hooved animals that have a "split-hoofe" (over ones without a split hoof) to demonstrate God's recognition of both temporal and ascetic life. He deems both to be important: "if he have no calling but a general, or if no calling but a particular, he is an uncleane creature…our callings doe not interfeire one upon another, but both goe an end evenly together…hee would have some imployment to *fill the head and hand with*." [98] Although it embraced pride in one's hard work–a very individualistic sentiment– this "imployment" had several conditions. Perhaps most importantly, God must be constantly present; the calling could be attained only by a clear indication of God's will, and God would be eternally present in the work itself. Furthermore, with God's approval, no work was too unsavory or "low;" similarly, no success could be fully enjoyed as a personal success. Modesty was therefore an essential character trait. Failures and injuries would be soothed as well by the fact that God wills and does all. Additionally, the "imployment" would have to serve the public good and would have to be suitable to the person's natural talents.[99]

Perhaps clinging to the spark of individual agency found in this concept of a "calling," the Puritans believed that once having found a vocation one was to deeply commit ones' self to it. It was to be a main focus of one's energy, strength, and will. Buffering this sentiment of industry was the virtue of frugality. In order to be productive and yet useful to the rest of society, successful without falling victim to vices such as "luxurious living" and vanity (both sinful largely because they mocked an omnipotent God), one had to live quite modestly.[100] There were several instances, in the years just prior to and during the Revolution, when the colonists had to

97 *Ibid*., 319; 326-327.
98 *Ibid*., 321.
99 *Ibid*., 319-327.
100 Morgan, "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution," 4-5.

face direct attacks on this historically engrained mode of life. When they famously demanded of the British that there be "no taxation without representation" in the decade before the first shots at Lexington and Concord, the American rebels drew upon their Puritan roots: "Through the rhetoric…of the Puritan Ethic, the colonists reached behind the constitutional principle to the enduring human needs that had brought the principle into being."[101] Because they had no control over the fact that they were being taxed, the colonists were essentially being robbed; in being robbed, they were deprived of their right and limited in their means to completely enjoy the rewards of their own industry and frugality. Before the Revolution they were powerless to stop this "assault on every man's calling,"[102] thus making it not a challenge of God but an act contrary to his will–unless, of course, it was God's will that the colonists go to war.

The same argument was applied to the issue of slavery. In the years of the Revolution, when the dark irony of slavery was becoming ever clearer to the colonists in light of their political assertions, Northern and Southern slaveholders alike realized that slavery violated central tenets of the "Puritan Ethic" as well as Enlightenment notions of liberty and equality. By definition, a slave has no control over his or her livelihood. Particularly in the South, people worried that slavery stole industrious workers from the fruits of their labor and encouraged masters to live a life of unearned ease. Interestingly, the focus was more on the sin-inducing effects of slavery on masters than on the inhumanity suffered by slaves; framing their criticism of slavery in this way, several white southerners were able to retain their racist values.[103] The early Puritan colonists welcomed much crueler adversities than simply not having slaves.

For the colonists, adversity was never up to the winds of chance. It was the predetermined act of an all-powerful God, used as part of His plan to impart justice and to

101 *Ibid*., 14.
102 *Ibid*., 13.
103 *Ibid*., 23.

reconcile people to His will. It was therefore, strangely, a good thing; in hard times, the Puritans believed that God was desperately trying to reach them.[104] This belief was most prominent in the Jeremiad, the unique form of Puritan sermon that stressed the incessant inadequacy of people's virtue and faith.[105] Besides faith in of itself, in times of hardship a man "could renew his faith by exercising frugality and industry, which were good not simply because they would lead to a restoration of prosperity, but because God demanded them." Of course, this prosperity was dangerous because it could lead to vices that in turn brought more adversity. Thus were the Puritans constantly caught in the middle of two extremes, "forever improving the world, in full knowledge that every improvement would in the end prove illusory."[106] Put simply, they thrived on struggle.

The colonists applied this concept of adversity to the Revolution. In need of a deep, emotional impetus for them to stand up to power while embracing liberty and democracy, they knew that "the preservation of liberty rested…on the vigilance of and moral stamina of the people."[107] This "moral stamina" had ties to religion: there was the commandment to "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."[108] Nathaniel Whitaker, citing Richard Price, claimed that '"liberty is the cause of God and truth'…submission to British claims 'to bind us in all cases whatsoever' would be sinful in the eyes of God.'"[109] Fortunately, the colonist's Puritan ancestors set a precedent for assigning great import to virtue and morality. This precedent was as much a result of external factors as it was ideology; just as, according to

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104 *Ibid*., 5.

105 *Ibid*., 6.

106 *Ibid*., 5.

107 Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the Revolution,* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,) 1992, 65.

108 Galatians v,I in Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 315. This commandment, as demonstrated by the context in which Bailyn uses it, was interpreted differently by British loyalists and revolutionaries alike to suit their own political ideologies.

109 Bonomi, 212.

Morison, the Puritans thrived intellectually in hostile new environments, so too did they thrive morally for the same reason. Bernard Bailyn writes: "In the colonies…virtue continued to be fortified by the simplicity of life and the lack of enervating luxury."[110] Of course, this disciplined cultural attitude was created and enforced by religion as well as environment; a tough environment allowed latent religious ideas the opportunity to fully express themselves.

Everyday adversity, just like industry and frugality, was much more than an abstraction or even a description of everyday life during the Revolution. It was a part of the framework by which the colonists were able to understand the major political events that were changing their world. More than an obstacle (such as taxation or slavery) in one's duty to be industrious and frugal in the pursuit of a "calling," the adversity represented by the political stranglehold of the British was seen as a path to virtue. The prospect of war was expected to draw out "the conditions of adversity in which virtue could be expected to flourish,"[111] a sentiment John Adams strongly agreed with. Adams wasn't alone in his exhortation of the war to improve virtue; preachers of various sects phrased the tenets of the Jeremiad not as a hopeful goal of the war but as a *means* to succeed in the war. Being virtuous would bring God to the colonist's cause.[112] The relatively short-term nature of the actual conflict, combined with (according to John Adams) the less than ideal level of inspired virtue during the conflict, greatly motivated the first American citizens to consciously strive for virtue as they sought to create a republican government.[113]

One of the most fundamental beliefs underlying this new government was the idea of liberty. Liberty, it was believed, rested on virtue; being parts of the path to success, virtues such as industry and frugality were safeguards to the vices that naturally led to economic downturn

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110 *Ibid*., 83.
111 Morgan, "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution," 18.
112 Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven,* 213.
113 *Ibid*., 19.

and hardship.[114] It might be added that on a more individual, philosophical level, being virtuous keeps someone from being a slave to his or her irrational, instinctual whims and desires. Drawing on a long political tradition, the colonists understood that property is also an essential component of liberty. Property, in turn, exists because of such virtues as industry and frugality.[115] Thus whether it had a direct or indirect correlation with freedom, virtue–just as it had defined Puritan theology– was at the core of early American Republican values.

These values manifested themselves in the development of manufacturing in the early United States. Not only did industry and frugality lead to freedom, they made economic (and therefore political) independence from Britain possible. The colonists embraced local manufacturing at the expense of a merchant class that relied on importing British and other European goods. Additionally, the potential riches to be gained from hard work were not perceived as being as morally risky as those riches gained from mere trade and speculation.[116] Prior to the war, the colonist's realization that they could in fact thrive on manufacturing made "a connection with Britain seem neither wholly necessary or possible, so that when the thought of independence came, it was greeted with less apprehension than it might otherwise have been."[117] After the war, industry and frugality were both emphasized to resist an overflowing post-war market of British goods; indeed, the increasingly aggressive efforts of the British to ruin the American economy only fueled the pro-manufacturing movement. The British did everything they could to limit the GDP of the newly formed nation: "The British gladly supplied the market…the result was a flood of British textiles and hardware in every state…Americans were caught up in an orgy of buying. But at the same time Britain barred American ships from her

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114 *Ibid.,* 10.

115 *Ibid*. While Morgan does not mention it here, the link between property and freedom is perhaps most explicitly represented, and was best understood by the colonists, in the writings of John Locke.

116 *Ibid.,* 12-13; 34-37.

117 *Ibid.*,13.

West Indies possessions, where American cattle, lumber, and foodstuffs had enjoyed a prime market."[118] This was seen as being part of a malicious British plan, born of resentment at losing the war, "to destroy American liberty by introducing luxury and levity among the people."[119] In addition to being unjust towards them, Americans saw the British as internally corrupt. Drawing back to their Puritan roots, the Americans argued that local manufacturing was as much proof of their virtue in contrast to British vice as it was a means of achieving independence: "When Congress finally dissolved the political bands…the act was rendered less painful by the colonial conviction that American and England were already separated as virtue from vice…In the eyes of many Americans the Revolution was a defense of industry and frugality…from the assaults of British vice."[120] In this way, the individualistic underpinnings of Puritanism were transformed to fit a common political agenda. Thus did the idea of a "calling" and all of its ramifications, especially those pertaining to a person's individual self-worth as determined by his or her work ethic, have definitive economic, social, and political effects on the rebellious rhetoric of the revolutionary period.

Origins and Value of the New Light

However, the Calvinist, individualist ideals inspired by the Great Awakening have much deeper origins and are far more complex than the Puritan notion of a "calling." The Awakening gave impetus to an old notion of individuality that would be indispensable to the success of the revolution. Even before the Awakening, Puritan beliefs had deeply instilled a sense of self-worth in the Puritan colonial consciousness: Bernard Bailyn states that Puritanism "carried on into the eighteenth century and into the minds of the Revolutionaries the idea…that the settlement of British America had been an event designed by the hand of God." He adds that "this influential

118 *Ibid.*, 36.
119 *Ibid.*, 37-38.
120 *Ibid.*, 18.

strain of thought…prepared the colonists for a convulsive realization by locating their parochial concerns at a critical juncture on the map of mankind's destiny."[121] This sense of self-importance was one means by which the colonists were enabled to repurpose religion from supporting monarchical government to supporting open rebellion. [122] It underlay the revolutionaries' appeal to a "calling" and all of its societal benefits, and was specifically expressed in the Great Awakening's revived emphasis on a deeply personal connection to God; it was tied to the intensely individualist theory of predestination, which held that God arbitrarily saved his "chosen" people via directly inspiring them to faith through his divine grace.[123] Bonomi clarifies, writing "Only god could see into the heart, and neither ministers nor congregations should interpose themselves between the individual and his Creator."[124] Bailyn agrees: "Puritanism… had created challenges to the traditional notions of social stratification by generating the conviction that…a cosmic achievement lay within each man's grasp."[125] Stressing individual agency made the Puritans feel not only justified in challenging authority; it was their '"duty to God and religion…to assert and defend their rights by all lawful, most prudent, and effectual means in their power."' [126] One member of the New Side Presbyterians in Philadelphia, Samuel Blair, also expressed the right to rebellion as divinely sanctioned. In the context of the Great Awakening, he and Gilbert Tennent both agreed that the possibility of disagreement was far better than the "corruption of the whole" that could come from uncensored authority.[127] In this way, Christianity in the colonies was reconfigured because of the Great Awakening; instead of

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121 Bailyn, 32-33.
122 Bailyn, 32-33.
123 Miller, 3-34.
124 *Ibid.*, 160.
125 *Ibid.*, 303.
126 Stephen Johnson, *Some Important Observations*… (Newport, 1766: JHL Pamphlet 19), 27-28, in Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution,* 304.
127 Bonomi, 155.

the theological underpinning of a large-scale system, it became a description of the deeply personal and direct relationship that any ordinary person could have with a higher power. This relationship outweighed any allegiance to any mortal being. It was in direct contrast to the traditional view–a view that was fervently upheld in resistance to the rebellious colonist's views, even as they rapidly gained popularity–that people had power through divine will; that because of this divine will those in power were naturally suited to their elevated positions; and that to disobey their authority was a licentious act tantamount to disobeying God.[128]

The mid 18th century American religious resurgence was the "crystallization" of a fundamental split between rationalist liberals and these conservative, evangelical revivalists.[129] The evangelicals used the idea of "piety" to contest the liberal's obedience to "reason."[130] This schism of rationality and faith was, Alan Heimert admits, a common characteristic of 18th century religious politics. However, the Great Awakening in America was unique for two reasons: it rested particularly on Calvinist values, and it emphasized the "works" as oppose to the "word" of God. Theory and doctrine was less relevant than reality; thus "…the focus of analysis quickly shifted from the will of God to the nature of man…the crux of Calvinism became the existential reality of the emotional conversion experience."[131]

During the Awakening, the evangelical revivalists broadened the limits of "liberalism" and were in fact much more "liberal" and progressive than the Old Light Liberals. Heimert writes: "Indeed the evidence attests that Liberalism was a profoundly elitist and conservative ideology, while evangelical religion embodied a radical and even democratic challenge to the

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128 Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution,* 301-319.

129 Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 2.

130 *Ibid.,* 3.

131 *Ibid.,* 3-5; 5.

standing order of colonial America."[132] Enlightened religious thought had good intentions, but it was still stuck in the mire of institutional beliefs and rules. If the "truth" did not come directly from God but could be learned and loved solely by a person's independent willpower, that person still had to rely on earthly sources of knowledge; a hierarchical chain of knowledge was necessarily preserved in a rationalist worldview. Bonomi cites how from 1725 to 1750, even radical Whigs like John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon "praised the liberality of the British system and counseled obedience to it as long as the constitution was 'preserved entire'…they… balanced the scales between obedience and resistance so evenly as to discourage a formal opposition, much less the overthrow of government by force."[133] Robespierre himself, in a different but not unrelated revolution, "connected the radical free thought of the Enlightenment with anti-revolutionary conspiracy. Atheism, he declared, is aristocratic."[134] The focus on learned truth was reminiscent of Arminianism, a theological belief that had contradicted predestination: Arminianism stated that someone could earn salvation through good deeds and could comprehend God solely through his or her personal agency.[135] The evangelicals, on the other hand, expanded liberalism from beyond just highlighting individuality to challenging the status quo.

True, before the Awakening, 17th century Puritan colonists had emphasized the rationality endorsed by Arminianism to also produce notions of individuality. Samuel Morison writes that "Predestination…was not stressed by the New England puritans…the puritan sermons assume… that by virtue of the Covenant of Grace…salvation lay within reach of every person who made an effort; Christ helped those who helped themselves."[136] Although both groups used similar

132 *Ibid.,* 12.
133 Bonomi, 198.
134 Walzer, 86.
135 *Ibid.,* 4.
136 Morison, *The Intellectual Life of New England,* 11.

theology to reach the idea of individual agency, in this respect the key difference between the early Puritan colonists referred to here and the later adherents of the Great Awakening lay in the aspect of the "Covenant of Grace" that each group emphasized. Later I will explain how for the 'awakened,' the Covenant of Grace placed great focus on predestination, while for the 'unawakened' it focused on morality and learned religion.

All this is not at all to say that rational liberalism played no role in the American Revolution; even Bonomi admits that such a claim is quite "improbable." Bernard Bailyn eloquently describes the ideas that were adopted, transformed, and ultimately claimed by the American colonists in the years leading up to and during the Revolution. In *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution,* Bailyn uses a plethora of firsthand evidence to prove the prevalence and popularity of these ideas. His greatest proof is the huge volume of pamphlets the colonists read and wrote. These pamphlets, being neither too long nor too short, were the perfect length to deliver highly polemical arguments with an immediacy and directness unique among the political literature of the time.[137] Although the colonists were not by any means all masters of the literary craft, (Bailyn considers many of them "amateurs")[138] these pamphlets were not without their merits. In comparing the rationalism of the American pamphlets to their impassioned English counterparts, Bailyn writes: "The American writers were profoundly reasonable people. Their pamphlets convey scorn, anger, and indignation; but rarely blind hate, rarely panic fear. They sought to convince their opponents…the reader is led through arguments, not images. The pamphlets aim to persuade."[139] Bailyn identifies five different epistemological sources for the political ideology the colonists had developed by 1775: Classicism, the Enlightenment, Puritanism, English Law, and, most significantly, the controversies that arose out

137 Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the Revolution,* 1-4.
138 *Ibid.,*14.
139 *Ibid.,* 19.

of the English Civil War.[140] The colonists read the classics–primarily Plutarch, Livy, Cicero, Sallust, and Tacitus–because these writers, writing in the centuries immediately preceding the establishment of the Roman Empire and the downfall of the Roman Republic, most directly reflected what they thought was the eminent destruction of their own democratic values.[141] The values that the colonists drew from the Enlightenment and the English law gave an intriguing contrast of tradition and progress. For the writings of the English Civil War, the colonists turned to both the writers contemporary with the revolution and to the eighteenth century writers who expanded that earlier generation's ideas. They were particularly influenced by John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, who (as demonstrated in works like *Cato's Letters* and the newspaper *The Independent Whig*) "ranked with the treatises of Locke as the most authoritative statement of the nature of political liberty and above Locke as an exposition of the social sources of threats it faced." [142] Bonomi agrees with Bailyn on the huge influence of Trenchard and Gordon; she elucidates that according to the *Independent Whig,* one such "social source" were the "Attempts by the high clergy to smuggle modified versions of divine right and passive obedience into the eighteenth century."[143] All of these intellectual traditions played a role in helping the colonists rationalize their rebellion against the English crown.

However, despite his comprehensive investigation Bailyn considers religion (as well as the Enlightenment, English Common Law, and the Classics) as being secondary to the ideas that arose from the English Civil War in influencing the Revolution. This is likely because he believes religion lacks intellectual sophistication and practicality. To the contrary, Bonomi fervently believes that religion (particularly the Puritan ethic) had a vital, shaping role in the

140 *Ibid*., 22-54.
141 *Ibid*., 25-26.
142 *Ibid*., 36.
143 Bonomi, 194.

Revolution. Referencing a brief history of seventeenth and eighteenth century religious dissent in England that covers everything from Milton's defiance of King Charles I, to the trial of Henry Schaverell in 1710 for defending the pre-Restoration Crown, to the writings of Gordon, Trenchard, and Jonathan Mayhew, Bonomi illustrates religion's powerful role once it became blended into the political injustices the colonists were facing from Britain.[144] She explains that these historically grounded themes of resistance to "divine right" worked well in the colonies, despite the fact that in the colonies (compared to Europe) "divine right" had never fully become an accepted social reality.[145] Contrary to confusing, secular polemics, "…the least ambiguous justification for opposition to Britain in the 1770s, the line of argument least weighted with qualifications and requiring the least remodeling…drew on the religious politics of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries–specifically the resistance in England to the doctrine of divine right and passive obedience."[146] Heimert offers that the evangelicalism of the Great Awakening suggested that "public discourse" should work at a visceral level as well as a rational one. He agrees with Bonomi that "a 'pure rationalism' might have declared the independence of the American people, but it could never have inspired them to fight for it."[147] Bonomi's argument draws on the inter-colonial context of growing religious toleration: "…should their religious as well as civil liberties come under attack, a new element would be added that might outweigh conventional inhibitions about resistance–even in an era of moderation." [148] When, during the 1760s and especially from 1767 to 1770, the Anglican Church sought to seat a bishop in the colonies, the colonists were alarmed; they quickly recognized that "politics rather than religion lay at the heart of the controversy," and that "bishops endangered civil as well as religious

144 *Ibid.,* 189-199.
145 *Ibid.,* 197-198.
146 Bonomi, 188.
147 Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind,* 18.
148 Bonomi, 198-199.

liberty."[149] Seeking popular support to defy England, famous revolutionary writers and thinkers such as John Adams and William Livingstone referred to the "American Bishop controversy" in tracts dating from the Stamp Act Crises (1765) to the actual Revolution.[150]

This religious aspect of the revolutionary impulse has received inadequate attention, and that is why it is Bonomi and Heimert's goal to give the colonist's religion "the careful analysis, in breadth as well as depth, it has deserved but not received."[151] Heimert especially embraces his bias towards evangelical revivalism over liberal rationalism; he wants to vindicate 18th century colonial Puritanism of the "sins of which it was in fact guiltless" that were "heaped on it by historians" and to be hyper-critical of Liberalism because it has been "a philosophy almost universally praised for its 'enlightened' principles and 'liberating' tendencies."[152] Ultimately, to understand the impetus for Revolution we must reconcile the tenets of reason and religion by ignoring theological differences (i.e. ignoring the hierarchical, institutional connotations of rationality as oppose to the implied disestablishmentarianism of evangelicalism) and by simply focusing on how the Great Awakening inspired people to challenge conventional authority.[153] We must stay aware of how this act of challenging was appealing on both the emotional and the intellectual levels. Indeed: "…evangelical Calvinism and religious rationalism did not carve separate channels but moved as one stream toward the crises of 1776."[154]

The Great Awakening: History and Implications

Though the Presbyterian and Congregationalist Churches were at the forefront of the Great Awakening–each Church experienced the most prominent division among adherents into

149 *Ibid*., 200.
150 *Ibid*. 199-209.
151 Bonomi, 188; Heimert, 23; Heimert, 22.
152 *Ibid*., 23.
153 Bonomi, 161.
154 *Ibid*., 188.

New and Old Lights (Congregationalism, mostly in Connecticut) or New and Old Sides (Presbyterianism, with the New Sides in New York and the Old Sides in Philadelphia)–numerous other congregations experienced the same fundamental cleavage, the rebellious sects redefining themselves denominationally.[155] Heimert notes that many supporters of the Awakening considered themselves Baptists or simply as new Presbyterians.[156] No matter the internally divisive church or the resulting new denominations, churches experiencing the upheavals of the Awakening tended to split (according to Gilbert Tennet, a famous Presbyterian minister of the Awakening) on the same three fissures: "the conversion experience, education of the clergy, and itinerant preaching."[157] Bonomi centers the Great Awakening experience on these three principles because they defined the split within the Presbyterian Church in the Middle Colonies; this Church was the first to divide, and is "a kind of paradigm of the experience of all churches from their initial formation through the Great Awakening and its aftermath" because it experienced all the "strains and adjustments experienced by other colonial denominations" in that time period.[158]

Taking the example of the Presbyterian Church, Bonomi is able to outline a brief history of the internal Church divisions that fomented the Great Awakening. The schism centered on the idea of absolute obedience to ecclesiastical authority, and first manifested in the issue of education. More than straightforward doctrinal expertise, at stake here was who knew the most about ultimately intangible things–God, faith, religion in general–and why. The Presbyterian Synod of Philadelphia, established in 1715, had ruled that all entering ministers had to have a degree from an established college or university and had to pass an examination. Rejecting such institutional control were several ministers led by William Tennent, Sr., and his four sons

155 Throughout this thesis, I use "new light" versus "old light" to refer to the general split between Great Awakening values and adherents and pre/anti Great Awakening values and adherents.
156 *Ibid*., 2.
157 Bonomi, 144.
158 *Ibid*., 133.

