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WINTER 2024

The Puritans

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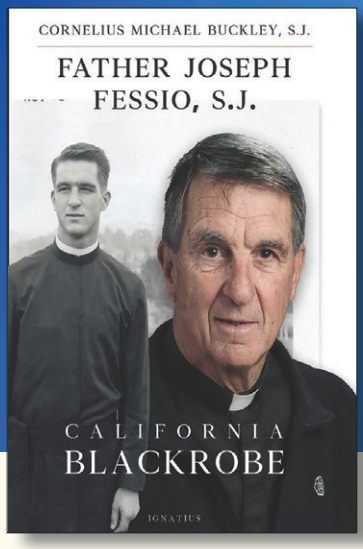

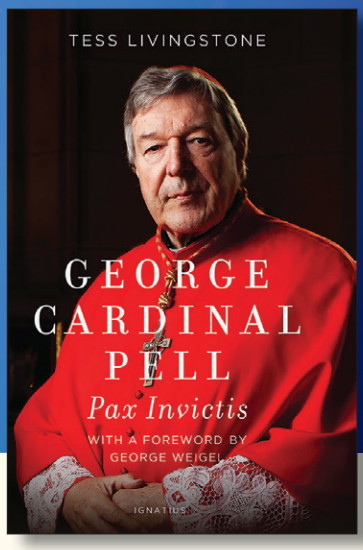

◆ FATHER JOSEPH FESSIO, S.J.
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This in-depth, page-turning biography of the founder of Ignatius Press is written by one of Fessio's earliest Jesuit mentors, historian **Fr. Cornelius Buckley, S.J.**

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"No one has impacted the Catholic Church in America and beyond like Father Fessio. This delightful biography is a must-read."
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This definitive biography of the great Australian Cardinal by veteran journalist **Tess Livingstone** traces his life from childhood in Australia to his role as the Vatican treasurer; through his trials, unjust imprisonment, and exoneration, to his untimely passing away in January 2023.

His huge legacy includes rebuilding Church precincts in Melbourne and Sydney, revitalizing seminary formation, founding Catholic universities, leading Australia's Catholic foreign aid agency, and heading World Youth Day 2008. From a weekly column in Australia's largest Sunday newspaper to bestselling books and scholarly lectures, he has left a trove of writings. This book includes snippets of some of the best of them and captures his ideas, wit, and personality.

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"George Pell, was a giant — on the football field, as a bishop leading the flock in Australia, as a brilliant intellect, and in his love of Jesus whom he served with vigor every day of his extraordinary life."
— **Cardinal Timothy Dolan**, Archbishop of New York

"Cardinal Pell was extraordinary in every sense: a man of sacrificial faith, superior intelligence, and tremendous evangelical energy. Livingstone has captured all these qualities, in this marvelous biography."
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THE ISSUE THIS TIME BY ANTHONY SACRAMONE

In the Spike Lee joint *Malcolm X*, a convict named Baines highlights for the not-yet-converted Malcolm Little some of the connotations of the word *black*: "destitute of light; devoid of color; enveloped in darkness, hence utterly dismal or gloomy…soiled with dirt, foul," etc. The point was that it was virtually impossible not to internalize the enculturated negatives attached to certain words when those words are attached to you.

Now let's do *puritanical*. From the Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus: *moralistic, pietistic, strait-laced, tight-laced, stuffy, starchy, prissy, prudish…narrow-minded, censorious, sententious; austere, severe, spartan, ascetic, hair-shirt, abstemious;* informal *goody-goody*.

Fortunately, we humans are more than the sum of our modifiers. This is especially true of a religious campaign that transcended national boundaries and traditional ecclesiastical commitments, and whose theology reached back to the church fathers and pointed forward to renewal movements in the 21st century.