(William Jr., Charles, John, and Gilbert). William Tennent had migrated from England in 1718 and, in the colonies, built and ran his own school for training ministers. The synod was frustrated by the fact that this "Log College" was challenging the status quo, and refused to approve licensed graduates (e.g., John Rowland) who did not submit themselves to the synod's examination. With the evangelical preachings of George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards and their ilk came theological justification for defying the authority of the synod; after Whitefield's first visits to the colonies in the winter of 1739-1740, itinerant preachers began to run amuck with laity members following closely behind. Now, not only could preachers and their adherents challenge the status quo; they could actively try to change it.[159] These separatists "stressed the rights of minorities against majorities, and of individuals against the whole, in matters of conscience."[160] In the spirit of defying rationality, New Lights frequently abandoned logical arguments and "turned on the more orthodox 'Old Sides' with the ferocity peculiar to zealots, charging them with extravagant doctrinal and moral enormities."[161] Gilbert Tennent said (mostly in Bonomi's words) that the members of the Philadelphia Synod were "bloated with intellectual conceit, letter-learned but blind to the truths of the Savior…'their Eyes with Judas, fixed upon the bag'…a generation of vipers."[162] Old lights/sides would often retort in like manner.[163] Such divisions and insults resulted in the Synod of Philadelphia expelling the Tennents and other revivalists in 1741, and those expelled members forming the incredibly successful Synod of New York in 1745. Interestingly, Aaron Burr Sr., wife of the Esther Burr later discussed in this thesis, was one of twenty-two founding members of the Synod of New York.

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159 *Ibid*., 139-143.
160 *Ibid*., 154.
161 *Ibid*., 139.
162 *Ibid*., 143-144.
163 *Ibid*., 149.

Eventually, George Whitefield travelled to New England, bringing (along with Jonathan Edwards) the Great Awakening directly to the Congregationalists. There the Awakening was brought to the fore via the published manifestos of Congregational clergy who couldn't agree whether itinerant Reverend James Davenport was too radical or not. The fact that established religion was so universally and powerfully challenged in such a short time span (according to Bonomi, between the years of 1739 and 1745) meant that even after 1745, churches felt the effects of the Awakening and continued to split. In addition to giving a representative summary of how and why internal church divisions occurred, Bonomi highlights some key differences between old and new lights/sides: On the whole, revivalists were much younger and had lived much longer in colonial America than the Old Sides.[164] Most important, however, was the fact that these young upstarts emphasized "individual actions over hierarchical ones. Everything they did…raised popular emotions…they insisted that there were choices, and that the individual himself was free to make them."[165] Such individualism, from the nature of the conversion experience, to disputes over educational standards for ministers, to the rights of laity to choose their own ministers, defined the actions of the separatists; it "was one of the most radical manifestations of the Awakening."[166]

By the time of the Awakening, when it became more acceptable to challenge Church doctrine and policy, clergymen commonly engaged in nasty polemics. As role models to the rest of the community, the clergymen thus "granted" a "kind of license…for a more broadly based and contentious style of public life."[167] This "public life" consisted of more than just arguing; rather, congregations operated as highly effective preliminary units of American democracy. Many

164 *Ibid*., 139-160.
165 *Ibid*., 147.
166 *Ibid*., 158.
167 *Ibid*., 162.

denominations "organized committees of correspondence, wrote circular letters, adjusted election tickets for religious balance, voted *en bloc,* and signed political petitions… Lay members, and… clergymen themselves, provided the leadership for movements whose initially religious aims rapidly became indistinguishable from political ones."[168] In addition to being a member of the Synod of New York, Aaron Burr Sr. was an instrumental path-breaker among revivalist ministry because in 1755 he published a "sermon on imperial affairs" that, instead of religious ideology, consisted mostly of secular politics; he and other Calvinist clergy thereafter paved the way for an "American tradition" of broad-based political involvement.[169] Sure enough, by 1775 the Continental Congress relied heavily on preachers both in and outside of New England to convince people to join the Patriot cause; as one of several examples, Bonomi claims that two clergymen managed to convert entire towns in Western Massachusetts "from tory to whig."[170] The clergy "resolved doubts, overcame inertia, fired the heart, and exalted the soul."[171] They accomplished this by discussing new light theology and the Jeremiad, and by comparing their present situation to biblical typologies. For instance: The colonists were compared to the enslaved Jews in ancient Egypt, Washington was Moses, and the struggle between the colonists and Britain was like the contest of David and Goliath.[172] Stylistically, the Calvinist clergy were unique in their method of delivering sermons for two reasons: they believed that "the purpose of public discourse was to activate men's wills as well as inform their minds," and they emphasized the "peculiar potency of the spoke word"[173] over the written one. Heimert acknowledges that although the revivalists were not completely alone in directly exhorting action–in using sermons

168 *Ibid.,* 186.
169 Heimert, 14-15.
170 Bonomi, 210.
171 *Ibid.,* 216.
172 *Ibid.,* 212-216.
173 Heimert, 18; 19.

that were not "vindications of action already done but encouragement to further endeavor on the part of the populace"[174]–very few recognized the power of non-written, verbal discourse as much as they did. (John Adams was one exception, but he still personally preferred to write.)[175] The value assigned the individualistic, spontaneous spoken word during a sermon was as much a tool to increase 18th century colonial church attendance as it was an effective method of political propaganda; as 1775 drew nearer, the latter became more and more relevant. Before the clergy could influence a popular, religiously based support of the revolution, many other developments also had to occur between the years just prior to the Great Awakening and the outbreak of war with Britain that pushed colonial Calvinism towards a more universal appeal.

Democratic in nature, the Awakening was experienced not just by the clergy but also by "hosts whose confrontation embodied a fundamental cleavage within the colonial populace itself."[176] Indeed, it is because of the popular nature of the Awakening and its attendant emphasis on individualism that it had significant political implications. Bonomi sums up the connection between the Awakening and political reform:

> The Great Awakening created conditions uniquely favorable to social and political, as well as religious, reform by piercing the façade of civility and deference that governed provincial life to usher in a new age of contentiousness. By promoting church separations and urging their followers to make choices that had political as well as religious implications, the Awakeners wrought permanent changes to public practices and attitudes.[177]

However salient these changes in political consciousness were, they also had historical antecedents within the Congregational Church. This Church faced inner controversy over how lenient Church practice should be regarding allowance to full communion. The early 18th century efforts to centralize church authority and to "ease some of its practices and broaden its

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174 *Ibid*., 18.
175 *Ibid*., 20.
176 *Ibid*., 3.
177 *Ibid*., 132-133.

community role" both aimed to increase the popularity of the church; where the former tried to increase the reputability of the Church and was only sparingly successful (more so in Connecticut than Massachusetts) the latter was "strikingly" so.[178] Furthermore, religious dissenters from Congregationalism were able to gradually gain exemption from paying Church tithes, culminating in total exemption for all dissenters by 1740. In Connecticut, where centralized authority was more welcome, dissenters had more trouble successfully defending their legal rights to church tax exemption; religious toleration would not become much of a reality until after the Great Awakening caused the New Light/Old Light split in 1740.[179] These developments allowed elements of the secular world to slip into the idealized Puritan community; what had originated as a uniform "city upon a hill" now emerged as "a relatively stable society whose religious beliefs were increasingly intertwined with secular and rationalist values."[180]

When it came time to declare war on Britain, regular people–not just clergy members–had been sufficiently exposed to the religious as well as political rhetoric that justified their rebellion. Ever wary of losing her argument in specific theological beliefs, Bonomi insinuates that it was the general idea of revolutionary religion that was most important: "My own emphasis…falls more directly on the ways in which religious rationalists employed the dissenting tradition to advance the Revolutionary cause."[181] The fact that the simple impetus to rebel, not the complicated ideology, was most important means that the "Revolutionary cause" was applicable to not just ecclesiastical authorities; it had a very broad-based appeal. Even before the war, the Great Awakening clergy revivalists "found their allies among the people," and

178 *Ibid*., 62.
179 *Ibid*., 65-66.
180 Bonomi, 67.
181 *Ibid*., 9.

it was only with such popular support that "the institutional disruptions and church separations of the Great Awakening…provided a kind of 'practice model' which enabled the provincials to 'rehearse'…a number of the situations…and arguments…that would reappear with the political crisis of the 1760s and 1770s."[182] Because the Awakening created a more vibrant public life by giving license to righteous rebellion and individual political expression, it fundamentally altered the way colonialists viewed themselves in relationship to their larger community. Before, "colonists had rarely conceived of themselves apart from a larger collectivity–the family, the congregation, or the town. But the eighteenth-century revival penetrated and shattered that unitary cosmos…the revivalists gave sanction to a new dynamic in human relationships."[183]

This new dynamic foreshadowed the nature and result of the Revolutionary War. Gordon Wood argues that even up to the mid 18th century, people based their realities on social relationships derived from the English model.[184] Supporting Wood's claim that the Revolution was not explicitly meant to be a social revolution but a political one, Bailyn is helpful in delineating how the American Revolution nonetheless instigated social change: "In no obvious sense was the American Revolution undertaken as a social revolution…the order of society as it had been known…was transformed as a result of the Revolution…The views men held toward the relationships that bound them to each other–the discipline and pattern of society–moved in a new direction in the decade before Independence."[185] The Revolution created lateral systems of group consciousness, whether political, social, or otherwise; it challenged and changed the fact that "most people could locate themselves only in superiority or in subordination to someone else…how to behave in society always had advise for both directions at once, above and

182 Bonomi,153.
183 *Ibid.,* 157.
184 Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 11-24.
185 Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution,* 302.

below…Individuals were simultaneously free and subservient, independent and dependent, superior and inferior–depending on the person with whom they were dealing."[186]

In *Beyond the Farm: National Ambitions in Rural New England,* J.M. Opal goes further in describing the social change that the revolution inspired. Using Edward Hitchcock's (the father of Justin Hitchcock, who will be discussed later in this thesis) story as well as that of five other men, Opal concentrates on nineteenth century rural New England. He illuminates that although the colonists all experienced a political and social transformation as a result of the Revolution, after the war they each occupied different places on the continuum between British subject and American patriot. This continuum was defined more by social values and roles than by political allegiance. Opal locates this social shift in the way the colonists conceived of ambition, nationalism, and livelihood before, during, and after the revolution. He describes how these people shifted from being almost entirely locally autonomous to being apart of the national economy and sharing in a national ethos.[187] Rather than finding lifelong satisfaction in a family tradition steeped in husbandry wherein "the household…issued the daily work orders through which people mapped out the familiar past and likely future," the colonists expanded their horizons into a fierce desire for self-fulfillment; as a result of the war, they came to value "independence" rather than mere "competence."[188] In a strange irony, the earliest Americans wrestled with new norms of personal, economic ambition while also slowly learning to identify each other more as equals in the social hierarchy. Thus was the ideology of the New Light, through both ideology and historical happenstance, absolutely essential to the American Revolution.

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186 Wood, 24.

187 J.M. Opal, *Beyond the Farm: National Ambitions in Rural New England,* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

188 Opal, *Beyond the Farm,* 25; *Ibid*., 36.

Chapter Three: The Primary Sources and the New Light

In this section and in Chapter 5, I will examine religious elements of three types of primary sources: that of a white, poor male from Massachusetts, that of a wealthy white woman also from Massachusetts who also lived in New Jersey, and those of three African Americans primarily spread (during their time in the American colonies) from New York to Massachusetts to Charleston. The fact that despite their geographic variety most of these sources can be traced to Massachusetts, along with the fact that the Great Awakening was a colony-wide phenomenon grounded in much of the same elements of Calvinist belief that undergirded New England Puritanism, suggests that the Puritan ethic–to a degree, at least– informs the religious tones of these sources. Each one of the sources reveals insights into the religious ambiguities (particularly those pertaining to Puritanism's legacy of a new conception of the individual) largely brought to light by the first Great Awakening; each lies outside the overtly political, white-male dominated polemical tracts that were written in the American colonies between 1750-1800.

Slave/African American Narratives

18th century African Americans, like white American colonists, had a complicated relationship to the nuanced political undertones of the Great Awakening. The slave and African American biographies that came out of this time period are distinctive because they cannot be taken at face value; they have nearly always been mediated by white editors. These editors had their own biases and goals that shaped the way they presented the slave's stories.[189] The works looked at here all have more or less explicit religious overtones, thus indicating that the white editors of the original accounts were invested in spreading a religious message. However, this is obviously not to say that the slaves themselves weren't motivated by religion, too. Each of the three black narratives presented here– that of Briton Hammon, John Marrant, and James Albert

189 The implication of the involvement of these editors is discussed in a later section. That discussion explains how, like Burr and Hitchcock, 18th century African Americans had a much more nuanced relationship to religion (particularly Calvinism and/or Puritanism) than may appear at first glance.

Ukawsaw Gronniosaw–represents a different time frame within the 18th century. James Gronniosaw lived in New York during most of the 1730s and 40s, Briton Hammon's account fills the 1750s, and the tale of John Marrant covers 1735 to 1785. The expressed Christian beliefs of these and many other black narratives from a similar time and place indicate that the Great Awakening helped many slaves legitimize their quest for freedom.

Just as with white colonists, for African-Americans the Great Awakening elicited an emotional response.[190] The actual process of conversion differed greatly among individual African-Americans: some mixed their old belief systems with the new one, others completely rejected these older beliefs, and some had particular trouble adhering to the new, Christian cultural norms.[191] In his article '"I Saw the Book Talk': Slave Readings of the First Great Awakening,'" Frank Lambert illustrates how, contrary to many slaveholder's wishes that conversion amongst their slaves would awaken a renewed sense of duty, the slave conversions that attended the Great Awakening in fact engendered a sense of individual rights (ie the right to freedom) among these slaves and greatly enhanced the potential for them to rebel. Thus did the Awakening cater more to slave-owners' fears rather than their hopes. Ann Duton, writing to some converted slaves at George Whitefield's request, asked the African Americans to see how '"[God]…doth not call you hereby from the Service of you Masters according to the Flesh; but to serve him in serving them in obeying all their lawful Commands…'" Dutton, Whitefield, and other whites wanted it very clear that "conversion affected only the slave's spiritual bondage, not his or her physical condition." [192] Such attitudes built on the attitudes of pre-Awakening preachers; SPG minister Francis Le Jau had emphasized in his conversion of South Carolina slaves "the adherence to the good order of church and society" over "a transformation of the

190 *Ibid.*, 185.
191 *Ibid.*, 192-194.
192 Ann Duton, in Frank Lambert, "I Saw the Book Talk," 189.

individual."[193] Nonetheless, the intensely individualistic aspect of the Great Awakening greatly outweighed the bible's traditional stress on obedience. Rather than becoming more subservient, African Americans saw in the revival "hopes of freedom, if not in this life then for eternity."[194] George Whitefield himself, though not an abolitionist by any means, "was appalled by the inhumane treatment of slaves"; he sought to improve slave's lives through religion.[195] Furthermore, the very language of Whitefield's message (sinners were '"slaves'" to the Devil'" and to their own sins) was easily interpreted by slaves as being pro-emancipation: slaves "heard the strains of emancipation from slavery as well as spiritual deliverance" because "Whitefield preached about themes which bondsmen applied to their physical as well as spiritual circumstances."[196]

Each of the slave/African American autobiographies I examine here uses some combination of three different but related means to highlight how the New Light influenced its author. First, the revived evangelicalism enabled the authors to re-appreciate their individuality on its own terms; second, it made them more acutely aware of when this individuality was violated. Third, the mistreatments the authors underwent (the "violations" to their individuality) consisted of just one aspect of lives full of adversity; adversity that, post-conversion, was construed as a necessary step in the pious individual's inexorable path to salvation and God. None of the authors state that the Puritan (or Calvinist) ethic inspired him to embrace his station in life because it was his divinely ordained "calling;" however, if there wasn't implicit eagerness for this calling there was definitely acceptance. For these men, the calling was more a reaction of God's unconditional investment in an individual than a cause of individuality per se. In this

193 *Ibid*.
194 Lambert, "I Saw the Book Talk," 195.
195 *Ibid*., 188.
196 *Ibid*., 195.

interpretation, God does not value the individual *because* of his or her occupation, but *regardless* of it; the acceptance of a calling is a symptom of God's completely nonobligatory decision to arbitrarily form a direct relationship with anyone. Success in a calling is thus not a duty but a motivation, and everyday life became invested with a whole new level of meaning and moral import under the watchful eye of divine benevolence. It chronologically makes sense to start this New Light, African-American/slave analysis with the biography of James Gronniosaw.

James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw

It is important to note, first of all, that Gronniosaw related his story to a young, white woman who has remained unidentified.[197] The best hint we are given is that it was written down by "a young LADY of the Town of LEOMINSTER, for her own Satisfaction, and without any Intention at first that it should be made public."[198] Gronniosaw's path to conversion began with a sense of his own helpless depravity. He learned about Christianity while in New York City under the tutelage of one of his masters, Mr. "Freelandhouse" (Frelinghuysen).[199] After learning about God's sovereignty and omnipotence, Gronniosaw was told about judgment day and how only the faithful could attain salvation; worried he was doomed to hell, Gronniosaw became "convinced of my own corrupt nature, and the misery of my heart…"[200] Such an intensely personal recognition of his own unavoidable sinfulness enabled Gronniosaw to understand the notion that through his Grace, God penetrates the souls of people individually. Gronniosaw soon learned that, in inspiring him to search for faith, God was working upon him; he knew that "the Lord… had worked so wonderfully for me a poor heathen."[201] As is typical with many religiously tainted

197 *Slave Narratives*, ed. William L. Andrews and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 2000,) p. 1006.

198 James Gronniosaw, 3.

199 *Slave Narratives,* 1006.

200 James Gronniosaw, 15.

201 *Ibid*., 16-17.

autobiographies and biographies from the 18th century North American colonies, the author relates one specific moment that was his "conversion experience." For Gronniosaw, this moment occurs while he is cutting wood: "I was one day in a most delightful frame of mind; my heart so overflowed with love and gratitude to the Author of all my comforts. I…saw light inexpressible dart down from heaven upon me…joy unspeakable took possession of my soul…I seemed to posses a full assurance that my sins were forgiven me."[202] Gronniosaw even recalls the Covenant of Grace so central to the New England Puritan faith: "…this text of scripture came full upon my mind. '*And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts that they will not depart from me.* '"[203] Thanks to this conversion experience, Gronniosaw was eventually baptized in England by a priest named Doctor Gifford.[204] He concludes his narrative with a hopeful self-assurance for everlasting salvation: "As Pilgrims, and very poor Pilgrims, we are travelling through many difficulties towards our HEAVENLY HOME, and waiting…for…when the LORD shall us out of the evils of this present world and bring us to the EVERLASTING GLORIES of the world to come."[205] Gronniosaw found relief, almost impossibly, in the idea that adversity was a natural part of his and his family's process towards salvation.

The adversity referred to in this closing statement is explained throughout Gronniosaw's autobiography. He, and the wife he eventually married and their three children, suffered greatly throughout their lives from poverty. Much of the story consists of him traveling within England (he moved to England shortly after Mr. and Mrs. "Freelandhouse's" deaths to experience the homeland of George Whitefield and other influential Calvinists) simply to find work to survive.

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202 *Ibid*., 17-18.
203 *Ibid*., 18.
204 *Ibid*., 27.
205 *Ibid*., 33-34.

This adversity culminated in a period during which Gronniosaw and his family starved: "My dear wife and I were now both unemployed, we could get nothing to do. The winter prov'd remarkably severe, and we were reduc'd to the greatest stress imaginable… to see my dear wife and children in want pierc'd me to the heart."[206] In addition to natural adversity, Gronniosaw often suffered racism. After his conversion all forms of adversity, whether "natural" or not, strengthened Gronniosaw's sense of a deeply personal connection to God. One instance of the racist behavior Gronniosaw experienced was when, after being a privateer to earn money to pay off a debt, Gronniosaw's creditor stole all of Gronniosaw's earned money instead of just the allotted amount for paying off the debt.[207] Another occasion of blatant racism and cruelty was when Gronniosaw (rather foolishly) entrusted all of his money and many personal belongings with a woman who ran a public house when he first arrived in England. This woman later denied he ever gave her anything and never gave the money and belongings back. In the narrative Gronniosaw laments: "I soon perceived that I was got among bad people, who defrauded me of my money and watch; and that all my promis'd happiness was blasted, I had no friend but GOD and I pray'd to Him earnestly."[208] Here, Gronniosaw relied on his piety to both overcome his temporal struggles and to reassure himself of his individual worth; God was a savior who would listen to his prayers as well as a "friend." These are but two of many cases wherein Gronniosaw was manipulated into losing money.

Briton Hammon

The narrative of Briton Hammon has a less explicit religious tone. Significantly, of the three African-American narratives that are analyzed in this thesis, Hammon's is the only one where there is no introductory mention of a mediating, white editor. Indeed, in his preface

206 *Ibid*., 29.
207 *Ibid*., 21.
208 *Ibid*., 23.

Hammon strives to use his proclaimed modesty as a stamp of authenticity: "As my Capacities and Condition of Life are very low, it cannot be expected that I should make those Remarks…as on in a higher Station…I shall only relate Matters of Fact as they occur to my Mind."[209] Although Rafia Zafar reminds us that Hammon did indeed have a white editor, too,[210] this potential lack of a white presence makes it more believable that this narrative directly reflects Hammon's beliefs. It also means that the narrative was written to seem more authentic. The result is that there is no description of a powerful conversion moment or an admittance of innate sin, lest a direct allusion to the Covenant of Grace; however, Hammon still acknowledges God. His less intellectual (insofar as it is presented in the narrative) piety is valuable because it shows how the Puritan ethic could appeal to African American slaves on an emotional level. The nature of this appeal was necessarily personal. When describing how a tribe of Native Americans burned his ship, killed all of his shipmates, and captured him, Hammon tells how terrified he was that the Native Americans "intended to roast me alive;" he then goes on to explain how "…the Providence of god ordered it otherways, for He appeared for my Help, *in this Mount of Difficulty,* and they were better to me then my Fears, and soon unbound me, but set a Guard over me every Night."[211] Later, Hammon credits God with sending a Captain to convince the Governor of Havanna to release Hammon from a four year, seven month stint in prison.[212] Finally, in his conclusion Hammon again acknowledges God for constantly intervening to save him:

"…I have been most frievously afflicted, and yet thro' the Divine Goodness, as miraculously preserved, and delivered out of many Dangers, of which I desire to retain a *grateful Remembrance,* as long as I live in the World…*I…am returned*…to Shew how Great Things the Lord hoth done for Me; *I would call upon all Men, and Say,* O Magnifie the Lord with Me, and

209 Briton Hammon, 2.

210 Rafia Zafar, "Capturing the Captivity: African Americans Among the Puritans," *MELIUS* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1991-1992), 27, accessed April 5, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/466997.

211 Hammon, 6.

212 *Ibid*., 7.

let us Exalt his Name together! O that Men would Praise the Lord for His Goodness, and for his Wonderful Works to the Children of Men!"[213]

Hammon's religious inclinations must have been strong indeed, to remain optimistic about God in a series of such dreadful circumstances. He clearly believed that no matter his station as a slave, God had a personal investment in him; Hammon's gratitude is testament to his powerful sense of individuality largely instilled by the Puritan ethic. Whether being attacked and captured by Native Americans, thrown into jail for not joining a press-gang, surviving a naval battle of the French and Indian War, or suffering slavery in general, Hammon's narrative (which "omitted a great many Things"[214]) is a laundry list of adversity. This adversity strengthened Hammon's individuality because it made him more grateful and loyal to an omnipotent God; a God who could have easily made things so much worse, but who instead deigned to act mercifully over and over again.

John Marrant

The narrative of John Marrant is, perhaps un-coincidentally, both the most explicitly religious and the most obviously mediated slave/African American narrative of the three. The cover page states that Marrant's narrative has been "Taken down from his own Relation, ARRANGED, CORRECTED, and PUBLISHED By the Rev. Mr. Aldridge."[215] Within the narrative itself, Marrant has such a powerful conversion experience at the hands of George Whitefield that he not only embraces Calvinism, but eventually becomes a preacher himself, too. Born a "free black" in New York but converted as a young teenager while living in Charlestown, Marrant gives a decidedly Calvinist perspective that highlights the far-ranging influence of the

213 *Ibid*., 13.
214 *Ibid*.
215 "John Marrant," 1.

Great Awakening.[216] Marrant's conversion experience is a good place to start understanding his intense piety. Before finding religion, he was (according to his account) an accomplished musician at a young age. Once, at the age of thirteen, he was "sent…to go and play to some Gentlemen,"[217] when he passed by a congregation of people being preached to by George Whitefield. Marrant's young friend dared him to go into the meeting and interrupt it by playing the French Horn; Marrant almost succeeded, until at the last minute Whitefield saw him and, pointing a finger at Marrant, exclaimed " PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD O ISRAEL." Marrant then claims:

> The Lord accompanied the word with such power, that I was struck to the ground, and lay both speechless and senseless near half an hour…when something more recovered, every word I heard from the minister was like a parcel of swords thrust in to me…I thought I saw the devil on every side of me…they took me away…I could neither walk nor stand, they carried me as far as the vestry…Mr. Whitefield came into the vestry…and the first word he said to me was, "JESUS CHRIST HAS GOT THEE AT LAST.[218]

Needless to say, this conversion experience is practically an archetype of the conversion experiences sought by Calvinists and Puritan evangelicals in the Great Awakening. In these conversion experiences it was believed that God directly impacted an individual who, from that moment forward, realized that he was surrounded by sin. Marrant's being "struck to the ground" is an exaggeration of the notion in the Covenant of Grace that God simply, powerfully, and directly inspires faith among his chosen people; whether these predestined few are actually saved depends on their actions from that point forward. God's election of Marrant is obvious (to an

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216 The reader may have noticed by now that it may seem I am using the terms "Calvinist" and "Puritan" interchangeably. This is not true, though the latter was largely a sect of the former. In fact, I intentionally use Calvinist and not Puritan to define the piety of James Gronniosaw and John Marrant, whereas Puritan can be used to describe all the other primary sources of this thesis. These two exceptions to the rule were born in or learned their piety originally in New York. Either way, both were converted to a form of Calvinism: although Marrant only lived in New York until before he was five, he still was converted by George Whitefield, who was not a Puritan but was definitely a Calvinist (specifically a Calvinist Methodist–see Frederick V. Mills, "George Whitefield, 1714-1770,"); furthermore, Thomas Frelinghuysen (Gronniosaw's converter) was a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, and therefore also was a Calvinist but not necessarily a Puritan. (See *Slave Narratives,* 1006). The four remaining primary sources were born in and spent much of their lives in Massachusetts, indicating a more direct connection to the Calvinism associated with the Puritans of the previous (17th) century.

217 Marrant, 9.

218 *Ibid*., 10.

evangelical perspective) from the fact that his Grace literally struck Marrant down, as well as from the fact that Marrant was meant to encounter Whitefield's meeting because of God's omnipotent arrangement of fate.

Proof of Marrant's religiosity–his committed endeavor to uphold his end of the bargain in his personal covenant with God–continues throughout the narrative. One important religious theme is the fact that Marrant's story itself seems to be a sort of biblical typology. He frequently uses a theme of three, and his experience traveling through "Indian" territory alone and starving is akin to biblical stories of the Israelites wondering the desert in search of Israel. This connection to both the New and the Old testament is made more clear in the concluding remarks of his narrative, just after he reveals that Lady Huntington (of Lady Huntington's Chapel in London, where Marrant was ordained) sent him to preach in Nova Scotia: "I have now only to intreat the earnest prayers of all my kind Christian friends…that vast multitudes of hard tongues, and of a strange speech, may learn the language of Canaan, and sing the song of Moses, and of the Lamb…May the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush ever preserve and lead them!"[219] One instance wherein Marrant ties events in his life to a theme of three (implicitly referring to the Holy Trinity) is when he explains how Minister Hart, sent by Whitefield, came to teach Marrant how to pray after his conversion experience. Marrant suffered in great spiritual distress for three full days before Hart arrived at his house; when trying to heal Marrant through prayer, it was only on the third try praying that Marrant perceived "the Lord was pleased to set my soul at perfect liberty, and being filled with joy I began to praise the Lord immediately; my sorrows were turned into peace, and joy, and love."[220]

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219 *Ibid*., 38-39.
220 *Ibid*., 12.

Other moments illustrate Marrant's sense of having a personal connection with God. When he was first captured by a Cherokee tribe, he was initially sentenced to death by the tribal chief; awaiting his fate in a "place of confinement," Marrant describes how he dealt with the prospect of his imminent death: "…the near prospect of death made me hope for a speedy deliverance from the body: And truly this dungeon became my chapel, for the Lord Jesus did not leave me in this great trouble."[221] Towards the end of his story, Marrant tells how he was impressed aboard a British man of war to fight in the Revolutionary War for nearly seven years: he sums up his relationship to God during that time by writing "…a lamentable stupor crept over all my spiritual vivacity, life and vigor…My gracious God, my dear Father in his dear Son, roused me every now and then by dangers and deliverances."[222] Here Marrant almost explicitly imparts the Calvinist belief of adversity as being a blessing in disguise; God designed– specifically, purposefully– for Marrant to experience adversity during the war so that he would keep his faith. Marrant lists the siege of Charleston and a naval engagement on August 5, 1781 (along with him not being drowned or eaten by sharks in a storm at sea, despite being thrown overboard three times) as more specific evidence of God's divine favor.[223] Outside of the war, Marrant experienced adversity in the form of being rejected by his family for his newfound piety, starving in the wild before finding the Cherokee tribe, and (as has been mentioned) almost being executed.[224] Noteworthy is the fact that, unlike Gronniosaw and Hammon, Marrant was never a slave. If he did mean to criticize the white status quo, he was incredibly subtle; there are no obvious examples of Marrant having an experience of specifically racially motivated adversity that challenged and ultimately reinforced his individualism. Rafia Zafar is quick to note that this

221 *Ibid*., 19.
222 *Ibid*., 36.
223 *Ibid*., 36-38.
224 *Ibid*., 7-39.

may be the result of his editor, Revered Aldridge, preferring "matters of Christian fact" over issues of race.[225] Nonetheless, the adversity Marrant *did* experience was also a strengthening challenge to the color-blind individualism he found in religion.

Marrant also applied his sense of having a personal relationship to God to the plight of less fortunate, enslaved African-Americans. Upon returning home from living amongst various Native American tribes, Marrant preached to the slaves of a plantation owner named "Mr. Jenkins." One time this Mr. Jenkins had some of his slaves whipped for meeting to worship under the instruction of Marrant; Marrant was spared because of his status as a "free black," and entreated Jenkins to be more lenient with his slaves who sought salvation. His empathy with the less fortunate African Americans is clear: "I asked him whether he did not think they had Souls to be saved?...I then told him that the blood of those poor negroes which he had spilt that morning would be required by God at his hands."[226] From the moment of his conversion onwards, Marrant plainly valued spiritual empowerment and all of its individualist connotations.

Esther Burr

The journal of Esther Edwards Burr is a remarkably rich collection of letters that fits within the Puritan literary genre. However, in striving to emulate a strictly patriarchal, hierarchal system, Burr necessarily challenged many of the traditional elements of her faith. Her understandable predisposition towards the values of the Great Awakening (her father was the infamous Great Awakening preacher Jonathan Edwards) contributed to her sense of individuality. Nearly all of the letters, written between October 1st 1754 and January 2nd 1758, were sent not individually but as collections to Burr's closest friend in Boston, Mrs. Sarah Prince Gill. They were sent at different intervals of time, ranging from a week or two to several months between

225 Zafar, 31.
226 *Ibid*., 32.

sets. Esther Burr lived in either Newark or Princeton, New Jersey during this time; this is because she was married to Presbyterian minister and president of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University) Aaron Burr. [227]

These letters are characterized by a mix of daily life descriptions and religious debate. True to the Puritan literary genre, they represent Esther's active examination of her relationship to God. To write in this autobiographical vein, especially when discussing religion, was to wrestle with deeply spiritual issues; it was not a reflective act. The editor comments on how this intensely personal aspect of Burr's letters gives an intriguing perspective on both the life and religion of an 18th century colonial woman: "It is precisely because the journal focuses on Esther Burr's own life that it most deserves our attention…Esther Burr and Sarah Prince…wanted to monitor one another's spiritual and emotional growth…The journal is a continual self-examination, itself a spiritual quest rather than a description of a quest."[228] Even when not explicitly discussing religion, Burr frequently recorded very personal details of her life not as stories but as events that happened even as she was in the process of recording them. When she gave such minute details of her daily life she exercised and revealed her powerful sense of individuality.

Daily Life

These descriptions of everyday life in the letters can be divided into several themes. Besides helping to understand Burr's life, the themes also are integral to appreciating her more theoretical musings on religion and her changing socioeconomic world. The themes are: her work as a wife and mother in the domestic sphere; her relationship to both her husband, Aaron Burr (senior), and her children, Aaron (junior) and Sally; social gossip; political rumors primarily

227 Editor, "Introduction", in Esther Edwards Burr, *The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr, 1754-1757*.
228 *Ibid.,* 4.

of the ongoing French and Indian War; and the stream of consciousness style in which Burr sometimes described these aspects of her daily life.[229] In presenting these themes as they are, I will reveal how they are implicitly indicative of a colonial woman striving to find her voice and thriving in that self-expression. Thus do the letters, with little interpretation, represent Esther Burr as a particular kind of "new light" who highly valued her individualism. Later I will re-evaluate several of these themes in terms of how they fit a more community based, "old light" ideology.

As the daughter of Jonathan Edwards and the wife of a minister who also happened to be the president of Princeton University, Esther Burr had more wealth, status, and education than most colonial women.[230] Therefore, in addition to performing duties such as cooking, mending clothes, and child rearing, much of her work consisted of entertaining guests and going on social visits. The tone of the moments wherein Burr describes her daily work is often distressed, sometimes sarcastic and dry, and very infrequently happy and appreciative. In a letter from February 14 1755, Burr describes how the day before she spent all afternoon entertaining over thirty guests. She was so tired out by this social gathering that she sadly comments, "But I am really tired of the World, and such a day (as yesterday) is enough to tire a person that loves it the most. How happy is the holy Hermits lot!"[231] In the same collection of letters, Burr expresses a desire to escape: "I wish now I could take wing and fly to Boston into your chamber, and set and chat about two days without interruption. No body should know where I was gone, nor any body in Boston know that I was there. I am tired of this Tedious round."[232] Burr was just as exhausted

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229 Editor, "Introduction", in Esther Edwards Burr, *The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr, 1754-1757*.

230 *Ibid.,*1.

231 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* February 14, 1755, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984, Document 4,) reprinted in *North American Women's Letters and Diaries: Colonial to 1950,* accessed 10 Dec. 2015.

232 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* February 20, 1755.

by visiting as she was by entertaining guests; indeed, at times she reveals that the social life demanded of her was nigh unbearable. In another letter from 1755, she complains, "Indeed vissiting is the heardest work that I do." In the same letter, she says that the combination of visiting and hosting in a single week makes her feel that she "has no spirits, nor life. I feel like an *old dead horse*, and shall stink in the nostrils of everybody soon, if I don't soon come to life."[233] While Burr describes her busy schedule throughout the entire journal, particular moments stand out for how strongly and succinctly they convey her stress. For instance: "Saturday, Busy, Busy– *hurry, Fly–Run*," and "Budge and Budge."[234] These two examples are representative of a creative writing style used throughout the journal. Other times she interrupts herself to mimic her sense of feeling overwhelmed: "P.M. 2 o'Clock our strangers left us and at 3 o'Clock comes a room full of new ones but only to spend the P.M. except one man that lodges with us– I can't never command my own time, tis a trial…."[235] Despite the stress of such a chaotic social lifestyle, there are instances in which Burr reveals a more positive outlook on her busy life.

Burr does also show hints of an appreciation at her "calling." This taste of appreciation is often concealed as grudging acceptance. Even this, however, is starkly different to the depressed outlook she reveals in other examples; it is the difference between Burr being forced into things she doesn't want to do, and walking towards those same unsavory tasks with her head held high. Humor was Burr's means of embracing the daily struggles of her life, and she creatively used language as its tool. For instance, for an entry dated November 10-11th 1755, she writes: "So busy about some Tayloring that I must beg to be excused. You must know that I am the Taylor. I'm altering old Cloths which is very hard work."[236] In an earlier example, Burr wryly comments

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233 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* October 2, 1755.

234 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* August 7, 1756; Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* July 19, 1757.

235 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* June 27, 1757.

236 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* November 10-11, 1755.

"Now Mr. Burr is come home *All the World and his Wife comes here* but the worst of it is they hinder me from better company…and that vexes me to death."[237] On incredibly rare occasions, Burr claimed to enjoy her domestic duties. This primarily occurred when she was entertaining very close friends. In the winter of 1754, William Tennent II and his wife, Catharine, visited the Burrs. This was at the tail end of a several day long streak of ceaseless entertaining; Esther was quite worn out. According to Esther Burr's account, Mr. Tennent noticed her unhappiness at being incessantly busy and commented on it. Esther claims in her letter to Sarah Gill that, in contrast to Mr. Tennent's observation, "even in my being hurried I take pleasure, for it has always been recond by me amongst my greatest pleasures to wait on my friends…how many I am rejoiced to see enter my doors…"[238] Other moments when Burr was likely less resentful to entertain (though not necessarily excited) were when she hosted "spinning frolicks" with other ladies.[239]

While Esther Burr frequently detested her social obligations as the wife of Aaron Burr, she nonetheless enjoyed–so far as is immediately evident–her domestic role as mother and wife. She devoted much time and space in her letters describing her relationship to the rest of her immediate family. Whether out of a respect for traditional Puritan values or genuine love, Burr absolutely doted on her husband. Aaron Burr was frequently away on visits, often for extended periods of time. He spent most of October 1754 in Boston. In an early letter from October 15, 1754, Esther Burr tells Sarah Gill how overjoyed she felt upon receiving a letter from "Mr. Burr": "This P.M. I received a very affectionate Letter from Mr. Burr, which did me more good than ever a Cordial did when I was faint. I was before extreamly low-spirited, but at once I felt as

237 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* October 30, 1754.
238 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* December 11, 1754.
239 See, for instance, Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* March 18, 1755.

lively as ever I did in my life. What power these people have over us that have our hearts."[240] When he finally returned home on October 28, Esther happily wrote "O my dear Miss Prince, this afternoon…my best self came home, all unexpected as much as the Man from the Moon. I could hardly believe my Eyes."[241] Sometimes it is hard to determine if Esther's infatuation with her husband was genuine love or hyperbolic romanticism. The theme of Mr. Burr being a part of her self, even to the extent of him being the sole reason for her existence, continues in other letters; once when Mr. Burr went to New York for business, Esther lamented "I am ready to immagine the *sun* does not give so much light as it did when my best self was at home, and *I* am in the glooms two, half *ded,* my *Head* gone. Behead a person and they will soon *die*…"[242] For Esther Burr, the constant threat of sickness was an accepted part of life. Whenever Aaron Burr became sick, she verged on sounding inconsolable. Thus: "I am perswaded by the symptons…he has the Nervous Fever…I can't be resighned to the Will of God if it is to bereave me of all that is near and dear at one stroke!...I am Mr. Burrs nurse, and will be as long as I can crawl."[243] Here, Esther essentially claims that she is forced to reconcile her worldly love for mere flesh with her love of God; Mr. Burr must have been dear to Esther indeed, if just the *idea* of his death made her reconsider her piety. A couple years later, Esther's sister Lucy visited and became sick. Even though Esther feared that she had "taken the infection," she was most concerned for her husband's well being. She asked Sarah Gill to "…pray for us, in petecular that Mr. Burr may be preserved–I am almost sunk to the depths of Meloncholy at the possibility of Mr. Burrs getting of it."[244]

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240 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* October 15, 1754.
241 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* October 28, 1754.
242 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* January 17, 1755.
243 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* August 25, 1755.
244 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* May 22, 1757.

Besides being motivated by pure love or religion, another factor in Esther's elaborations on her attachment to Mr. Burr was the fact that Sarah Prince Gill married very late in life for a woman of that place and time. Trying to convince her friend to marry, Burr repeatedly criticized Gill for not settling down; in retort Gill "did not hesitate to mount an attack on marriage and 'poor fettered folks.'"[245] Burr defended marriage (as understood in terms of traditional Puritan values) as a way of justifying her deference to and love for her husband. For example, after conceding herself in a letter dated June 21, 1757 that a married couple must make concessions to each other and undergo hardships they would not face while single, Burr defends the institution by using a metaphor: "…most have no notion of the new tryals… altho perhaps not so great as what they were exercised with Whiles single…they…gaul themselves with the Chain which aught to be a silken Cord of Mutial Love, and Tender sympathy and Affection."[246] Whatever the reason, marriage and Aaron Burr were so integral to Esther Burr's personal life that they frequently became the topics of her most liberating, private form of self-expression.

At this point, it is useful to point out that there is an ostensible contradiction between Esther Burr's sense of self, illustrated by the existence and nature of the journal itself, and the attitude she displayed towards her personal life. It is hard to determine to what degree, and for what reasons, Burr embraced a "calling" as a mother, housewife, and social planner for the good of her husband's career and her Presbyterian church. Devout Puritan descendent that she was, she felt her personal life mattered enough for her to record its most minute details, and yet she struggled to accept the very domestic role she described. Additionally, to the degree that Esther felt obligated and connected to Aaron Burr out of traditional patriarchal values supported by Puritanism, in writing about her personal attachment she ironically also exposed a strong sense

245 Editor, ""Introduction"," *The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr,* 8.
246 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* June 21, 1757.

of self. This contradiction plays itself out in Burr's religious sentiments, which will be addressed both later in this section and in additional sections that examine said sentiments in terms of an old light ideology. For now, these contradictions can be ignored; my present focus is simply on Burr's energetic, detailed descriptions of her daily life.

There is no ambiguity about Esther Burr's attachment to her children. It goes without saying that Sally and Aaron Burr Junior constituted one of the most important aspects of Burr's personal life. That she discusses them in numerous letters to Sarah Gill may seem commonsensical, but it is testimony nonetheless to the highly intimate character of the journal as a whole. When describing her own and Aaron's relationship to their children, Esther frequently portrays a scene of domestic tranquility: "You my dear cant imagine how much pleased of late Mr. Burr is with his little Daughter…he sees a great many beauties in her, that he used to be perfectly blind to. He complains she is another temptation to him…he does love to play with her dearly…"[247] Several months later, Burr writes "O–I ha'nt told you that Sally runs alone. She began to walk the day she was 14 months old…now [*that*] she does go, she goes very well. She will go out-doors or any where."[248] It seems unlikely that Burr almost forgot to tell Gill about Sally learning to walk; rather, she probably included the "O" as a way to try concealing her intense pride and admiration for her daughter.

Not all of Burr's letters involving her children depict domestic happiness. Several detail how she and Mr. Burr used physical punishment as a form of discipline. For instance, on February 28, 1755 Esther reveals that "I have begun to govourn Sally. She has been Whip'd once…But none but a parent can concieve how hard it is to chastise your *own most inner self*." At another point Burr says that Sally, having recovered from an illness, "….is very cross." Esther

247 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* January 24, 1755.
248 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* July 7, 1755.

warns "I am afraid this illness will cost [her] a whiping spel."[249] In one of her most well known passages, Esther complains about raising Aaron Burr junior–an apt foreshadowing of the contentious man he would become. She describes Sally as being "…not much of a Baby" who "affects to be thought a Wom[an]"; Aaron, on the other hand, is "a little dirty Noisy boy…very sly and mischevious…He has more spri[ghtliness] than Sally and most say he is handsomer, but not so good tempered. He is very resolute and requires a good Governor to bring him to terms."[250] Indeed, realizing how hard it is to raise just two children, Esther expresses her fear of raising the huge (from our perspective) family that was more typical of colonial Americans: "When I had but one Child my hands were tied, but now I am tied hand and foot. (How I shall get along when have got ½ dzn. or 10 Children I can't devise.)"[251] Nonetheless, ultimately Burr's expressed love for her children crushed any qualms she appeared to have about being a mother. This is proven by Burr's reflection one time in October of 1756 when Aaron Burr Jr. became seriously ill. Upon telling Sarah Gill how there had been a high chance he would not have survived a particular night, Esther claims "here was the greatest tryal that ever I met with in my life–I may compare the struggles with my self to the *Agonies of Death*–but O god made me submit!"[252] There is no inner-resistance against a patriarchal system here to question the legitimacy of Burr's feelings. The pain she experiences is commensurate only with the absolute power of God.