What exactly is/was Puritanism? Reformed Anglican J.I. Packer, who will be heard from again, offered this in his superb *A Quest for Godliness*:

> Puritanism was essentially a movement for church reform, pastoral renewal and evangelism, and spiritual revival; and in addition—indeed, as a direct expression of its zeal for God's honour—it was a world-view, a total Christian philosophy, in intellectual terms a Protestantised and updated medievalism, and in terms of spirituality of reformed monasticism outside the cloister and away from monkish vows.

In short, they were "visible saints" who wanted the visible church, in which sat the reprobate and false believers, to resemble more the invisible church, composed solely of God's Elect. To do this, Elizabeth I's Church of England, to start, needed to be purged of the "Dumme Doggs, Unskilful sacrificing priestes, Destroyeing Drones, or rather Caterpillars of the Word" (thanks, Edmund S. Morgan). In their place would be posted pastors who would preach a purified gospel in a streamlined sanctuary unencumbered by semi-idolatrous images to a covenanted congregation.

In other words, party animals they were not. Satires like "Zealous Knowlittle, a Boxmaker," *A Knack to Know a Knave*, and Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* and more serious fare such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* hammered that home. And yet, Puritans enjoyed their ale and a good smoke, and were prolific writers in their own right.

In fact, if I were to add one more essay to our list, it would be "The Puritan as Diarist." According to Ellen McKay of Queen's University, Belfast:

> Diary writing was stimulated by a growing "self-awareness" amongst the population of England during the course of the seventeenth century. Scholars such as Roy Porter, amongst others, place diary writing amongst the factors pointing to a growing individualism in European societies from the Renaissance period.…This individualism was most notable amongst those styled as "Puritans." The onus placed upon individual thought and self-awareness was disseminated through the public psyche by the preaching of the Puritan ideology of individual responsibility for salvation. Historians such as William Haller have highlighted the importance placed upon keeping a diary as a spiritual record or account book of sins, good works and daily meditations. According to Haller "the diary…became the Puritan substitute for the confessional."

I hope this edition of *Religion & Liberty* will begin to unpack a most complicated people whose legacy abides—for good and for ill.

Religion&Liberty

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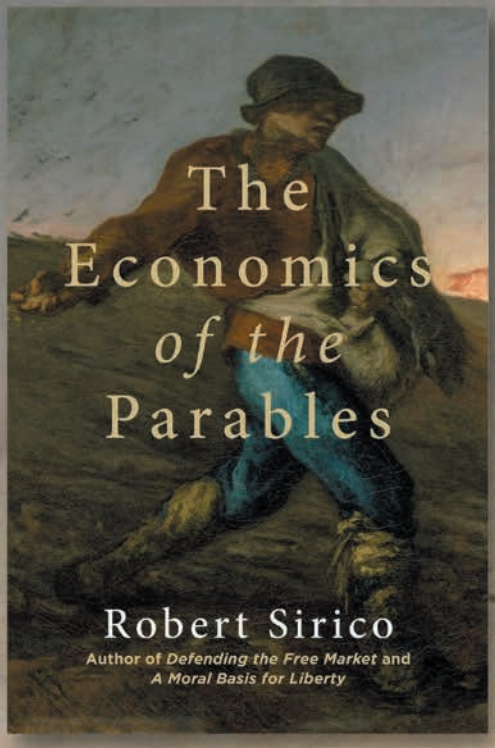
NEW FROM REV. ROBERT A. SIRICO

"The wisdom evident in this book will reward every reader, as it has rewarded me." – Robert G. Kennedy



Libraries are filled with books on the parables of Christ, and rightly so. Two millennia later, the New Testament parables remain ubiquitous, and yet few have stopped to glean wisdom from one of Christ's most frequently addressed subjects: money.

In "The Economics of the Parables," Rev. Robert Sirico reveals the modern preconceptions that obscure the timeless economic insights. Thirteen central stories—including "The Laborers in the Vineyard," "The Rich Fool," "The Five Talents," and "The Faithful Steward"—serve as his guide.