Esther Burr was highly integrated into the social fabric of her time and place. In her communications with Sarah Prince Gill, she often discussed other people. The idea that such gossip was considered trivial does not explain why it was included in the same documents that

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249 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* April 8, 1755.
250 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* September 2, 1757.
251 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* April 13, 1756.
252 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* October 8, 1756.

express such deep values as familial love and spiritual yearning. Instead, it seems that social gossip was a large and significant component of the life of an upper-class colonial woman. In a time when women did not have equal access as men to work, politics, or other forms of associations, gossip was a likely antidote to having little to talk about except religion and domestic affairs. Instances that illustrate this aspect of Esther's life are spread throughout the entire journal. When Elizabeth Canning was sent to the colonies for a seven-year long exile for perjury, Burr was aware and wanted to discuss the issue with Gill: "I saw the news just now that Miss Canning is come to Boston. I have a deal of curiosity about her. Pray my dear write what you think of her."[253] A frequent topic of discussion was whether or not people approved of new ministers. One letter is a particularly good example of the social gossip Burr participated in, for it shows both this informal debate over the clergy as well as the intense attention these women paid to gossip about "regular" people. Burr and Gill humorously nicknamed a couple they did not like much (Mr. and Mrs. Cumming) Mr. and Mrs. Fickle:

> Rain all day. I sat in the house…with Mrs. Fickle…We talked about one thing and another, and amongst the things, and folkes, you my dear came on the carpet, and engrossed no small part of the conversation I assure you–See an account of what Mrs. Fickle said of and about you, in the private paquet to be burnt…Eve. Miss Nancy came to see me, and all the talk was *Bellamy, Bellamy,* and reflections on the Minnisters this way…Twas evident they did not want Mr Bellamy to come amongst them.[254]

In this example, Burr exposes not just the value she and Gill placed on talking about other people, but the preoccupation they had with what others said and thought of them. Ironically, Burr and Gill were so concerned that gossiping would hurt their own reputations that they decided to destroy the evidence of such gossip; hence Burr's request to burn the "private pacquet." Another similar example is when Burr describes her understandable indignation at a prospective minister's wife, Mrs. Kittletas, for not wanting Mr. Kittletas to "stoop" to "settle as

253 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* November 6, 1754.
254 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* December 18, 1754.

the minister of a congregation": "She is LOYER SMITHS DAUGHTER and I believe inherits some of his qualities–*Chip of the Old Block,* as say the Vulgar…says your E. Burr."[255] The topic of all this gossip was not limited to women or ministers. In April of the following year, Burr told Gill about a certain "Mrs. Banks" leaving her cruel husband. In that letter Burr calls him a "Beast" and "Devil."[256] Another man Burr despised was Mr. Potter, who, as part of an ongoing conflict between himself and the Burrs, sent an inflammatory letter to Esther. Outraged, in her letter she spews that his letter was "the most *insolent* of any I ever saw or heard off." She goes on to say that she and Aaron Burr both agree he is a dishonorable person: "…he don't stick at the truth one Morsel–I have found him out in several lies to day to my surprize."[257]

Not all of the gossip in these letters was directed at particular people. Letters from February 8, 18, 20, 21, and 22 of 1757 all describe the religious revival that occurred at the College of New Jersey. Thrilled at this resurgence of piety, Burr exclaims to Gill "This wonderfull pouring out of the spirit at this time…looks to me exactly like Gods desending into the Temple in a Cloud of Glory, there by signifying that he did except of the house for his dwelling place and would Bless it…O that this might be the dawn of the glorious day!"[258] Gossip was a source of humor as well as scorn and inspiration. One can imagine Sarah Gill chuckling as she read Esther Burr's description (as told to her by Aaron Burr) of an exceptionally awkward competition between two men for the same women's hand in marriage: "…Mr Hubbard is about courting Miss Eunice Denny…*he is above fifty, and she but 24* and there is cousin Thady too, designs to make tryal and he is several years younger than she. *I Phantsy it will look very comcal*...I should not begrudge to go to Fairfield this Winter on purpose to see such a *Battle.*"[259]

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255 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* February 9, 1757.
256 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* April 16, 1755.
257 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* May 24, 1756.
258 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* February 22, 1757.
259 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* October 16, 1755.

In contrast to this relatively infrequent positive and lighthearted gossip, Burr often wrote about the Seven Years War. These political discussions took on a much more serious tone.

Living and writing during this war, Burr heard rumors about various battles and saw soldiers training firsthand. In an early letter, Burr portrays the military training she witnessed in Newark: "This is our *grand* Training day, all the Militia in the County are coming into Town…I am to go up common to see 'em Train. My head is so confused with the noise of Drums, Guns, and Trumpets…All the rabble rout in Town goes by here [so] that I am almost crazy."[260] As the war progressed, Burr's righteous discontent, curiosity, and mere annoyance gave way to immediate fear. The July 9, 1755 defeat and death of Major General Edward Braddock was cause for consternation in the colonies. Burr spent much space in one collection of letters (Document 9 in the journal) reporting to Gill the flying rumors about Braddock's death (for several weeks after the General's defeat, Burr was uncertain if he had actually died).[261] In one entry Burr elegantly captures the emotional blow she experienced as a result of this disastrous battle: "Two gloomy to write–the [situation?] of our publick affairs are so melancholy that I am sunk at my heart, and go bowed down like a Bullrush–I never was so sunk with in anything in my life."[262] Another example of public affairs taking center stage in Burr's letters occurred a year later, when Burr learned that the British had been defeated at Oswego on Lake Ontario. While visiting her family's home, she darkly comments on the grave public situation: "Almost overcome with fear…some thought that they heard the enemy last night"; "…I am so poorly, and scared out of my Witts about the Enemy…"; " I am not willing to be Butchered by a barbarous enemy nor cant

260 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* October 14, 1754.

261 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* July, 19, 1755; July 21, 1755; July 26, 1755; July 29, 1755; August 4, 1755; August 8-9, 1755.

262 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* August 8-9, 1755.

make myself willing…"; "…All is dark as Egypt."[263] Although Burr's knowledge of the public situation is somewhat marred here because she is writing and thinking more out of great personal fear than civic-mindedness, these examples do in fact underscore her wish to be engaged in public affairs. One example of Burr expressing emotional attachment to the public realm that is not related to her own sense of self-preservation is when she lamented the death of Jonathan Belcher, the governor of New Jersey: "Just now I received a Letter with a Black Seal that contained Backer news. Governor Belcher is dead, died this Morn…I feel quite sunk with this and other bad news."[264]

Burr's reflections on the Seven Years War reveal not only her political awareness, but her intense desire to be involved in what was considered a man's world. She was acutely aware that the war's outcome (and the war itself) would have a direct impact on the livelihood of both herself and her family. Writing privately to her closest friend, Burr felt comfortable enough to expose her stereotype-defying sense of political involvement; she was relaxed enough to challenge patriarchal authority without fear of repercussion. This act of defiance and political engagement is illustrated in an entry from December 20, 1755:

> I wish I could help troubling you with my troubles that can do nither you nor me and good, but I am perplexed about our publick affairs. The Men say…that Women have no business to concern themselves about em but trust to those that know better and be content to be destroyed because that they did all for the best–Indeed if I was convinced that our great men did act as they realy thought was for the Glory of God and the good of the Country it would go a great ways to meke me easy.[265]

This entry stands out in a journal that mostly describes daily, personal life. It is obvious that Esther cared a good deal about political life; indeed, she even unconsciously blends the private with the public when she links "my troubles" to "publick affairs." This is followed by a harsh

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263 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* September 2-3, 1756; September 6, 1756; September 10, 1756; September 13, 1756.

264 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* August 31, 1757.

265 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* December 20, 1755.

criticism of the men who, in Burr's colonial world, held all the political power. She felt a personal involvement in matters she was not technically supposed to participate in.

Burr went beyond mere description in illustrating her concern for her personal life. A stream of consciousness rhetorical style colors what would otherwise be a rather humdrum list of occurrences. One recurring instance of this rhetorical style is when Burr laments having a bad pen. In a letter dated November 2, 1754, she resignedly writes "I have such a *Duke of a pen* that I must be obliged to leve off."[266] Burr interjects herself again in a later letter: "–O this *dreadfull Pen.* Ill try another–sometimes I write with a pen mended with the sizzers."[267] Besides bad pens, everyday life frequently prevented Burr from completing her letters. Such distractions are relevant here because they show Burr's willingness to record not just her life, but her life even as she experienced it while writing. One example is in a letter dated February 18,1757. In it, Burr is about to release a stream of praise towards God for the religious revival happening at "the College" when she abruptly stops: "The concern in College prevails…O lets us pray earnestly for a universal revival–I am interrupted as I often am."[268] In another example, while Burr is expressing her longing for Aaron Burr to return home from a trip to New York, she explains how the sound of a horse interrupts her thoughts: "I have looked out for Mr. Burr since Noon an. 100 times…tis hope that keeps persons alive…they that have it most are the hapiest I believe–but hark–I think I hear a horse–I must go and look…Well the dear gentlemen is come sure enough–goodnight."[269] In a single entry, Burr transitions from describing her feeling of anxiety, to contemplating the nature of hope, to describing Mr. Burr's arrival home as it actually happens.

Burr's children often provided means for her to write in this stream of consciousness

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266 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* November 2, 1754.
267 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* November 29, 1754.
268 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* February 18, 1757.
269 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* March 17, 1755.

style. Often this style takes the form of simply writing in the present tense. In one letter, Burr reveals her love for her baby daughter, Sally: "In the Morn Sally awakes me with her prattle. Like *other Birds* as soon as she is awake to singing. . . . The first thing after her Eyes are open is to look for me and as soon as she sees me a very pleasant smile, her Eyes sparkling like *diamonds*. She is very good company when I have no other."[270] Though Esther was likely not writing at the exact same time as Sally was waking up, her intimate description of Sally in the present tense is significant; it highlights a certain vitality and detail, which points to Burr's affection for her children. Almost a month later, in a long letter to her sister Lucy Edwards Woodbridge, Burr talks again about Sally, this time in a stream of consciousness style: "You will not wonder if you see many blunders for I write Rocking the Cradle. By the way people say Sally looks like you, don't you want to see her?...Now I write with Sally in my arms for I am resolved to write."[271]

This theme of Sally being a spur for Burr to illustrate her stream of consciousness writing style continues, albeit less directly, in a letter dated April 23, 1755. In the letter, Burr says she is so impressed with a poem Gill wrote about Sally that, in comparison, Burr's poetic talents are akin to an Ass playing music. Ashamed at her strange metaphor, Burr does not scratch it out but instead flusters, "You'll excuse this cours comparison it just *popt* into my mind as I was writing–but for all that I love versifying in others."[272] Burr wanted the process of her thinking to stay a permanent record on the page; in this case the record reveals her having a sudden inspiration, being quickly embarrassed by it, and then seemingly changing her mind and saying she enjoys writing allegorically, regardless of what others might think. Aaron Burr also often directed Esther's stream of consciousness writing into various directions. When Esther explained

270 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* October 10, 1754.
271 Esther Edwards Burr, *The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr,* 1754.
272 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill*.

to Sarah Gill her rationale for not telling a "Mrs. Brown" about how frequently she (Burr) and Gill communicate, her train of thought led her to worrying (yet again) about when Aaron Burr would return home. Burr was reluctant to let any men know about her and Gill's correspondence: "I would have told her…but I was afraid she would tell her MAN of it…he would sertainly make some ill-natured remarks or other, and so these *Hes* shall know nothing about our affairs *until they are as grown as wise as you and I are*–O I wonder where this mister Burr is."[273] This example foreshadows Burr's involvement in a "Sisterhood" and the consequences this involvement had on her sense of individualism. All of these details may seem insignificant compared to Burr's theological musings; however, as Burr's most unconscious, automatic thoughts, they uncover the considerably large value Burr placed on her personal life. They are reflective even of the inner-workings of Burr's mind.

Esther Burr's Devotion

Burr revealed her piety in the content as well as the form of these letters to Sarah Prince Gill. She expressly stated her belief and devotion to an omnipotent God in several different ways: by praising His greatness, mourning her own depravity and ingratitude as a human being, recognizing adversity as tasks of God to strengthen her and her community's faith, and showing respect for traditional patriarchal values supported by the Church and (by extension) God. A later section will explain that although Burr's situational and historical placement gave her the deepest religious convictions, many of the old Calvinist tenets reasserted in the Great Awakening made her struggle greatly with her faith. Nonetheless, insofar as the earlier religious revival invoked or did not contradict a powerful sense of individualism, Esther Burr had no religious qualms.

That Esther Burr's sympathy with the Great Awakening was based on its reiteration of the value of the individual, and the personal relationship a person could have with God, has perhaps

273 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* January 15, 1756.

been best proven already by the mere fact and form of Burr's letters. Patricia Bonomi has asserted the role religion played for women in the 18th century anxious to express their individuality: "Besides spiritual refreshment, religion offered women of energy an outlet to the wider world, as well as opportunities for self-expression, personal growth, and even leadership."[274] The content of the letters conveys the *what* of Burr's religiosity; the form tells the *why* hinted at by Bonomi. In fact, in at least one instance the form and content almost conflict. For example, on June 19 1757, in referring to Freehold, Burr writes: "There has truly been a most Glorious work of God in that place, much the same…as here at the College. No appearance of Enthusiasm or affectation, in short, none of the imprudiences that prevailed last stir–I can't but hope God is about to visit this land in general."[275] Assuming that Burr is referring here to the emotional nature of the Great Awakening a decade earlier, it appears that she disapproved of anyone claiming to have such a personal connection to God that they unwittingly sacrifice reason and rationality for passion. Indeed, in this example Burr appears to have had old light sympathies. However, this statement is a strange exception to Burr's overall notions of being a good Christian–either that, or for Burr public and emotional professions of faith simply represented the limit of acceptable New Light behavior. Her firm stance in the center of New Light ideology is perhaps most openly demonstrated in her admiration of George Whitefield. She expressed this admiration by describing her disagreement with a "Miss Joans": "Just now I met with a paragraph in Miss Joans that has disgusted me extreamly …she undertakes to prove that there are such beings as *Demons,* and that men are often under the influence of em. One instance…is Mr. Whitefield…She sets all zeal in relegion in the most *abominable ridiculous* light."[276] This defense of Mr. Whitefield is consistent with Burr's notion of piety. Given that her

274 Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven,* 107.
275 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* June 19, 1757.
276 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* November 14, 1754.

father was Jonathan Edwards, Burr likely personally knew Whitefield; in another letter, she tells Gill to send "my love to Mr, Whtefield…You must do so every Letter you write."[277] However, it is not clear whether this "Mr. Whtefield" is the infamous George Whitefield referred to in the earlier letter.

Esther Burr constantly praised God in her letters to Sarah Gill. The two women were both devout Christians who came out of the same Puritan religious tradition; the expressions of faith in these letters were thus just as much reminders to each other of proper piety as they were acts of faith. In perfect accordance with Puritan creed, Burr believed that God is too powerful to be subject to human actions. He acts not according to how much people have sinned or been morally good, but according to his own ultimate, arbitrary will. While describing a destructive earthquake that had recently occurred in Lisbon, Burr wonders: "Why was it not our portion to be distroyed as well as they…but God is infinite in mercy and does not deal with us according to our sins but according to his sovereign *good* pleasure…"[278] Here as in other examples, Burr recognized that the best examples of God's supreme power often occur in the form of natural events. She praises him for delivering a rainstorm: "…a fine showr came up and it looks likely to turn to a settld rain–O how good is our God! He not only gives us temporal blessings freely, but *spiritual* and *heavenly* blessings!"[279] Despite God's complete sovereignty and arbitrariness–or, perhaps, precisely because God still gives such blessings as this rainstorm when he is under no obligation to anyone but Himself to do so–Burr adamantly explained to Gill how it is impossible to truly know God without completely adoring Him. A love of God produces a willingness to imitate Him, too: "That knowledge of God that does not produce a love to him and a desire to be like him is not a true knowledge–That knowledge of any thing that produces *love* will also

277 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* November 23, 1755.
278 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* December 30, 1755.
279 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* June 6, 1755.

produce a desire to be like what we know and *Love*…"[280] Absolute love of God also meant absolute acceptance of His role in all life.

Many of Burr's professions of faith took the form of admiration for God's absolute control over fate. In a letter from January 5, 1755 Burr writes "In the afternoon and Eve Mr. Sprout preached to universal acceptance…I think I was brought to some sense of my own utter inability to do anything for myself and my whole dependence on God alone."[281] Two months later, she told Gill about how Mr. Brainerd's daughter was badly burned in a fire but survived; playing to the visceral fear for children's safety (especially her own) that this terrible tragedy invoked, she turned to God for a sense of reassurance and security: "O why was this not my trial! But perhaps greater tryals await me–O to be fitted for Gods holy will and pleasure in every thing!"[282]

If God was all-powerful, he logically had to be omnipresent. Even when a particular event or miracle did little to prove God's power, Burr asserted that God kept a watchful eye on every aspect of temporal as well as spiritual life. Indeed, while relating her long and arduous journey to visit home in late August and early September of 1756, Burr explains to Gill how God is present both in and out of the Church:

> 29 Aug Sabbath Morn…at a Dutch house in the woods…I desire to be thankful tis a pleasant day [*so*] that one may walk out into the Woods and be retired–And O my dear I find God is here as in his house and among his people–Yes my dear God is everywhere and does not forget his, be they where they will…God does not want for means nor place…O what shall I render to the Lord for his goodness to me?[283]

If God can be found in remote, relatively uninhabited parts of the woods, he is certainly present among all people. Everyone–at least, everyone who lets God into their hearts–has a spark of the

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280 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* June 14, 1755.
281 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* January 5, 1755.
282 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* March 13, 1755.
283 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* August 29, 1756.

divine: Burr rejoices in another letter that religion "dwells among the poor–low and despised…O how good it is!"[284] This sentiment hints at a new light interpretation of people's "calling." Indeed: even in her moments of most desperate loneliness, Burr knew that God was with her; while in labour for her second child, Aaron Burr junior, she was heartened that despite being "destitute of Earthly friends," "God was all these relations and more to me in the hour of my distre[ss]."[285] Such piety over God's earthly presence only whetted Burr's appetite for the transcendent glory of heaven.

Burr knew that for all the blessings God could bestow upon mankind, nothing paralleled the joy of going to heaven. In true Calvinist form, she had non-ascetic values yet was also disdainful of earthly joys because of their tendency to ignore frugality and elevate vanity.[286] She notes in a letter to Gill that a book, titled *"Virtue rewarded,"* overvalues "riches" and "honor" too much;[287] in other letters, she expresses an intense desire for the afterlife. One such example is when she grows tired of entertaining religiously unenthusiastic guests: "…Topick of conversation two trifling–how tired I am of this poor dark World! O how good to leve it for a better." [288] She was almost as concerned for other people's salvation as she was her own. Burr longed for a religious utopia that would transcend the trouble-ridden mortal world: "…What a charming place this world would be if was not for the inhabitants–O I long for the blessed and glorious times when this world shall become a Mountain of Holiness and [an] habitation of Righteousness."[289] Struggling for eternal life, Burr was acutely aware of her humanity's inescapable sinful nature.

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284 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* March 4-5, 1755.
285 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* March 26, 1756.
286 For more on this, see the discussion of Edmund S. Morgan in Chapter 2.
287 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* April 8, 1755.
288 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* August 9, 1756.
289 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* April 26, 1756.

As has been mentioned, the notion that mankind is trapped in its own sin was a central tenet of the Calvinist Puritan faith and ethic. Esther Burr, desperate to be as close to God as possible, constantly shifted between being thankful for God's benevolent presence and obsessively worrying that her faith (and, if she had experienced it, her conversion experience)[290] wasn't strong enough to counterbalance her immense sin. This interplay of gratitude and stress played such a major role in Burr's religious musings that she frequently discussed them in her letters to Sarah Gill; one time, the two themes merged into the same sentence. This letter thus betrays an anxiety so deep it made Burr contradict herself and sound nearly nonsensical: "O my dear what reason of thankfullness!...Such favours should not be forgot by me–but Alas how soon do I forget Gods mercies! O my ungreatfullness, Ingratitude, to the best of things! Just would it be in this infinite good being to deprive me of every comfort, and make me everlastingly missarable as I am ungratefull."[291] Burr cannot decide whether she should extol God by expressing her gratitude or by lamenting her not being grateful enough.

More often, these two elements of faith were parsed out in different letters. Burr was reminded of her relatively good fortune when she compared her circumstances to those of the people around her: "This afternoon I rode…to see the Widow, the fatherless and the sick. I cant but be amazed that *ever* I was disposed to repine at the dispensations of Providence for when the dispensation has been most grievous how much more Mercyfull has God been to me than others that are far better than I."[292] Another example (of many) is from a letter dated April 16, 1755, when Burr compares her good luck in marriage to a "Mrs. Banks" who decided to leave her husband because of his bad behavior: "O my dear what am I better than she that it was not my

290 There is no mention in the letters of whether Esther had a singular, "legitimate" conversion experience–or, for that matter, whether she believed as her father and other Great Awakening revivalists did that such an experience was necessary proof of election.

291 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* October 24, 1755.

292 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* October 21, 1754.

portion to be bound to such a *Beast*…how different are my circumstances from this poor Woman…O my dear pray for me that I may live answerable to the mercies I have and am daily receiving!"[293] Burr's sense of gratitude would be incomplete without her having a reason to be grateful. She was thankful not just for God's mercies, but because He was merciful despite her sinful nature.

Burr admitted her depravity to Gill on a regular basis. Though it is impossible to completely interpret intentionality in the letters, these admittances are likely some combination of both genuine sentiments and automatic responses conditioned by Burr's intensely Puritan background. On June 22, 1755, she tells Gill: "O my dear I don't live to God as you do! No I am *carnel, fleshly, Worldly minded,* and *Devilish.*"[294] Burr lamentably wished she "could be willing to *be and do, and suffer,* just what God pleased without any will of my own, but I am stubborn, willful, disobedient…How unfit am I to approach the Lord's table!"[295] In another letter Burr claims to be so convinced of her unworthiness in the eyes of God that she ostensibly is "amazed" at her "barrenness under such advantages!" She goes on: "Why does not God deprive me of every means of grace and cut me off and send me down to the dark Regions of Dispare where many are that have never sind against such light as I have."[296] These represent a small minority of the multiple self-deprecating announcements Burr made throughout her letters. She also despaired of the impiety of the world. Not all her declarations of the world's sins were tempered by a hope for improvement; they were often incredibly dark. Though Burr frequently complained of "the Nonsense of this World" because of her worldly duties, nothing matches this sad reflection on May 4, 1757: "This poor Wicked missarable World! It requires mu[ch] [g]reater

293 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* April 16, 1755.
294 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* June 22, 1755.
295 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* July 5, 1755.
296 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* December 14, 1755.

degrees of Grace to be Willing to Live then to Die…"[297] Here, Burr's piety bordered on depression: she was so upset at the depravity of the world that she needed more help from God to stay alive than to accept the inevitability of death. To cope with this rather pessimistic worldview, Burr followed yet another aspect of the Puritan creed.

Esther Burr believed that all adversity was a test of God, a means of Him reconciling his chosen people to him by re-igniting their faith. She conceived of adversity in this light in both the struggles of her personal life and in the issues that impacted her greater community. Indeed, in her letters to Sarah Gill, Burr's descriptions of adversity ran the gamut of petty gossip to very real dangers of losing to the French in the Seven Years War. In June of 1755, Esther was the object of negative rumors–rumors likely related to her position as Aaron Burr's wife when the waves of religious revivalism (instigated by Esther's father, Jonathan Edwards) were still striking New Jersey. Aaron Burr, as the president of a college founded with New Light principles, had to be "fully supportive of its (the college's) evangelical goals" while also being "keenly aware of the institutions need for broad-based support." Aaron and, by extension, Esther, were thus prime targets of "deep-seated hostilities" as they tried to carefully navigate these political waters. Aaron (and, by extension, Esther) ostensibly crossed a line when he resigned as pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Newark in order to focus more on his job as president of the College of New Jersey.[298] In late June of 1755, Esther not only took the gossip surrounding her in stride; she used it to bolster her faith: "What they say is two foolish to repeat…Tis good my friend for us to go through good as well as evil report…such things bring such Corruptions to our sight as we never mistrusted we had there…I cant but have great hopes that I shall get some good out of such trials, that I shall be brought nearer to God by 'em–And O what reason for thankfulness if it

297 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* July 18, 1757; Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* May 4, 1757.

298 Editor, "Introduction," in *The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr, 1754-1757.* Parenthesis my own.

should be so!"[299] Burr used the negative comments made about her as a personal learning experience in her path to becoming a morally better person; she thereby sought to become more pleasing to God. Thus, she perceived of the gossip itself as being part of God's grand, merciful plan to help her find salvation.

Natural disasters were also means by which, in the Puritan cosmology, God warned his chosen people of their shortcomings and of their need to reinvigorate their piety at the price of not being saved. In the early morning of November 18, 1755, New England experienced an earthquake that Burr claimed "continued the longest of every any has done in this Country." Several days later, Burr heard a preacher tell how the earthquake contained "the voice of God."[300] In 1756, Aaron Burr himself was "so affected" by "the most Tirrable whirlwind that was ever known this side of the West Indies at the Mountains the effect of which…twas truly an awfull sight…" that he, too, delivered a sermon on the topic. [301] Although in these instances Burr does not explicate the exact relationship between God and the hardships she and her fellow colonists were experiencing, her ruminations on the French and Indian War are more telling. Burr states that "God seems to come out in a way of awfull judgement against this whole Land"; she then complains that, despite his warnings, "the people…insted of lerning rightousn[ess] they lern Wickedness apace–Gods awfull judgments seem to have no other effect on us here but to harden us…"[302] Burr was so eager for the colonists to experience a religious awakening that at one point she actually embraced the prospect of bloodshed. She felt that New Jersey had not participated enough in the ongoing conflict; this was troublesome not just because it placed an unfair burden on the other colonies and made New Jersey appear weak and cowardly, but because New Jersey

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299 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* June 28, 1755.
300 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* November 18, 1755; November 23, 1755.
301 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* June 28, 1756.
302 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* November 30, 1755.

was missing an opportunity to be reconciled to God. Thus Burr's blunt statement in a letter from December 3, 1755, in which she also insinuates that a certain Colonel is a coward: "You would laugh to see what quear work we make of war here…Tis high time that we had felt the sword. Newjersey has had a [p]eacable time of it ever since it was settled, whiles [the]ir poor Neighbors have been [killed!]"[303] The fact that these Puritan values were ideologically aligned with Burr's individualistic take on being a New Light is proven by Burr's membership in the "sisterhood"–a group committed to reinforcing religious values on its female-only membership that also acted as a powerful tool of empowerment for these women as they navigated their increasingly complex social worlds.

The Sisterhood

The editor of Esther's journal is quick to remind us that these letters' primary intentions were not merely for two separated friends to stay in touch; nor were they meant for the public eye as religious polemics. Rather, Sarah Gill and Esther Burr "had specific goals in mind. Most important, they wanted to monitor one another's spiritual and emotional growth."[304] Indeed, as this monitoring became a source of strength for Burr, Gill, and other members of the "sisterhood," it also evolved into a very tenuous challenge of the patriarchal status quo. The letters are also expressive of efforts by these women to resist a changing socio-economic world. Mid-eighteenth century colonial North America was very different from the North America of the previous century: it was more secularized and was finding its place in an increasingly globalized economy, an economy in which the idea of women having a divinely sanctioned calling as domestic warriors was quickly losing relevance. Caught between the older Puritan theology and the newly burgeoning emphasis on market capitalism, Burr was depressed as she

303 Esther *Edwards* Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* December 3, 1755.
304 Editor, *"*Introduction", in *The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr, 1754-1757,* 19.

tried in vain to find relevance to her life: "…the Puritan model of womanhood could not always help her deal with feelings that some of her work was trivial…Cycles of discontent, depression, resignation, and reassurance are the dominant rhythms as she writes…the Puritan emphasis on women's work as a religious vocation had, in fact, lost its validity in the more secular, market-oriented world of the 1750s."[305] Though the idea of Burr finding a sense of purpose in her calling as a woman was problematic (as will be discussed later), the notion of a sisterhood engendered new and powerful concepts of individuality for Burr, Gill, and other sisterhood members– concepts that not only did not contradict traditional Puritan values, but embraced them.

Like Esther Burr's stream of consciousness style, her place in the sisterhood is an overlying mode of expression for her religious sentiments. It thus colors these sentiments in a particular way; a way that denotes a sense of individual empowerment via a sense of community. The letters gave Burr (and other sisterhood members) proof that they were not alone: not alone in feeling depraved, in believing in the magnificence of God, in finding solace in adversity as merely a harsh form of God's love, and in having a divinely sanctioned calling. The fact that not only other people but other women felt the same way gave legitimacy to a piety that focused on an individual relationship with God.

Burr's place in the sisterhood was a result primarily of her strong friendship with Sarah Gill. Burr never even met some of the members of the organization: "Love to *Julia* and all the Sisterhood for whom I feel a great friendship atho' some of 'em are unknown to me by sight…"[306] Rather than being friends as a result of religious conversation, Esther Burr naturally turned to religious conversation as she and Gill strove to stay in touch as friends. This friendship is perhaps best exemplified by the way Burr signed most of her letters to Gill; though a

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305 *Ibid.*

306 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* June 17, 1756.

somewhat exaggerated style characterizes her writing, the consistency with which Burr signed her letters as Gill's "affectionate friend" (or some similar variation) is significant. A particularly strong example is how Burr signed a packet of letters she sent to Gill, dating from late August to mid-October of 1756: "From my dear, dear Friend your tenderly affectionated Friend, E. Burr."[307] Burr was so eager to stay in communication with her closest friend that she became insulted when Gill suggested that the packets of letters might be "dry"; defending the letters, Burr retorted "I assure you I was never so charmed with Letters in my Life since you have wrote in this method, so don't call 'em *dry* again…it is exactly the thing I have always wanted of my absent friends."[308] Indeed, Burr was so attached to her old friends that when she moved to Princeton, she had trouble finding new ones. On December 10, 1756, she complained to Gill (whom she affectionately gave the nickname "Fidelia") that "New acquaintance and I hope new friends almost every day, *but Alas for me* I can't find a *Fidelia* amongst em all, nor need I look for it for there's not another Fidelia on the face of the Globe…"[309] All the other members of the Sisterhood had nicknames, too. In one letter Burr lists them all: Marina, Constancia, Confidenta, Laura, Simpathia, Leomira, and Julia.[310]

If friendship brought Burr into association with all these other women, religion maintained the connection. The letters between Burr and Gill demonstrate how each of the members of the sisterhood might have used each other to bolster their own piety. Fairly early in her correspondence with Gill, Burr remarked on the value of conversation in religion. In an April 20, 1755 letter she reveals frustration that Gill is her only religious confidante: "There is *not one person that will talk freely to my on relegion in this town*–out of our own house…I esteem

307 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* October 16, 1756.
308 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* October 4, 1754.
309 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* December 10, 1756.
310 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* January 22, 1756.

relegious Conversation one of the best helps to keep up relegion in the soul…Then what a lamentable thing tis neglected by Gods own children…Ah! Relegion thou gettest many a stab from thy *Professed Friends!* "[311] There is an interesting analogy here between conventional friendship and the relationship that people should have with religion; people should be 'friends' with their religion, and the key to a healthy friendship is continued conversation. More than making an analogy, Burr wants to connect these two forms of real and abstract friendship by implying that her and Gill's friendship is essential to them both being adequately pious.

To make up for a lack of religious conversation in her daily life, Burr and Gill solemnly promised to "monitor" each other's spiritual growth. This agreement is explicitly stated in a letter by Burr from November 1, 1754: "You say I have excepted the office of *Monitor* but on no other conditions than that you be one to me. *Mind that.* I think it one of the great essentials of friendship [that] the parties tell one another their faults…it is one of the best evidences of true friendship, [I] think."[312] Burr and Gill tried to be creative as they recorded their loyalty to and struggles with religion–an act that, as has been explained, was just as much for themselves individually as it was for each other. A main creative outlet, confined as the 'Sisters' were to the medium of the written word, was poetry; thus an example from June 30, 1755, in which Burr responds to a piece of religious poetry Gill had sent her by saying it is "beautiful" and that Gill has many "beautiful… fine thoughts."[313] Ultimately, Burr is most satisfied with her friendship when Gill appears to have experienced the most religious growth: "I rejoice with you my dear that you have found the Lord to be with you of a truth, and that you have experienced so much of his loving kindness to your soul, and have had his enlivneing and quickning presence. I pray God

311 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* April 20, 1755.
312 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* November 1, 1754.
313 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* June 30, 1755.

it may continue throu'out your life."[314] Occasionally, Burr exposes how this religious conversation was meant to have more real life consequences.

To say that Burr, Gill, and the rest of the sisterhood spearheaded an early women's rights movement is an overstatement; nonetheless, within their abilities and insofar as they were willing to challenge a male status quo, these women did indeed create the "necessary preconditions for the overt activities of their female descendants of the nineteenth century."[315] They achieved this simply through the act of writing–an act that engendered 'dangerously' individual, progressive, political awareness. An earlier example is pertinent here too: Burr's frequently masked distaste of men's self-perceived superiority comes through in the letter wherein she explained to Gill why she did not tell Mrs. Brown about her and Gill's "method of corresponding." It was because "I was afraid she would tell her MAN of it, and *he* knows so much better about matters than *she* that he would sertainly make some ill-natured remarks or other, and so these *Hes* shall know nothing of our affairs *until they are grown as wise as you and I are*…"[316] The punctuation as well as the content here highlights Burr's agitation. In a rare and particularly vituperative outburst over a year later, Burr challenged a "Mr. Ewing" on his "mean thoughts of Women." The debate, as Burr related it to Gill, centered on to what degree women could understand and appreciate true friendship. However, it is not far-fetched to claim this debate held significant ramifications in terms of the intelligence, equality, and rights of women. Burr became outraged when Ewing suggested that women should talk about "*things that they understood. He did not think that women knew what Friendship was. They were hardly capable of anything so cool and rational as friendship*…You may Guss what a large field this opened for me–I retorted several severe things

314 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* November 24, 1754.
315 Editor, "Introduction", in *The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr, 1754-1757.*
316 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* January 15, 1756.

upon him…He blushed and seemed confused…I talked him quite silent."[317] Interestingly, in both instances Burr's argument centered on her support of women's friendship; she defended the friendship itself as well as the method she and her friends used to maintain that friendship. Thus did the Sisterhood, as an explicit force for increased piety, both implicitly and explicitly perpetuate an increased awareness of women's rights. In doing so it took a rigid religion–a religion that typically put colonial women at odds with the changing times– and made it adaptable. Later in this thesis I will examine how despite these strong undercurrents, the piety expressed in Burr's letters also showed a strong predilection for the traditional, patriarchal, values of Calvinism.

Justin Hitchcock

Justin Hitchcock's autobiography is the one true autobiography of all the sources in this thesis. Unlike the African American narratives, it was not mediated by an editor; unlike the letters of Esther Burr, it focuses on a broad narrative arc instead of being a collection of detailed insights into daily life. However, like Burr and the African Americas analyzed in this thesis, Hitchcock also desired to record his personal life experiences; it is useful here to give a brief summary of that life as it is presented in the autobiography. Hitchcock prefaces his personal story by talking about the history of his family in the New England colonies. He traces his ancestry ultimately to England and claims that he came from a long line of New England inhabitants. The first Hitchcocks to settle in New England went to the District of Maine, only to quickly move to Weathersfield, Connecticut due to Indian attacks. In this family were two sons named Luke and John, from whom the rest of the Hitchcock family line sprung.[318] In his *History of Deerfield,* George Sheldon illustrates that Luke, from whose line Justin is most directly descended, was

317 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* April 12, 1757.
318 Justin Hitchcock, *A Sort of Autobiography & Genealogy,* 3.

born in New England in 1655; thus the Hitchcocks were likely within just a couple decades of being amongst the earliest Puritan English colonists to settle in New England.[319] These ancestors were involved in many various aspects of social life. They served as soldiers, and were joiners, lawyers, colonels, and saddlers, among numerous other professions.

More directly relevant to Hitchcock's life, his father and grandfather were both from Springfield. His father, Luke Hitchcock, married Lucy Merrick in 1747 and eventually had 12 children. Though Hitchcock doesn't elaborate very much on what his father did to make a living at this point, he was evidently (and unsurprisingly given the area and the place) heavily involved in husbandry; in 1756, he uprooted the entire family to Granville for better farming prospects. This move occurred when Justin was just four years old.[320] This fits with the fact that Hitchcock was born on May 27, 1752. Justin lived on this 100-acre farm with his family until he was fifteen. While in Granville, besides being a famer, Luke Hitchcock was a selectman, a church deacon, and an assessor.[321]

As Justin Hitchcock matured, he realized that his interests lay outside the world of agriculture. He developed an interest in music (particularly singing) and in learning a specialized trade. Though he wanted to be a clockmaker, in 1767 Hitchcock settled for being a hatter when he had the opportunity to apprentice under Moses Church. Hitchcock reveals he wasn't always the upright, strict Calvinist he ostensibly is as the narrator: as an apprentice he once was part of a group of boys who threw stones at the house of a man accused of being unsociable; he was also once caught by his master (Mr. Church) playing cards in the workspace.[322] He would remain

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319 *Family Genealogies,* in George Sheldon, *A History of Deerfield Massachusetts: Volume II,* (Somersworth, New Hampshire: New Hampshire Publishing Company, 1972,) 207.

320 Justin Hitchcock, *A Sort of Autobiography*, 3-5.

321 *Ibid.,* 6-8.

322 Playing cards was sinful to Calvinist Puritans for many reasons: it was a means to profit without the traits of industry and frugality, it tempted greed, and it mocked God's omnipotence in fate.

under the tutelage of Church in Springfield until he became a journeyman on June 7, 1773. After working intermittently in Hadley and Deerfield, he eventually decided in May of 1774 to settle in Deerfield. He moved because living in Springfield had become too expensive. The military actions of the Revolutionary War figure prominently in the autobiography, however they rarely pertain to Hitchcock's personal life. He details how he became a fifer in a company of Deerfield Minutemen; besides this, he gives very little description of a personal military career.[323] Hitchcock does describe how after the infamous skirmishes at Lexington and Concord, his company marched into Cambridge as part of a lottery selection of which minutemen should stay at home and which should go to the battlefront. Hitchcock's company was selected to stay in Cambridge and fight; however, instead of fighting he decided to pay "Smith of Sudbury" to take his place.[324]

Justin Hitchcock became more involved with the Deerfield community as the Revolutionary War picked up speed. He had continued studying music to a certain extent as an apprentice, and even tried his hand at composing when he was nineteen; in 1775, he started a singing school through the local church. In October of the same year, he hired a hatting shop in Wethersfield.[325] Hitchcock claims that it was "for some time past and about this time I had become more impressed upon religious subjects;" yet despite having started the music school, he was not an official church member. This was due to impassioned, divisive, and potentially dangerous local politics. Throughout the Revolutionary War, the helmsman of the Deerfield Church was the Reverend Jonathan Ashley, a loyal Tory. Hitchcock reasonably did not want his name attached to

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323 Though it is not in the autobiography, Hitchcock also helped meet the Burgoyne Invasion of 1777. See David Field, *List of Soldiers,* transcription, (Deerfield, MA: Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Museum, accession number L99.086,) accessed 9 April 2016, http://www.memorialhall.mass.edu/collection/itempage.jsp?itemid=5840. Thank you to Historic Deerfield Summer Fellowship program director Barbara Matthews for pointing this out.

324 Justin Hitchcock, *A Sort of Autobiography,* 8-15.

325 *Ibid.,*17.

the leadership of someone considered a near-traitor to the Patriot cause. [326] Nonetheless, in November of 1778, the weight of his sins proved too much for his pride. Furthermore, Hitchcock was likely pressured to join the Church because of the fact that this same year he became engaged to Mercy Hoyt, who came from a loyalist family. The decision to join the Church–which in keeping with the Calvinist creed included a public profession of faith–directly impacted Hitchcock's career: the Tory-dominated local government, hoping that Hitchcock was shifting his political loyalties, thought he would be more easily persuaded if he was offered the position of Town Clerk. Although Hitchcock accepted the position in 1778 and kept it for the next three years, the Torys' plans didn't work.[327] He remained a fervent Patriot throughout his life.

Land and private property is a theme throughout Hitchcock's autobiography. The fact that it is mentioned so much reveals how, for him, having land and the money to pay for it was a constant stress. During Justin's lifetime, his father (Luke) had never revealed to his sons that he owed a huge mortgage on the estate he owned in Granville. When he died of dysentery while fighting for the Continental Army against General Burgoyne in (according to Sheldon's confirmation) 1777,[328] Justin was hit with a huge economic and emotional blow. Justin was resentful of his father for hiding such crucial information from him, all for the sake of pride: "And I would remark that tho a man may appear to possess an estate that may be beneficial to his children yet if he know that it is involved to such a degree as to afford no home of any thing being left for them it is in my view a duty he owes to them to let them know the actual situation of his affairs that if they must depend intirely on their own exertions the sooner they know it the better."[329] In the spring of 1778, Justin was finally able to start building a home of his own in

326 *Ibid.,* 18.
327 *Ibid.,* 21-22.
328 *Ibid.,* 19; Sheldon, *A History of Deerfield,* 209.
329 Justin Hitchcock, *A Sort of Autobiography,* 20.

Deerfield.[330] He likely had some extra motivation; by that time he had been courting Mercy Hoyt for at least a year.[331] The couple was married on November 25, 1779 and would eventually have three sons and two daughters.[332] After his family's home was completed, Hitchcock bought a shop in Deerfield from Mr. Stebbins–having quit his shop in Wethersfield due to his disliking for his partner in that venture, Mr. Smith–so he could carry on being a hatter. Justin regretted paying an unreasonably high price: "Certanity it was extravagant to give such a price for the shop… There was time sufficient afterwards to regret this hasty foolish bargain."[333] Indeed, to pay off his debt to Mr. Stebbins and to Mr. Hannah Williams (of Pittsfield) for another piece of land he had rented, Hitchcock had to work incredibly hard. In addition to working in his shop, this involved laboring in the cornfields and hayfields.[334] He sadly remembered "As to myself I had sometimes dark prospects as to obtaining a support for my growing family."[335] One time while working in one of these fields, Hitchcock missed a swing with his axe and cut off several of his toes.[336]

The rest of the autobiography portrays Hitchcock's life after the revolution. During the immediate post-war recession, Hitchcock served for an unspecified amount of time on the Jury of Trials in Northampton. Significantly (as will be shown later), he joined approximately forty local Deerfield volunteers to protect the Supreme Court at Springfield in 1787. After the defeat of Shays' Rebellion, Hitchcock continued to ride (as he had done most his adult life) the ups and

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330 *Ibid.,* 22.

331 The dates of two letters Justin wrote to Mercy Hoyt and her parents, dated April 4th and 3rd, 1778, prove this. See: Justin Hitchcock, *From Justin Hitchcock to Mercy Hoyt,* April 4, 1778, transcription, (Deerfield, MA: Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Papers of Justin Hitchcock, Folder 6.) Also: Justin Hitchcock, *From Justin Hitchcock to Mr. David & Mrs. Silence Hoyt,* April 3, 1778, transcription, (Deerfield, MA: Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, Papers of Justin Hitchcock, Folder 6.)

332 Sheldon, *A History of Deerfield,* 209. For specific date of marriage see also Justin Hitchcock, *A Sort of Autobiography,* 23.

333 Justin Hitchcock, *A Sort of Autobiography*, 24.

334 *Ibid.,* 32-33.

335 *Ibid.,*32.

336 *Ibid.,* 36.

downs of the rural economy. In 1798, he was named Deacon of the Church. The autobiography ends in 1799 with Hitchcock's tribute to George Washington and lamentation over his death.[337]

Hitchcock as a New Light

Hitchcock's autobiography is testimony to the dual nature of politics and religion in colonial New England during the Revolution. The combination of his expressed Puritan Calvinist beliefs with his passion for learning, his desire to be politically involved during (and after) the Revolution, and his willingness to be apart of a wider post-war economic system indicates that Hitchcock was heavily influenced by the new light attitudes of the Great Awakening. He reconciled his belief in predestination with his faith in his own individual worth. In the autobiography, Hitchcock proves how he was a devout Calvinist; at one point he enumerates the five points of Calvinist Doctrine: "original sin, election, special grace and the absolute divinity of the saints." Although only a certain number of pre-selected people can achieve selection, the Calvinists–according to Hitchcock, and in accordance with the theory of the Covenant of Grace–do allow for some individual agency. Even the pre-selected "saved" are naturally "depraved" and must experience "the special influences of the holy spirit to regenerate them," so that they might "seek after salvation."[338] By 1774, Hitchcock was resolutely patriotic. Thus: "I cannot well describe the sensations of my mind at that time to submit must be abject slavery to fight and be overcome rebellious but I felt a preference to try the fist of war rather than submission without an effort to free ourselves."[339] Hitchcock's patriotism is most commonly expressed in his lengthy descriptions of the battles of the Revolutionary War. These occur throughout nearly the entire autobiography. A good example involves some of the military maneuvers of 1780:

337 *Ibid.,* 29-36.
338 *Ibid.,* 28.
339 *Ibid.,* 14.

In Jul Genl Morgan effectually defeated Col Farlton a famous partyian Officer under Cornwallis. Morgan had taken about 500 prisoners Green immediately moved towards Morgan to direct that the prisoners should be marched to Virginia…Cornwallis…pursued Green and Morgan near five hundred miles but could not…retake the prisoners. There was something so remarkable in the escape of the Green Army by the sudden rise of the river after he had passed that the enemy could not pass that some supposed it a special act of providence in their favor.[340]

Here, where divine providence is portrayed as the colonist's salvation, Hitchcock certainly had no qualms about defying an authority previously sanctioned by God. Later in the autobiography, when he analyzes why the Americans were successful in the war, Hitchcock refers again (in his sixth reason for the American's victory) to divine providence.[341] One wonders how Hitchcock knew such intimate details if he himself barely fought.

He also discusses politics outside of the context of war. After describing how he struggled to learn music as a composer but eventually was able to compose by the age of 19, Hitchcock describes the divisions between Tories and Whigs in Deerfield. As has been described earlier, this division stalled Hitchcock in his ability to join the local church. On Whigs, he notes "…these were opposed to many of the claims of Great Britain especially to their claims of a right to bind us in all cases what ever and their right to tax us while we ware not represented in their government."[342] A little later in the autobiography, Justin describes the paramount issues of contention with Britain in 1774: besides taxation without representation, there was the appointment in the colonies of a Governor council as well as the Governor by the King. These were grievous violations of the colonist's liberty that resulted in the Boston Tea Party. Hitchcock records this famous event: "The populace…went a party of them in disguise and threw it overboard into the sea."[343] He later describes the rising tensions over gunpowder stores that

340 *Ibid.*. 24.
341 *Ibid.,* 27.
342 *Ibid.*, 10.
343 *Ibid.,* 13.

eventually led to the outbreak of war at Lexington and Concord in 1775.[344] Writing about the conclusion of the war, Hitchcock unabashedly states "…I was at an age when the whole conflict was likely to interest me…the events as they took place fixed in my memory and it is not likely that the like or those of vastly greater importance will even engage my attention to such a degree again."[345] Hitchcock's most enthusiastic expressions of patriotism, however, lay in his illustrations of George Washington. He felt that taking note of Washington's death (1799) was a fitting conclusion to his autobiography. His adoration was limitless: "The loss of such a Man was deeply lamented…such was my respect and attachment to him (tho I never saw him) that the sound of his name excited emotions that I cannot describe."[346]

Hitchcock's involvement in the revolution is only one proof of his political progressiveness. Opal reveals the other means by which Hitchcock was politically and socially progressive. He says that in the face of extreme economic hardship, Hitchcock "used the future of the nation to brighten his dark prospects."[347] Regarding education, Hitchcock notes in the early pages of his autobiography that he went to school at an extremely young age; he was in school before he turned four, at which point his family moved from Springfield to Granville. When in Granville, Hitchcock continued his education despite having to walk over a mile to and from school every day. Hitchcock remembers his family's emphasis on education as well as the different types of teachers he had and how they affected how well he learned:

My father was very careful to get us good an education as the circumstances in a new settlement would permit one Doct Smith kept the school a proper Tyrant…the consequence was that we learned but slowly. After him we had one Harvey…he used a very different method with us and instead of going to school as a task we now went as a pleasure tho we had more than a mile to go yeat scarcely any storms or blowing storms stoped my Brother Merick and I from attending and

344 *Ibid.,* 14-15.
345 *Ibid.,* 26.
346 *Ibid.,* 36.
347 Opal, *Beyond the Farm,* 50.

it was to this school and Instructor that we are indebted for the little we know of writing and spelling.[348]

Later, after retelling how he had trouble getting along with a fellow hatting apprentice by the name of "Hall," Hitchcock explains that he enjoyed reading in his free time–particularly a book on the history of England, dramatic pieces, and novels.[349] Slightly later in the autobiography he also admits to having read enough of the Gospel Doctrines as a youth to have a "tolerable idea" of what they meant.[350] Not only was Hitchcock clearly drawn towards non-religious texts, he directly espoused the merits of reading literary fiction. He defended his decision to read these books by saying that they helped a great deal in developing his ability to write; he read novels both for their inherent interest and their contribution to his rhetorical ability. Hitchcock's devotion to learning also shined through in his sustained effort to learn music. After having a hard time learning under the tutelage of a Mr. J Stickney while he was an apprentice, Hitchcock didn't give up; he eventually was able to practice and become a good musician with the friendly help of a neighbor to Mr. Church's shop named Joel Day. [351]

However much Hitchcock shared in the patriotism of the other colonists, other aspects of his progressivism–such as this passion for learning– weren't necessarily shared. For instance, among New Englanders he placed an unusually high value on education and came from a remarkably well-educated family. Opal gives more depth to Morison's overview of New England schools in the years before the American Revolution. He shows how although educational institutions and laws were in place, few towns and families actually obeyed them. Hitchcock fit into the intellectual standards prescribed by the original immigrant Puritans; yet, among a rural

348 Justin Hitchcock, *A Sort of Autobiography,* 7-8.
349 *Ibid.,* 9.
350 *Ibid.,* 12.
351 *Ibid.,* 9.

community, this intellectual strain cast him as an outsider.[352] Hitchcock conferred this value on education to his children. Despite economic constraints, three of these children (including Edward Hitchcock) were miraculously able to pay tuition for Deerfield Academy, where they "were a threadbare few amidst a well-heeled many; among their twenty-four classmates from Deerfield, only the sons of Deerfield's minister had less household wealth."[353]

Hitchcock was also progressive in his embrace of the post-war economy. This economy, tied to national ambitions, was grounded in inter-regional commerce rather than local bartering and agriculture.[354] Opal explains how Hitchcock's hat-making business thrived in a wider market: "The account book he kept from 1783 to 1800 shows that he worked at a preindustrial pace, but for a large and diverse clientele…Of the 133 customers I can locate, sixty-five lived in Deerfield."[355] Thus, by virtue of his economic class and personal values, Hitchcock was a willing participant in what by 1815 had become "a tipping point in the wider culture, a general movement from the goals of household and local independence to those of individual and national distinction."[356] In his political, social, and finally economic life, Hitchcock actively moved into the egalitarian, individually empowering form of human relationships that defined the post war period.[357]

352 *Ibid.,* 27.
353 *Ibid.,* 106-107.
354 *Ibid.,* 44.
355 *Ibid.,* 65-66.
356 *Ibid.,* 155.
357 For more on these new post-war human relationships, see Chapter 2, or Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution.*

Chapter Four: The Old Light

Instability in the New Light: The Covenant of Grace

For all its appearances of being a united, pro-rebellion front, and despite its pivotal role in the Revolution, the evangelicalism of the Great Awakening was not at all unambiguous. As has been discussed, it was called "new" but was in fact nothing more than an attempted revival of traditional values; the "old light" it fought against consisted of "liberal," Enlightenment values that had themselves chronologically followed the original traditional values. Whereas the old light had grown stale, the new light was re-born into a situation where its values were easily

politicized as being "liberal" and "progressive." However, the colonists could not simultaneously re-invigorate some aspects of their conservative past while rejecting others. With the more "liberal" components of evangelicalism came other, less progressive, values; values that would create great ambiguity in the lives of many different types of people. The traditional, 17th century (and earlier) values that the colonists brought to the fore in the Great Awakening consisted of a mixture of divine omnipotence, individual agency, and morality that had been resolved by the colonist's Puritan predecessors in the Covenant of Grace.

It is best here to give a significant anecdote that illustrates how pertinent this "mixture" was. Jonathan Edwards has been considered the, if not one of the, prime instigators of the Great Awakening; yet, he was also eventually expelled from his pulpit in Northampton, Massachusetts. This is because he was caught between an innate humanism and a learned theocraticism; a supporter of the Great Awakening, Edwards was also an intellectual unable to completely give up the life of the mind. He was expelled because he compromised the notion–a notion he had largely perpetuated, nonetheless–that "too much learning is a dangerous thing…the inner light needed not training but release, that the splendor might escape" for a position that believed acquired knowledge "was the root of true religion."[358] Just as Edwards had seen earlier in his career that rationalism was overpowering the emotional, individual aspect of Calvinism, so too did he believe that rationalism was being ignored too much in his later preaching days. His attempts to "establish in logical relationship the intellectual love of God with human emotions" resulted in confusing a clergy that had learned his earlier revivalist invocations "too well:" these attempts "passed over the heads of his pastoral children" and made Edwards seem a traitor to his own cause.[359] Of course, from a modern perspective it is clear that Edwards was merely trying to

358 "Introduction," Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson, ed., in *Jonathan Edwards*, xii.
359 *Ibid.,* xiii.

bring moderation to a movement that had induced its adherents to experience '"outcries, fainting and fits, '" '"bitter *Shriekings* and *Screamings; Convulsion-like Tremblings* and *Agitations, Strugglings* and *Tumblings*.'"[360] He sought to distinguish between "supernatural inspirations" and the imagination; the imagination was as much a playground of the Devil acting on "animal spirits" as it was the consequence of loosely controlled passions that, because of their vital role in all human actions, God used as tools to impart knowledge of himself.[361] Thus was Edwards able to be lenient towards the unbridled emotional nature of the Great Awakening while also recognizing that not all passionate, religious expression was equally valid. In his general reservations about the consequences of the Awakening, Edwards was a practical archetype of the devout 17th century colonial Puritan. The fact that at the core of Edward's pity was his great emphasis on the absolute power and goodness of God as oppose to the depravity of man, and his belief that the "good" ultimately coming from God and the "evil" of man's temptations are always in conflict, further proves this connection: on the crucial upper layers of his theological pyramid, "he erected solidly his doctrine of depravity and his doctrine of virtue…At the apex of the whole he set his doctrine of grace…The whole edifice was designed to make evident the majestic power of God."[362]

The Puritan creed encountered and overcame the same contradictions that Edwards wrestled with and was punished for during the Great Awakening. While the outcome in both instances was a more nuanced respect for both God's absolute sovereignty and human agency and intellect, it should be noted that whereas Edwards was concerned mostly with the religious legitimacy of human emotional expression, the early Puritans particularly focused on countering

360 *Ibid.,* xvii*;* xviii. This is from the records of a certain Charles Chauncy, the Old Light Pastor of the First Church in Boston (p. xix). It was presumably written about Chauncy's experience of a sermon by the notoriously inflammatory New Light preacher James Davenport.

361 *Ibid.,* xxxvi-xxxix.

362 *Ibid.,* xcv.

an "Antinomian heresy" (without falling into the "Arminian heresy") that took predestination to such a high level that human morality and choice was deemed irrelevant. It seems that Edwards' conflict was a more moderate reenactment of the earlier controversy; disagreeing with the Northampton laity over "the Qualifications necessary for admission to the privileges of members, in complete standing, in the Visible Church of Christ,"[363] he was concerned with accurate piety. The earlier Puritans went even further and applied this concern to human morality.

Perry Miller explains how the 17th century colonial Puritans, in order to resist the tenets of "Arminianism" and "Antinomianism" that were "driven to their conclusions by a sense of Calvinism's deficiencies," "…were compelled, in order to preserve the truths already known, to add to their theology one that hitherto had not been known, or at least not emphasized, the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace."[364] This invention was a unique aspect of the development of Puritanism in the colonies and distanced it from its European parent.[365] To understand the Covenant of Grace, and how it was a precursor of the pervasive, underlying ambiguities of the Great Awakening, one must generally understand the Antinomian and Arminian creeds. Arminians saw in predestination the logical fallacy that most men, seeing no hope to change their eternal destinies, would fall into a state of chaotic carelessness: "…Calvinism's splendid vision of God's omnipotence would become, when taught to men of weaker resolution, an excuse for their licentiousness and a justification of their indolence." To solve this obviously dangerous sentiment, Arminius stated (as quoted by Miller) that "' the efficacy of grace 'depends on the will of man, in regard that by vertue of its native liberty, it may receive or reject this grace, use it or

363 Jonathan Edwards, "Farewell Sermon," in Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson, ed., *Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962,) 188.
364 Perry Miller, 367; 366.
365 *Ibid.,* 367.

not use it, render it effectuall or vain.'" [366] God depended on man's works in deciding who was condemned or saved. Devout Calvinists quickly saw this philosophy as heretical on two levels that were absolutely integral to their piety: by assuming that any man or woman could ever "deserve" of his/her own merit to be "saved," it limited the absolute, arbitrary power of God and contradicted the doctrine of innate depravity and mankind's sinfulness. Indeed, merit was viewed as completely inadequate for salvation: "Puritans believed literally that did all men get their just deserts, who should 'scape hanging?"[367]

On the flip side was Antinomianism, which instead of rejecting the Calvinist's strict theory of predestination embraced it too much. Antinomians seriously questioned the notion that "If the elect are joined to Christ so that they move not of themselves but by the spirit within them…why need anyone study the commandments or fear condemnation for his sins?"[368] Key to this belief was the fact that God's presence, when experienced by the elect (those chosen to be saved), was an all pervasive force; those who were saved were so perfectly united, had "such an inward union of man with Christ…that the man and his Redeemer became as one…person," that they themselves had perfect faith and were immune from immorality. In this sense, Antinomians also challenged the absolute power of God by denying the fallibility of an individual if that person was one of the elect.[369] Miller astutely points out that the Puritans distinguished between God's omnipresence in creation and everyday life and his special presence in those He chooses to save. The Arminians and Antinomians both confused the two: Arminians sacrificed the former (God's "ordinary dispensations") to the power of the latter (his "extraordinary dispensations"), and Antinomians conflated the two so that God's "extraordinary dispensations" became

366 *Ibid.,* 368.
367 *Ibid., 369.*
368 *Ibid.,* 369.
369 *Ibid.,*371.

subsumed under his "ordinary" ones and lost their unique position as God acting in a very specific way on very specific people. The end result of both was a vision of a God who had lost much of his power and therefore no longer made any sense.[370] In each case, Puritanism itself also lost a crucial element of faith that it strove to recover: "Arminianism was a kind of ethical tradition that had lost the sense of piety, and Antinomianism was an uncontrolled piety without the indispensable ballast of reason; Puritanism looked upon itself as the synthesis of piety and reason, and…Puritans looked upon the covenant theology as the perfection of that synthesis."[371]

The Covenant of Grace resolved this seemingly fundamental contradiction. At stake was a schism that, though almost fully realized in the Great Awakening, in my opinion never actually happened. The example of Jonathan Edwards and the primary sources I describe in this thesis support my claim. Such a schism would have been a much more radical and absolute extension of the split that actually happened between New Lights and Old Lights; perhaps if the Awakening had run completely unchecked past 1750 this would have occurred. Bonomi does not explicitly state if she believes (unlike me) that the Great Awakening was a complete and radical split between Arminians and Antinomians, but she does acknowledge the active potential of this split in the pre-awakening years: "In New England…only the Calvinists' ability to hold the two elements in exquisite balance had avoided a schism." The Middle and Southern colonies had this potential to divide, too; the South just had to wait until the "later colonial years" to have "heart religion," and the Middle Colonies was a place of multifarious opinions that witnessed the first eruptions of the two contentious camps.[372] The Great Awakening obviously happened in New England, too, but there the Covenant of Grace as a powerful precedent of the nature of the Awakening split (among new lights, that is) is arguably more significant than the split itself.

370 *Ibid.,* 373.
371 *Ibid.*
372 Bonomi, 132.

This Covenant of Grace is a testimony to the intensely inquisitive, intellectual character of the Puritan mind. It managed to solve the seemingly diametrically opposed contradictions of Puritanism: it "held to both the grace and the consent, to the decree of God and the full responsibility of man, to assurance in spite of sin and morality in spite of assurance."[373] The covenant was summed up as "an agreement of unequals upon just and equal terms, 'in which God promises true happiness to man, and man engages himself by promise for performance of what God requires.'"[374] In addition to promising happiness and eternal salvation, God initiates the covenant by, through his grace, giving the initial "means" to faith.[375] The essential assumption here was inherent in the very definition of a covenant; a covenant is a mutual, voluntary obligation between two parties. God, despite his absolute power to dispose with humankind and all life however he pleases, "has voluntarily tied his hands, willingly agreed to a set of terms."[376] Because God chooses of his own volition to offer man salvation instead of offering it as entirely dependent on mankind's actions, his omnipotence is not compromised. The voluntary condition of the covenant for both parties also made it as powerful a contract as is possible. To not uphold the terms of a covenant is to be disloyal not just to an external force but to one's very self. Looking at biblical history, the Puritan theologians reasoned that God offered two different covenants at two different moments; once with Adam and Eve, and then again with Abraham after Adam and Eve failed to fulfill the terms of the original covenant. This first covenant was called the "Covenant of Works;" the "set of terms" humankind bound itself to consisted of upholding a moral law. After Adam and Eve fell from grace, God began the "Covenant of Works" with Abraham; this time, God–via Jesus Christ–took full responsibility for

373 Miller, 389.
374 *Ibid.,* 376.
375 Miller, 394-395.
376 *Ibid.*

moral action, only requiring piety in return.[377] Thus the belief, later stressed by Edwards, that all good must ultimately come from God.[378]

Though these aspects of the covenant refute the Antinomian and Arminian challenges to God's omnipotence, and seemingly satisfy the Antinomian concern with the unconditional nature of predestination, they do not yet answer the Arminian concern with human agency and morality. The Puritans answered this concern by claiming that piety, in of itself, entails morality: "…when faith was viewed not as a simple act of faith, but as the condition of a covenant, it became itself, as it were, a "work," involving in the inward act an obligation to external behavior."[379] Also: "Thus the Covenant of Grace becomes a 'conditional' covenant; the condition is faith, but…faith as the fulfillment of a covenant obliges the believer…to walk, whereas unsophisticated piety naively supposes that faith in itself is adequate for salvation regardless of how it walks."[380] Morality is a natural consequence of faith, not the other way around.[381] This morality, in its most general terms, "is stated in the moral law, in the Ten Commandments, which are also the law of nature, the law of that which is good in itself."[382] Thus is faith emphasized without sacrificing morality, as oppose to the Covenant of Works where God (mistakenly, ironically) ostensibly placed morality as a necessary precondition, or path, to true faith. The distinction is subtle, but absolutely vital to realistic (according to the Puritans) conceptions of the nature of man, God, and divine Grace: it is much more reasonable of God to expect mankind simply to be faithful with the assumption that morality would follow, than to expect of mankind perfect knowledge of a moral code; it makes sense that, in the context of God having a deep, personal relationship to

377 Miller, 374-377.
378 Edwards, xcviii.
379 Miller, 383.
380 *Ibid.,* 385.
381 *Ibid.,* 392.
382 *Ibid.,* 396.

each predestined individual, unconditional loyalty is a more powerful connection than an imparted stipulation of rules; lastly, it is much easier for God to simply inspire faith than it is for him to impart said moral rules. Ultimately, the Covenant of Grace managed to instill a sense of individuality based on God's personal connection to his chosen people as well as on that people's ability to control their salvific destinies, and it did so without compromising the central beliefs of the Puritan faith. In the Great Awakening and the years between its occurrence and the American Revolution, the New Light revivalists re-experienced these two elements of individualism too, albeit in a slightly different way. In the pre-Awakening years, elements of the new light (Antinomianism) and the old light (Arminianism) were assigned similar value and non-value; post-Awakening, learned religion was tied to traditional notions of a more conservative past, and innate humanist piety was seen as progressive and liberal.

Communitarian Values

At surface level, the Arminian sense that was embodied in the Covenant of Grace as well as in the Great Awakening was (not regarding the theological problems it raised) an understanding of humanity and religion that is easy to appreciate. It championed human agency and the power of rationale thinking. However, attending this strain of Calvinism were ideas that were less compatible with notions of liberalism and capitalism, lest revolutionary thought. In basing theology around acquired knowledge, around a "truth" that must be learned and not intuited, the Puritans necessarily recreated their own hierarchical system within a strictly defined community. In this sense a person's "calling" was not so much a means of she or he finding a path to personal salvation as it was a result of a structured society; it was a justification for

maintaining order in a vision that emphasized non-ascetic religious experience. In fact, a calling was meant to lead to "productivity for the benefit of society."[383] The political agenda here was to maintain a new form of order–not to instigate rebellion. In other words, instead of focusing on the fact itself that an individual person can have a connection with God, the Arminian ideas focused on the specific characteristics of that connection. Michael Walzer illuminates these intensely communal, traditional elements that were inherent in English Puritan ideology. Though Walzer does not deal specifically with colonial history, there is an initially strong but gradually weakening common thread running from the English Puritanism he portrays, to early American colonialist Puritanism, to the ideology of the Great Awakening revivalists.

Walzer contradicts Whigs, Weberians, and Marxists by claiming that each of these groups fails to a certain degree in connecting Puritanism to liberalism or capitalism. He reveals how each ideological group has used an anachronistic view of history to reach its conclusions: although "The Revolution of the Saints" may have influenced the development of liberalism and capitalism through a commitment to "radical volunteerism," individualism, intellectual debate, and rational life in a "calling" that strove for success as a proof of divine grace, there remains great ambiguity as to whether capitalism was actually an effect and not a cause of Puritanism; furthermore, the connection between Puritanism and liberalism is also very weak.[384] Walzer shows how both Marxists and Weberians, obsessed with Puritanism's ties to capitalism, have been so eager to naively project their ideologies onto history (a very dangerously misleading and inaccurate practice!) that they have contradicted each other: "…the Marxist knows the beginning of Puritanism as well as Weber knows the end: at the beginning and end is capitalism."[385] The

383 Morgan, 4.
384 Walzer, 61; 68-72.
385 *Ibid.,* 71. For a discussion on how the Marxist and Weberian theories both fail to account for the underlying anxiety that must prefigure Puritanism and capitalism, no matter which chronologically came first, see Chapter 2. Also, Walzer, p. 70.

Marxists, positing that Puritanism was a symptom of a developing capitalist society, have simplified and conflated Augustinian religious anxiety with the anxiety of being alienated from one's labor; although Walzer admits that the "anxiety" at the source of Puritanism, capitalism, and liberalism was due to the impact of shifting social and economic forces on people's lives, he maintains that Marxism is too narrow an interpretation and is more adequate in explaining Puritanism as an established force, not as a revolutionary ideology. Marxism posits the Puritan revolution as being a calculated response to solidifying (or solidified) social stratums, not as a way of reinforcing order on a chaotic world; it simply gives rationalism too much credit (at the price of repressive communitarian principles) in an uprising that resulted in civil war.[386] Puritanism was also not the perfect precursor to capitalism that Weberians like to pretend it was. It did indeed stressed self-control and hard work–requisite values for a successful capitalist–but Weber ignores (according to Walzer) how these qualities were tempered by valued traits such as modesty, virtue, frugality, and charitable giving. Excessive greed and profit was sinful; economic success did not translate into salvation.[387]

Equally at fault is the overly optimistic Whig belief that "liberalism is a kind of community chest to which nations, groups of men, and particular thinkers have made contributions. History is a catalogue of the contributors…The contributions mount up; the world perfects itself."[388] Whig historians have gone so far as to think that "Puritanism *is* liberalism in theological garb."[389] Contrary to overemphasizing individuality, and contrary to the Whig, Weberian and Marxist perspectives, there was a communal aspect of Puritanism. Individual rights existed at a very different level within the Puritan congregations than they did amongst

386 *Ibid.,*59-60; 77.
387 *Ibid.,* 64.
388 *Ibid.,* 68.
389 *Ibid.,* 61.

humanity. The strict intent on maintaining a "collective discipline" meant that, "Puritan individualism never led to a respect for privacy;" indeed, "all forms of individualistic extravagance" were harshly criticized.[390]

This criticism was due to the fact that during the English Civil War, English conservatives saw a dangerous, anarchic potential in a religious ideology that stressed individual power and toleration of that power.[391] Cromwell grudgingly permitted a degree of religious toleration sheerly for political reasons (he needed the anti-monarchical support of various religious sects), perhaps unaware that said toleration would soon escalate into a drive throughout the entire English Interregnum for a form of democratic liberalism. [392] The principle of religious toleration put "the Bible to endless destructive use;" just as during the American Revolution, during the English Civil War it enabled a mixing of politics and religion that promoted legal equality.[393] Conservatives were aware of the political implications of "toleration," and they did not like them; they believed that "…toleration could only lead to skepticism, atheism, and debauchery… the mass of mankind was sinful: unless preached at and disciplined by their betters they were bound to go astray. Democracy must lead to heresy."[394] Indeed, if "all had a spark of the divine in them," where would toleration stop? Was it to extend 'to debar any kind of restraint on anything that any will call religion?'"[395] This awareness that the very rebelliousness they had inspired could also be their own undoing may have motivated Cromwell and the rest of the revolutionary English Puritans to be as authoritarian as Michael Walzer suggests.

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390 *Ibid.,*64; 80.
391 Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution: 1603-1714,* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980,) 142-153.
392 *Ibid.,* 142; 149-153.
393 *Ibid.,*149; 147.
394 *Ibid.,* 144.
395 *Ibid.,*144; 147.

Walzer explains that if Puritanism did "contribute" to liberalism, the connection is extremely indirect and tenuous at best. The Holy Commonwealth, despite being the result of a violent challenge to monarchical authority and of "endless discussions of church government," was nothing if not a rejection of democratic liberal values: Oliver Cromwell and his ilk were "narrow, fanatical, enthusiastic, committed to their 'work,'" and had "little to contribute to the development of either capitalism or liberalism. To expect freedom from their hands is to invite disappointment…They ruthlessly… pursue…*collective control* of themselves, of each other, of all England."[396] Steven Green has gone so far as to insist that Puritanism was so repressive that it played no role (compared to Enlightenment thought) in the creation of American democracy and government–lest capitalist ideology–at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War.[397] Obsessed with curtailing their own inner-anxiety, the original Puritans created a political system that sought perfection in an imperfect world.

The positive upside of this was that in the new world, at least, selflessness was a source of pride: "frugality and industry were the most conspicuous public values."[398] In the years of the Revolution, Calvinists distinguished themselves from Liberals by not solely relying on the "strictly individualistic premises of Lockean theory." These Calvinists eventually promoted a political theory that was "radically communitarian in its assumptions and goals" and, contrary to (but stemming from a similar analysis as) the thesis of Steven Green, sought not just American independence but '" the most equitable, rational, natural mode of civil government' for an independent America.'"[399] Immediately after achieving independence, Americans argued for local (not imported) manufacturing because in addition to reinforcing industry and its moral

396 Walzer, 64; 88-89.
397 Steven K. Green, *Inventing a Christian America: The Myth of the Religious Founding,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, DOI 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190230975.001.0001,) Chapters 1-2; Conclusion.
398 Morgan, 10.
399 Heimert, 18.

benefits, it favored the nation as a whole over the greedy individuals who dabbled in foreign trade at the expense of the newly formed Republic.[400] Thus did the communitarian beliefs of the Puritan ethic, for good or ill, transcend both the English Civil War and the Great Awakening to be relevant during the formative years of the United States.

Chapter Five: The Primary Sources and the Old Light

These traditional elements of Calvinist thought that could not be superseded by the Great Awakening are also apparent in the primary sources analyzed here. Hitchcock, Burr, Marrant, Hammon, and Gronniosaw all expressed some form of solidarity with their culture's traditional, communal values; they did so even at the risk of contradicting the strident individualism they ostensibly championed in other parts of their written documents. Especially amongst the African-American/slave narratives, this affiliation with more communal, hierarchical Calvinist values is made apparent not so much because it is openly acknowledged but because it is grudgingly accepted. However, because two narratives in this particular category–the narratives of Gronniosaw and Marrant–are not as aligned with the Puritan strain of Calvinism as the other

400 Morgan, 38.

primary sources are, they cannot be said to come from quite the same tradition of resolving Arminian and Antinomian ambiguities in the Covenant of Grace.[401] Therefore, while the evangelicalism of Whitefield likely affected Marrant and Gronniosaw in much the same way that the evangelicalism of Edwards and his followers affected Burr, Hitchcock, and Hammon, both groups logically did not have the exact same ties to the old light. Nevertheless: no matter to what degree harsh social reality was an underlying current of their intrinsic religious consciousnesses, Marrant and Gronniosaw, like all the other primary authors in this thesis, recognized at some level the cruel irony of any extrinsically enforced notions that their "calling" was incompatible with their individualism and humanity. These interpretations of a calling were based more on individuality being a result of the calling, rather than the calling being an effect of the individualism emphasized in Calvinism. (This is opposite from the new light perception of a calling.)[402] For African Americans and slaves, these notions manifested as racism. More than just individual instances of adversity to test their faith or strengthen their individuality, this racism was, if not an immensely powerful, constant, institutional force, often inherent in the very hegemonic culture that gave these people their religious sense of individuality in the first place. The essential point remains: there were massive challenges to the individualism that the Awakening inspired, and whether those challenges were also intrinsic or extrinsic to the religion of the Awakening in any specific place, they, together with the object of their challenges, represented a deep cultural tension.

Slave/African American Narratives

401 However, as will be discussed below, these two narratives (and the narrative of Briton Hammon) did still imitate a "captivity narrative" genre that originated specifically with the Puritans (see Rafia Zafar, "Capturing the Captivity: African Americans Among the Puritans," 19-32.) It is important to distinguish between the writing conventions of these narratives and the beliefs of the authors who wrote them.

402 See Chapter Three.

Rafia Zafar's article, "Capturing the Captivity: African Americans Among the Puritans," elucidates how the colonial American slave narratives discussed here (particularly that of John Marrant and of Briton Hammon) along with several others were both problematized by and overcame the conventional racist attitudes of the hegemonic white, Puritan culture that they grew out of. She reveals how the American colonist's frequent clashes with Native American peoples paved the way for a distinctive colonial genre; the typical "conversion narratives" of the Puritans "metamorphosed into the popular captivity narratives."[403] The result was a genre that for its authors and their culture had two goals: evangelicalism and power. Zafar explains, "Whereas a chief purpose of the captivity narratives was to illustrate 'God's providence,' another, equally important element of the captivities written by North American whites lay in the espousal and perpetuation of a white, Protestant ruling class."[404] Thus captivities denied the captors' agency and instead fit in with the classical Puritan ideals of adversity for the sake of discovering or rediscovering faith in God.[405] However, the ultimate aim of Zafar's argument is that when African American slaves (or free blacks) began participating in this unique narrative tradition, they very subtly modified its conventions to fit their own ends. When describing the narrative of Briton Hammon, Zafar explains how although Hammon ostensibly rejected the fact that just like his Native American attackers he did not fit with the Puritan prototype, (he calls the Native Americans '"barbarous and inhuman savages'"), he in fact revealed a closer similitude with them than with his white owners. Zafar points out how once captured, Hammon was treated '"pretty well"'; this is in contrast to Hammon's constant distress as a slave. Indeed, "a one way passage existed between culture groups…Indians adopted both whites and blacks, granting them full status in the community; yet whites who took in convert Indians or blacks did not similarly grant

403 Zafar, "Capturing the Captivity," 20.
404 *Ibid.,* 21.
405 *Ibid.,* 22.

the newcomers equal status…"[406] Another example is the narrative of John Marrant. Here, race is relegated to the far background: the narrative focuses on "the essential alien quality of a charismatic Christian in an unenthusiastic world;" it is not "a paradigm for race relations in a polarized society."[407] However, Marrant was uneasy simply being a tool for white, evangelical propaganda. Zafar tells how in a separate address to the "African Lodge" in Boston, Marrant expressed great awareness and concern over racial issues.[408] Like Hammon, Marrant was actively concerned for his status in the Puritan/Calvinist worldview, however good that worldview seemed for offering him salvation. The result of this concern was simple. Rather than permitting themselves to participate in a culture and a genre that glorified white superiority at their own expense, Marrant, Hammon, Gronniosaw, and other colonial American black authors "helped to construct an African American literary tradition."[409] They were aware of the religious and cultural ambiguities– of both the Puritan Calvinism of the genre they imitated and/or of any other form of Calvinism they had learned– presented them and, rather than attempting to reconcile these ambiguities, created an entirely new literary form.

James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw

There are several other examples of how and why the black authors analyzed in this thesis were hesitant to accept a religion and culture that had already offered them so much. James Gronniosaw's narrative is confusing due to the ambiguity of his expressed feelings towards his masters. Such confusion renders questionable how much of a role Gronniosaw actually had in writing his autobiography, and makes his frequent, apparently passive acceptance of his slave status problematic. At one point, this ambiguity even results in confusion as to whether

406 *Ibid.,* 28.
407 *Ibid.,* 29.
408 *Ibid.,* 31.
409 *Ibid.,* 32.

Gronniosaw is enslaved at all. When describing how he was first brought into slavery from his home in Bornu to the Gold Coast, Gronniosaw portrays the merchant who takes him as being his friend who "would bring me safe back again soon."[410] However, this depiction of the merchant as a "friend" may only be the result of how the merchant contrasted with his partner, who frequently desired to have Gronniosaw killed.[411] It is only after telling how he was spared execution by the king of the "Gold Coast" and (in accordance with the King's "merciful" ordinance that Gronniosaw be sold into slavery instead) sold by the merchant and his partner to the captain of a Dutch ship that Gronniosaw reveals the cruel treatment his "friend" had subjected him to (or allowed him to be subject to–it is rather unclear whether this treatment was the doing of the King or the merchant or both). He reveals: "When I left my dear mother I had a large quantity of gold about me, as is the custom of our country, it was made into rings, and they were linked into one another, and formed into a kind of chain, and so put around my neck, and arms and legs, and a large piece hanging at one ear almost in the shape of a pear."[412] The sympathy of the merchant is brought further into question when Gronniosaw relates how, just prior to selling Gronniosaw to the Dutch captain, the merchant's resolution to not kill Gronniosaw "began to waver, and I was indeed afraid that I should be put to death…I heard them (the merchant and his partner) agree, that, if they could not sell me *then,* they would throw me overboard (parenthesis my own)." Gronniosaw was sold for "two yards of check"; if he made a personal profit from the sale, could the merchant really have been forced by the king to sell Gronniosaw? After suddenly losing his freedom, Gronniosaw was ostensibly suspiciously

410 Gronniosaw, 8.
411 *Ibid.,* 9, 11.
412 *Ibid.,* 11.

obedient and complacent. He claims that he "loved" his master, and that he "endeavored to convince him, by every action, that my only pleasure was to serve him well."[413]

There are very few instances wherein Gronniosaw openly addresses a racial divide between himself and the white Europeans and American colonists who perpetuated his slavery. Much later in the narrative, when he arrives in London, Gronniosaw expands on the racism he had experienced earlier at the hands of a white, lady landlord (see Chapter 5). Upon seeing his future wife for the first time, Gronniosaw writes that he "loved her from that moment…I was almost afraid to indulge this inclination, least she should prove like all the rest I had met in Portsmouth, &c. and which had almost given me a dislike to all white women."[414] Another key instance is when, first aboard the Dutch ship after being bought for the first time, Gronniosaw says he lamented "…that every body and every thing despis'd me because I was black."[415] True, this statement–made in the context of his realization that unlike the Dutch captain he could not read the bible– can be seen as being a setup for Gronniosaw's eventual gratitude when he later learned about Christianity and how to read. However, the irony cannot be forgotten: Gronniosaw's desire to learn how to read and be pious, and thus better fit in with his white masters, was born out of a profound sense of his alienation on racial lines. Finally, Gronniosaw divulges his frustration with Church institutions as well as with white culture. Both represented challenges to the individualist aspects of Calvinism that Gronniosaw found comfort in. When one of his daughters died of a fever, Gronniosaw and his wife (Betty) had difficulty finding a place to bury her because she had never been baptized. They were eventually allowed to bury the baby in a Baptist parish; however, the Parson refused to "read the burial service over her." Gronniosaw's annoyance is evident in his sarcasm: "I told him I did not mind whether he would

413 *Ibid.*
414 *Ibid.,* 24.
415 *Ibid.,* 12.

or not, as the child could not hear it."[416] Considering his abundant devotion, Gronniosaw must have been annoyed with institutionalized Church practices indeed to sacrifice his own daughter's funeral service to his personal indignation.

Briton Hammon

Briton Hammon also showed his complicated relationship to the white status quo. While he was grateful to a Christian God for saving him in all his trials, he was not entirely accepting of the culture that edified him about this omnipotent deity. Hammon does indeed align himself with his white captors by referring to the Native Americans who attack him as "savages" and "villains,"[417] he also refers to his original Massachusetts owner as his "good master." Indeed, when he was reunited with this master (General Winslow), Hammon writes that he "was joyfully verify'd by a happy Sight of his Person, which so overcame me, that I could not speak to him for some Time."[418] In contrast to this (at least according to the editor/s) approbation of his first master and acceptance of Puritan religion is the fact that Hammon attempted to escape slavery under the Governor of Havana three separate times before finally succeeding.[419] In the narrative, Hammon mentions these attempts merely as a matter of fact; he does not explain what about the Governor's treatment of him made him want to escape so desperately, especially considering he (apparently) had objected little to being a slave under his (apparently) benevolent first master in Marshfield, Massachusetts. One would think that the shift from a good master to a cruel one would be worth mentioning. If it were not for this detail that Hammon strove and succeeded to escape from the Governor of Havana, it would seem that the Governor was Hammon's benefactor and friend: he saved Hammon from captivity at the hands of the native Americans,

416 *Ibid.,* 33.
417 Hammon, 6-7.
418 *Ibid.,* 13.
419 *Ibid.,* 9.

and only allowed Hammon to be imprisoned (for not joining a press-gang) for over four and a half years because he was unaware of Hammon's imprisonment in the first place.[420] Thus by looking closely, the reader can discern cracks in Hammon's story that reveal his distaste for a culture that enslaved him and labeled him as inferior.

John Marrant

John Marrant's questionable acceptance of white Protestant culture is revealing not in what he writes, but in his very lack of criticism of that culture. Zafar states that Marrant very infrequently referred to slavery or to the fact that he was black: the one time the word slave appears, "Marrant wields it in the moral sense, as a synonym for one helplessly trapped by things of this world."[421] Furthermore, "only the title page identifies Marrant as a black; only the closing paragraph indicates his sentiments as a man of color."[422] Indeed, given Marrant's closing statement on its own, it seems nearly impossible that Marrant could be black. As part of this closing statement he conceives of Africans as an unconverted, heathen other: "I have now only to intreat the earnest prayers of all my kind Christian friends…that the black nations may be made white in the blood of the Lamb…"[423] Absurdly (because of both a wishful sense of cultural superiority as well as because Marrant is himself black), here whiteness and religious and moral rectitude are conflated. A further denunciation against his belief in the evangelical, individualist strain of Calvinism is the fact that Marrant was pressed aboard a British ship during the Revolutionary war to serve as a musician. This suggests that Marrant was more tied to the warring power that stressed obedience and authority than to the one that emphasized righteous rebellion.[424] Of course, Marrant's willing participation in the war is dubious at best; even so, his

420 *Ibid.,* 7-8.
421 Zafar, 29.
422 *Ibid.,* 30.
423 Marrant, 38.
424 *Ibid.,* 36-38.

religion never inspired enough of a revolutionary impulse for him to desert. Marrant never tells his true political loyalties.

Nonetheless, Zafar is partially incorrect in her analysis–though the essential point remains. Aside from the aforementioned (see Chapter 5) instance towards the end of the narrative in which Marrant expresses sympathy–sympathy that, because of his bold accusation of the slave's master, borders on solidarity– for some slaves whom he had preached to being whipped,[425] another example that Zafar neglects where Marrant hints at his blackness is when he discusses how all the various Native American tribes he visited "are full of resentment" "when they recollect, that the white people drove them from the American shores…"[426] However much he was assimilated into white culture, Marrant still distanced himself from the Native's oppressors by calling them "white people," not "we." Marrant, like Gronniosaw, Hammon, and New Light ideology itself, was inextricably bound to the Old light systems of power and authority; he was, at least on a subliminal level, resentful of those systems.

Esther Burr

Many of Esther Burr's written descriptions of how she perceived both herself and her faith carry strong old light undertones. If her father eventually questioned the blind, passionate piety he himself perpetuated, Esther Burr could express religious ambivalence too. Furthermore, Burr lived (and wrote) in the aftermath of the Great Awakening, when colonists had had more time to reflect on the movement and control its energy. Burr's letters reveal her many nuanced takes on the traditional values of her Puritan forbears: the tonal difference between how she discussed religion when writing to her parents as opposed to Sarah Prince Gill hints that she may not have sincerely believed the traditionalist things she said (she must have been somewhat

425 *Ibid.,* 32-33.
426 *Ibid.,* 25.

insincere to either her closest friend or her family–the much greater abundance of letters to Sarah Gill inclines me to believe the latter); certain letters imply that she in fact explicitly approved of patriarchal values; finally, several letters seem to cover her underlying uncertainty about her own faith–if that faith rejected her individuality. This last set of examples goes beyond accentuating Burr's innate depravity; not just a foil to the incredible, redemptive power of God, it expresses Burr's struggle to even accept all of Puritanism.

Any reader of Burr's letters does not need to see to whom each letter was addressed to detect an immediate difference between the letters Burr wrote to Sarah Prince Gill, and the letters she wrote to her mother and father. The letters Burr wrote her parents were, most obviously, significantly more formal. This differentiated writing style in of itself underscores Burr's strong respect for authority and hierarchy, no matter her new light impulses. In a letter to Jonathan Edwards dated November 8, 1757, Burr expresses an unquestioning willingness to accept God's will that stands in contrast to the self-doubt Burr exposed in her letters to Sarah Gill. She tells her father that, when her son (Aaron Burr jr) was gravely ill, she "was innabled to Resighn the Ch[ild]…with the gre[at]est freedom–God shewed me that the Child w[as] not my own but His, and that he had a right to recall what he had lent…He not only kept me from complaining but comforted me by ennabling me to offer up the Child by Faith, I think if ever I acted Faith."[427] Strange utterances for a mother who, over a year earlier when Aaron was also sick, had compared her fright for his life to "the agonies of death" and had claimed that "god *made* me submit!"[428] (Emphasis my own). Interestingly–and perhaps not at all coincidentally–Burr gives another measurement of her absolute faith and trust in God in the letter from November 8. She claims to have had a transcendent spiritual experience that hinted at the joys of heaven: "…one

427 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Jonathan Edwards,* November 2, 1757.

428 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* October 8, 1756. I also use this example in the section on Esther Burr and the New Light.

Eve…my soul was carried out in such longing desires after this glorious state…I was so transported and my soul carried out in such Eager desires after Perfection and the full enjoyment of God and to serve him uninterruptedly…I think dear Sir I had that Night a foretaste of Heaven…" Might this have been her conversion experience? If it was, the fact that Burr only described it in a letter to her father–the leader of the Great Awakening in New England–makes it hard to verify if she actually felt the strong passion for heaven she describes. Burr goes on in the same letter to proudly explain, ironically, how she has overcome Satan's temptations (specifically pride and a questioning of God's power) so that she could renew her faith. She ostensibly believes that God has been "fitting me for himself."[429] The unequivocal acceptance of faith and the self-image of being a perfect model of Puritan conversion offered here are too good to be true. Rather, it seems Burr was seeking the approval of a father whom she deeply admired.

One month earlier, Burr wrote to her mother, Sarah Pierpont Edwards. This letter and the one to Burr's father reveal how Burr's emotional reaction to the death of her husband manifested itself religiously by Burr (ostensibly) becoming increasingly accepting of God's absolute control over fate. Indeed, Burr's increased faith in the face of Aaron Burr junior's sickness was likely an aspect of her reaction to Aaron Burr senior's death. Written before Aaron Burr jr became sick (but after Aaron Burr senior died), the letter to Sarah Edwards bears no mention of this mishap and further proves that the way Burr dealt with her son's sickness and her husband's death was– at least on the surface– one and the same. However, under surface level it is quite suspicious that Burr would so easily and quickly embrace losing two of the people she loved most (as revealed in the earlier section on Burr's daily life). If she clearly struggled constantly with her own depravity, how could she be so accepting of death? In the letter to her mother, Burr writes that although He has "cast down," God is nonetheless "an all-sufficient God…I have been enable to

429 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Jonathan Edwards,* November 2, 1757.

cast my care upon him, and have found great peace and calmness in my mind…God has helped me to review my past and present mercies, with…thankfulness."[430] Besides helping her deal with earthly grief, God apparently helped Burr refocus on ascetic goals. In the same letter, she adds: "God…has given me such a sense of the vanity of the world…the world vanishes out of sight! Heavenly and eternal things appear much more real and important, than ever before."[431] This rejection of mortal life is unusual too, given Burr's participation in a literary genre that esteemed descriptions of everyday life–just as the Puritanism this genre mimicked also valued non-asceticism. Of course the Puritans always viewed Heaven and the afterlife with greater approbation than their sin-ridden mortal lives; notwithstanding, Burr's ready and (according to this letter) absolute rejection of all earthly pleasures seems hasty. It is clearly a symptom of grief more than an actual expression of piety, and is therefore not an entirely accurate reflection of Burr's religiosity. It hides a rejection of the hierarchical power dynamics (explicitly those between God and men) that always accompanied Puritanism's emphasis on the individual. Burr's quick acceptance of God's will and rejection of everything temporal raises questions of how much she actually believed what she wrote to her parents, and how much she questioned the faith she seemingly believed in so fervently.

The possibility that Burr took issue with certain aspects of traditional Puritan values is made more concrete by evaluating some of the letters she wrote to Sarah Prince Gill. In a letter from October 23, 1756, Burr gives some surprisingly feminist advice regarding Gill's indecision to marry a certain man. She tries to empower Gill: "Upon the Whole–The important point must turn here. If upon mature deliberation and serious consideration you cant think of spending your days with the Gentlemen with Complacency and delight, *say No*…you can only determine for

430 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Pierpont Edwards,* October 7, 1757.
431 *Ibid.*

yourself."[432] This example conforms to the fact of Burr's involvement with a progressive "Sisterhood." Whereas the letters to Burr's parents must be read ironically if they really represent Burr's criticism of conservative Puritan elements, the statement here is a more explicit rejection of the colonial patriarchy. Burr ultimately believed her friend's well-being and happiness was more important than her being married, even though for the time and place Gill was old to not be married.[433] Here, in rebuffing a patriarchal culture that presumably scoffed at unmarried women, it seems that Burr was not always inclined to adhere to the traditional power structures inherent in conservative elements of Puritan culture.

However, at the same time there are multiple instances in Burr's letters–instances that cannot be construed as exceptions to the rule because they are written to Sarah Gill instead of to her parents– in which she is unequivocally supportive of women being contained to subservient roles in the domestic sphere. Two days before the aforementioned letter, she tells Gill "…*Let the Wife see that she Reverence her Husband*…"[434] Apparently, Burr believed that even though a woman ought to have agency in choosing her husband, that agency should be restricted once the choice is made. More anti-feminist rhetoric occurs in a letter written to Gill on September 2, 1757, when Burr tries to organize a rendezvous with Gill: "send word by the first Post after you receiv[e…] whether you are your own or at your own d[is]posal or have chose a master or lord to disp[ose] of you…"[435] Even more embracing of the colonial patriarchy is the comparison Burr makes in another letter where she praises "Mrs. Hubbard" for being happy in her marriage. Here, Burr is likely criticizing Gill for still not being married: "It gives me a peculiar pleasure to hear of happiness in that Relation–for alas! how many poor creatures are like Samsons Foxes,

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432 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* October 23, 1756.
433 Editor, Introduction".
434 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* October 21, 1756.
435 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* September 2, 1757.

unhappy."[436] Specific biblical allusion aside, the point remains that Burr compared herself and other women to animals that are owned by men.

What was the result of Burr's ambiguity towards traditional values? She was unable to decide her opinion on these conservative (as distinct from new light, evangelical) Puritan values perhaps best represented by the Arminian heresy. The examples thus far only indicate that such traditional values were aspects of Burr's piety; aspects that made that piety more problematic and less uniform than an exclusively new light approach to her letters can reveal. Several other instances illustrate how Burr was caught between embracing the faith of her ancestors and rejecting a creed that, while supporting her individuality, also managed to undermine her value as a human being. Burr's adherence to strong communal values predisposed her to suppress her individual self. For instance, while referring to her fears of the French and Indian War, Burr shows her sense of community: "I am very glad to see people in any measure awake with a concern about…our popish enimies…What blessed times it would be if all were as much ingaged in conservation about the grand concerns of their never dieing souls…"[437] In another letter, Burr implicitly reveals her rejection of a conservatism that, in its ascetic emphasis, refutes her individual experience of reality. Burr starts by aligning herself with these ascetic values: "How *vain and empty* is the World and all its injoyments. Tis enough to make one weary of life and all its charms…" She then immediately switches to acknowledging her privileged social status and describing her earthly love for Mr. Burr (as oppose to her self-proclaimed, heavenly, platonic love for Sarah Gill). Burr continues, "…but just now it han't many charms to me, altho' few have so many of its comforts and conveniences allotted to 'em as I have, nay I believe

436 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* March, 1757.
437 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* January 2, 1757.

nobody. Do you think I would change my *good Mr Burr* for…all things on the Erth? *No sure!*"[438] In writing as in life, Burr was unable to escape the real world.

A letter from December 13, 1755 further illustrates Burr's attachment to reality. It conveys a sense of hopelessness at living in a world wherein faith is the only means to happiness. The sentiment is in direct contrast to the self-empowerment she implied in her very act of writing and that she strove for via the sisterhood. Her piety takes the form of a burden rather than a gift: "O how good tis to get near the Lord! I long to live near him always–nor is it living unless I do– No tis *death*–Worse than *death*…"[439] The focus is on the consequences of not-believing rather than the reward of piety, and the tone is exaggerated just enough that it seems Burr is merely repeating what she had been taught to believe, not necessarily believing herself what she wrote. For her New Year's resolutions on January 2 of 1757, Burr makes note of the "Numberless Mercies" she was granted by God throughout the year, and then states that she doesn't "want to live unless I can live more to the glory of God and do more good…"[440] At another point, Burr wrote on how she felt unable to achieve this goal of living close to God; strange that she would have trouble finding a way to be near God, if the alternative was "worse than death." She writes: "How little do I Love God! How cold my service–Why does he offer me to sin away any more such precious seasons?"[441] In another instance, Burr expresses a surprising–even to herself–lack of faith: "Sabbath. Out all day but so dull in Body and soul that I could not give close attention which troubled me some but not enough."[442] This melancholy attitude gives weight to Burr's frequent expressions of self-depravity, such as this one in a letter from April 11, 1757: "This

438 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* February 15, 1755.
439 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* December 13, 1755.
440 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* January 2, 1757.
441 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* August 8, 1756.
442 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* August 7, 1757.

morn feel affected with Gods goodness to a sinf[ul] Worm of the dust."[443] Burr knew she was sinful, but more importantly she knew that her sense of that sinfulness was also inadequate. She must have felt some degree of frustration if even in this respect she failed to live up to Puritan standards. Humility doubtless played a huge role in what Burr wrote; however, the fact that the letters were personal documents meant to reflect Burr's real feelings implies that she actually had considerable trouble coming to terms with the strictness of Puritanism. Taken together, all of these examples suggest that Burr's faith was often forced and not the genuine expression of religious love and individualism that some instances seem to indicate. Her piety was not always a personal incentive but was often done largely out of fear; thus was it not entirely her own and not entirely genuine. If Burr's religion was indeed not her own, it was inflicted on her by a higher power; it fit into the authoritative mode, recognizable to colonial women and ecclesiastical structural systems, of unquestioning obedience.

Justin Hitchcock

However much Justin Hitchcock was a proponent of the American Revolution, he did not fit into a one-size-fits-all mold. Underlying Hitchcock's progressivism laid resilient traditional values; he falls in the middle of Opal's social spectrum. As the years of his life suggest, (1752-1822),[444] Hitchcock doesn't quite fit into either a pre-revolutionary traditionalism or a post-revolution progressiveness. Even though Hitchcock supported the new light and the American Revolution to a certain degree, he also represented a particular breed of Calvinist Puritanism that was especially adept at retaining conservative values. He was a Revolutionary Republican, not a Liberal Democrat.[445] When a Unitarian Pastor joined the Deerfield Church in 1807, Hitchcock

443 Esther Edwards Burr, *From Esther Edwards Burr to Sarah Prince Gill,* April 11, 1757.
444 Sheldon, *A History of Deerfield,* 209.
445 My thanks to Bryan Rommel-Ruiz for these precise political definitions.

chose to remain a deacon to counter the "liberal heresies" of this pastor.[446] Fortunately for Hitchcock, most of the laity did not completely accept Unitarianism: '"According to an early Unitarian, many eighteenth-century ministers 'were more liberal than the people to whom they ministered."'[447] Hitchcock even fluctuated in his support of the Revolution. At one point in the autobiography, he practically acknowledges his personal difficulty in reconciling his traditional Calvinist background with the rhetoric of rebellion: "…soon after their settlement here the people in England rose against their Government…it is not wondered at that they should not be willing to submit to all the exactions of a government in which they had no voice…yet as the colonies were British subjects it must be allowed that they owed allegiance to that government."[448] Hitchcock had trouble accepting the new light, anti-hierarchical, rebellious connotations.

Much of Hitchcock's political discourse lay outside the Revolution. Shays' Rebellion is a window into how well Hitchcock conformed to local political notions and social values immediately following the conclusion of the Revolutionary War. Robert Taylor's *Western Massachusetts in the Revolution* describes this tumultuous event. Taylor portrays how the rural inhabitants of western Massachusetts came to define themselves in relationship to the American Revolution; he explains how, ironically, this definition nurtured a willingness to take arms against the government that had engendered such a self-definition in the first place.[449] He begins by explaining how western Massachusetts was economically distinctive from the rest of the state. Besides participating in a local economy and in agriculture, towns such as Deerfield specialized in trading lumber, livestock, and flax. They "specialized enough to warrant the title of an

446 Opal, *Beyond the Farm,* 79.
447 *Ibid.,* 29.
448 Justin Hitchcock, *A Sort of Autobiography,* 14.
449 Robert Taylor, *Western Massachusetts in the Revolution*, (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1954).

economic region."[450] In addition to other factors such as sheer geographic distance, this trade added to western Massachusetts' distinctive local flavor; ironically, it also tied the region to the rest of the colonies.[451] This connection manifested itself politically, too: when Great Britain oppressed New England, all New England colonists suffered.

Taylor argues that western Massachusetts did not start to embrace the patriot cause until Great Britain decided in 1772 to have absolute control over the salaries of Judges on the Superior Court. After the passage of the Intolerable Acts in 1774, (particularly the Massachusetts Government Act)[452] western Massachusetts fully supported the Whigs. These acts, among other things, took a large amount of local government control from the colonists and gave it to the British government. Councilors, judges, and jurors were all controlled by the "crown," and the governor (appointed by the "crown") was given greater jurisdictional power.[453] Taylor argues that having once united with the other colonists in their search for independence, western Massachusetts put the ideals of the revolution into its own hands: "Once the western farmers had grasped the principles advocated by the Whigs and enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, they insisted that these principles should apply at home as well as against Great Britain."[454] This attitude would quickly propel these rural farmers into open rebellion.

Taylor enumerates the various factors that led to Shays' Rebellion. Besides heavy taxes and a lack of currency–which were in fact due to factors such as the post-war debt, a lack of cultivated lands, and a poor export trade–[455] the people of western Massachusetts were frustrated at "the expensiveness of the state government and particularly of its judicial machinery…This distrust

450 Taylor, *Western Massachusetts in the Revolution,* 10.
451 *Ibid.,* 3-10.
452 Barbara Matthews helped on this point.
453 Taylor, 62-63.
454 *Ibid.,* 73.
455 *Ibid.,* 104.

fed upon the examples of inefficiency and costly administration apparent to every man in his county."[456] This combination of an inept judicial system with the fact that many people were going to court over their debts was a recipe for disaster. Deerfield was one of many western towns that attempted to address these issues and demand change; on September 29, 1783 it was the site of a "rump convention" among seven towns.[457] However, when it came to armed revolt Deerfield was one of three other towns in the region (Hadley, Northampton, and Hatfield) from which came a total of only four or five insurrectionists.[458] Indeed, many citizens from these towns actively opposed Shays' Rebellion–Hitchcock among them. During the rebellion, Hitchcock "joined a town militia force raised in the late summer of 1786 to protect county courts…In this sense, Justin Hitchcock took up arms against his former neighbors from the hill towns of western Massachusetts." By virtue of his trade, Hitchcock was not in the same tax-induced, desperate social straits as most farmers: "…his hat-making venture landed him in the middle of the debt chain, not on the hind end of it."[459] Hitchcock's autobiography reveals his awareness of the growing tensions in western Massachusetts after the war and his role in resisting Shays' Rebellion.

Even before the economic crisis of the post-war debt, Hitchcock was highly attuned to his financial world. He notes the inflation that occurred as a result of the war; in 1779 "The paper money had more depreciated and was running down fast. Congress in order to carry on the war had issued so much that the country was full of it…it passed however at some rate or other…The paper money having so much depreciation that it was difficult to do business."[460] As town clerk in Deerfield, Hitchcock paid attention to taxes. He writes that in 1781–when he was town clerk

456 *Ibid.,* 113.
457 *Ibid.,* 122.
458 *Ibid.,* 147.
459 *Ibid.,* 40.
460 Justin Hitchcock, *A Sort of Autobiography,* 22.

for the third time in a row–"Taxes were high and I had in addition to the ordinary Taxes to pay two class taxes for procureing man for the Army."[461] It is unsurprising that Hitchcock understood the circumstances that sparked rebellion by the year 1786. He knew that a lack of export trade and a huge post-war debt were at the root of the problem; furthermore, he was keenly aware of how the colonists in his vicinity blamed the government for their economic struggles:

> We had a heavy debt to pay. And the trade that now opened upon us drained off the money the people had lived so long with but little trade that they were destitute of money articles of necessary use…Our publick affairs wore a very gloomy aspect. Money was scarce taxes called for often. And people getting into debt at the stores. And a spirit of insubordination began to show itself and the Government complained of as the cause tho it was evident they did all they could to ease the people of their burdens but they had no power to do it.[462]

Hitchcock devotes much of the next couple pages to describing his involvement in Shays' Rebellion. As Taylor confirms, Hitchcock was with a force of roughly forty armed men from Deerfield who went to defend the Supreme Court in Springfield against 1200-1300 insurrectionists. Although he wasn't at Springfield in 1787 to witness the climactic confrontation between General Shepperd and Shays' forces, Hitchcock clearly knew the intimate details of this bloody event;[463] he lists "Spiecr of Leydon, Hunder of Shelburn, Root of Bernardston, and Webster of Gill" as the four insurrectionists killed.[464]

After the defeat of Shays' Rebellion in 1787, the citizens of western Massachusetts remained slightly at odds with the federal government. As revealed by debates over the ratification of the Constitution, many rural farmers remained disgruntled with how the government favored more populated areas. They resented how much the Constitution was biased towards eastern seaboard, mercantile interests.[465] Hitchcock did support liberalism and independence, but like most of his

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461 *Ibid.,* 27.
462 *Ibid.,* 29.
463 Taylor, *Western Massachusetts in the Revolution*, 30-31.
464 Hitchcock, *A Sort of Autobiography,* 31.
465 Taylor, *Western Massachusetts in the Revolution,* 171, 176-177.

immediate community in Deerfield, his revolutionist tendencies stopped firmly short of anarchy. He was too committed to the new American government and the ideals enshrined in it to ever risk its destruction. He sympathized with the growing pains of a new nation. Hitchcock did not limit his political ideology to the borders of the newly formed United States; after both the Revolution and Shay's Rebellion, he turned his conservatism towards France and its own violent revolution.

Within the autobiography, Hitchcock virulently criticizes the French Revolution. He claims reading about the actions of "the filth of France" was enough to "chill the blood of a stoic."[466] However, Hitchcock reserves most of his vituperations for his 1798 Fourth of July speech at Barnard Tavern. He calls his fellow citizens to action, and he denotes France's justifications in asking the colonists for assistance in its revolution. He also expresses how he is afraid of the increasingly popular and Jeffersonian Democratic Party because of its sympathies with the French cause. Undoubtedly, France's help was essential to the success of the American Revolution; however, Hitchcock believes that France only helped in order to get revenge on and weaken her longtime archrival, Great Britain. He goes so far as to imagine the worst-case scenario: in the event of war with France, France would attack Florida first and enlist the help of Native Americans shortly thereafter.[467] Using his highly prized rhetorical skills, Hitchcock pleads for courage if war becomes a reality: "…to surrender what is so dear to us without a Manly struggle would be but an acknowledgement of the Justice of what we might suffer in consequence of such Pusilanimous cowardly conduct–we shall find it soon enough to part with our privileges unless we cannot avoid it." [468]

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466 Hitchcock, *A Sort of Autobiography,* 34.

467 Justin Hitchcock, *1798 Address,* (Deerfield, MA: Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Museum, Papers of Justin Hitchcock, Folder 7.)

468 *Ibid.,* 9.

Although inciting and exaggerated from a modern perspective, Hitchcock's diatribes remain valuable. They reflect real fears and, more importantly, a continued interest in politics even after the conclusion of the Revolutionary War. In essence, then, Hitchcock was undoubtedly influenced by the new light of the Great Awakening; nonetheless, the nature of that influence had strong traditional undertones. Hitchcock was a self-proclaimed Calvinist who also, in placing great value on individuality, supported the Revolution and liked to be politically involved. Yet much of that political involvement was reminiscent of the 17th century English Puritan's urges to take control of a chaotic world. For Hitchcock, individuality stopped being an ideal as soon as it challenged the integrity and order of a community; thus to him united rebellion against Great Britain was good, but any form of internal divisiveness (i.e. in the newly formed United States or in France) was bad.

Conclusion

The Great Awakening fundamentally impacted the American Revolution. Re-ignited by the spark of intensely religious piety that had always been prevalent in North American colonial history, the colonists realized afresh their individual value and agency; this realization was manifest and made evident in both their personal reminiscences and their public engagement. A common social fabric, the evangelical Calvinism (and in many instances Calvinist Puritanism) that characterized the Awakening was felt by a plethora of social groups. When it came time to declare war against Great Britain, the colonists were well prepared to channel their re-invigorated, emotional sense of individualism towards the revolutionary cause.

And yet, no matter its radical impact, the Awakening was still based on earlier cultural norms and religious thought. It did not express entirely new ideas. Thus, like a tenacious string, traditional Puritan and Calvinist religious and cultural values that focused less on the individual remained attached to the values of the Awakening; the 18th century colonists could never completely escape their past. However much evangelical religion justified individuality and

eventually rebellion, it also pressured the colonists to obey a 'natural' hierarchy. Even during the war, the colonists were caught in the ambiguity of an incredibly complex religious ideology.

Whether via the pre-war personal letters of a colonial woman with their expressions of political awareness and daily life, the autobiography of a colonial man who lived through the Revolutionary War and Shays' Rebellion, or the white-edited autobiographies of several African Americans (most of whom were slaves) ranging from the early-middle 18th century to the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, this thesis has attempted to demonstrate the American colonist's underlying religious ambiguities in the years before, during, and after the American Revolution. In my analysis, some sources (the strongest example is Esther Burr's letters) seem to emphasize the effects of the new light aspects of the Great Awakening over proving the resilient liberalism of Calvinism present in the same movement; in other sources, (most prominently Hitchcock's autobiography) the opposite is true. Nevertheless, the two tendencies coexist in some sort of ratio in each of the primary sources examined in the thesis. Though representing a relatively wide spread in terms of time and perspective, this thesis has limited itself to people who lived–within colonial North America, for at least one part of their lives–in modern day Massachusetts, New York, Charleston, and New Jersey. While there is some geographic variety here that gets outside the classic Puritan New England arena of study, the thesis obviously still does not represent most of the 18th century North American colonies. It has concentrated on different types of people at different moments in a certain time frame; applying the same argument to people who lived in other parts of colonial America (particularly the Middle and Southern colonies) is the task of another paper and, perhaps, another historian.

Given the popularity of Christianity in all of the colonies, and given the fact that the Revolutionary War was a colony-wide endeavor, I would assume that a similar argument holds

for other parts of colonial North America. The key difference between this thesis and further explorations of the same topic–the ambiguous role of religion in the Revolution–will lie in the particular religion examined. To do this requires a more precise knowledge of the extent to which the Awakening spread; not just a vague knowledge of the colonies and cities that Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and other evangelical clergy travelled to, but specific data on the range of these preacher's published works and as much personal religious testimony as possible from the time period. Only then can we determine the true impact of evangelical Calvinism on the colonies in the years between the Great Awakening and the Revolution.

Just as Michael Walzer has questioned the connections between Puritanism, liberalism, and capitalism, so too is the direct connection between the Calvinist and Puritan impetuses to rebellion and the actual structure of American society and government tenuous. Just as, according to Walzer, the Marxists were mistaken to misinterpret a revolutionary ideology (Puritanism) as a calculated response to the chaos of social change, so too is it wrong to assume that the revolutionary ideology inspired by the Great Awakening is directly compatible with the enlightened, rational early American government.[469] Steven Green reminds us of the fundamentally repressive, closed nature of the early New England Puritan communities; unlike Enlightenment values, the Puritan ethic cannot be traced to specific aspects of America's democracy.[470] Of course liberal ideas mattered in the framing of the American constitution, and they may have even inspired revolution on a deeper level than sheer intellectualism; however, in order to shift from the traditional, repressive Calvinism of their forbears to the progressivism that engendered the revolution, the Puritans and other colonists had to work within the same religious framework that had defined their and their ancestor's lives. Change had to come from within. It

469 See Walzer, *"Puritanism as a Revolutionary Ideology,"* 59-90, in Chapter Four of this thesis.
470 See Green, *Inventing a Christian America,* 4-20.

was precisely this inner transformative process, catalyzed by the Great Awakening and crystallized in the framing of the Constitution, that gave the Revolution and its values an enduring, powerful effect.

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