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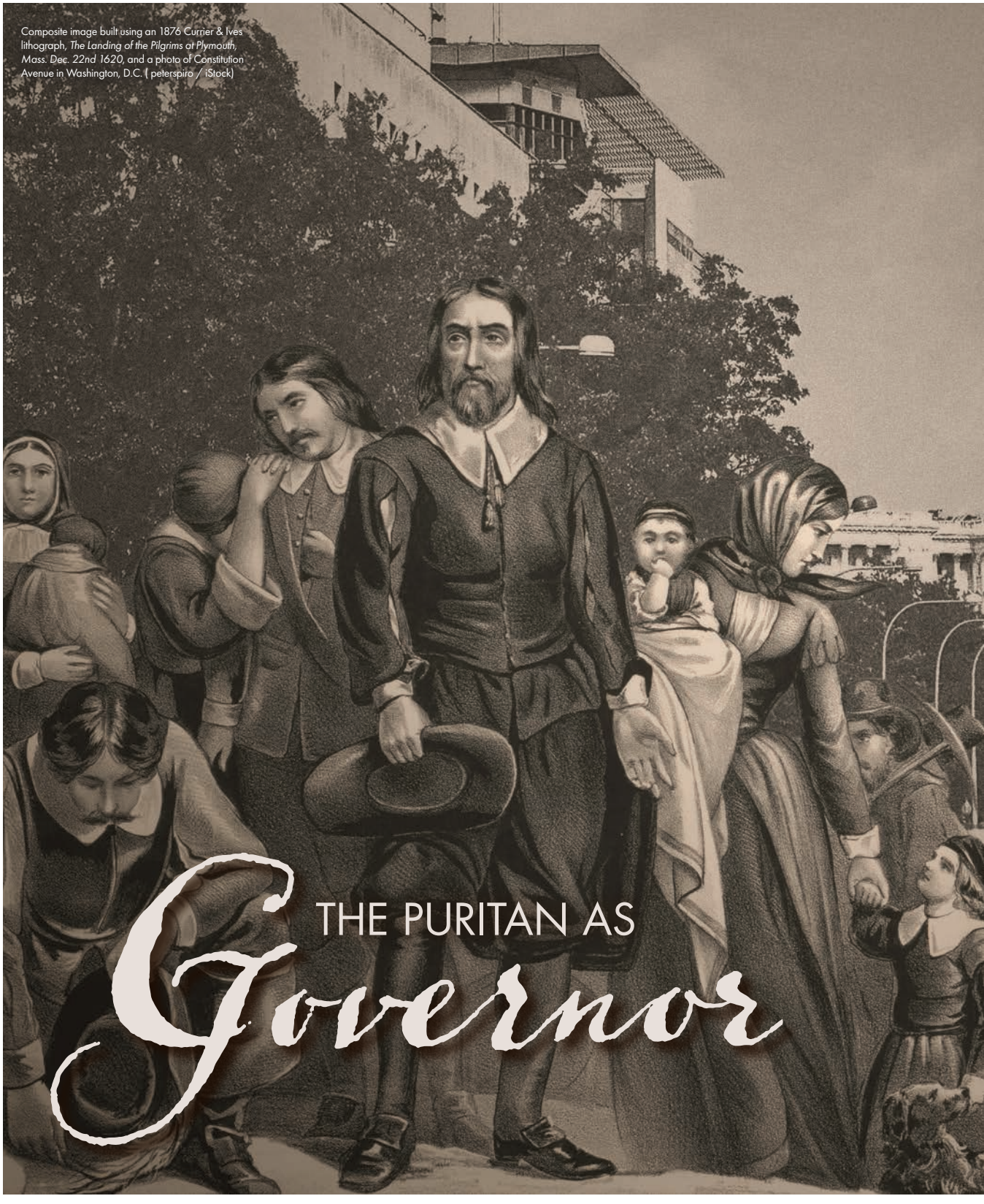
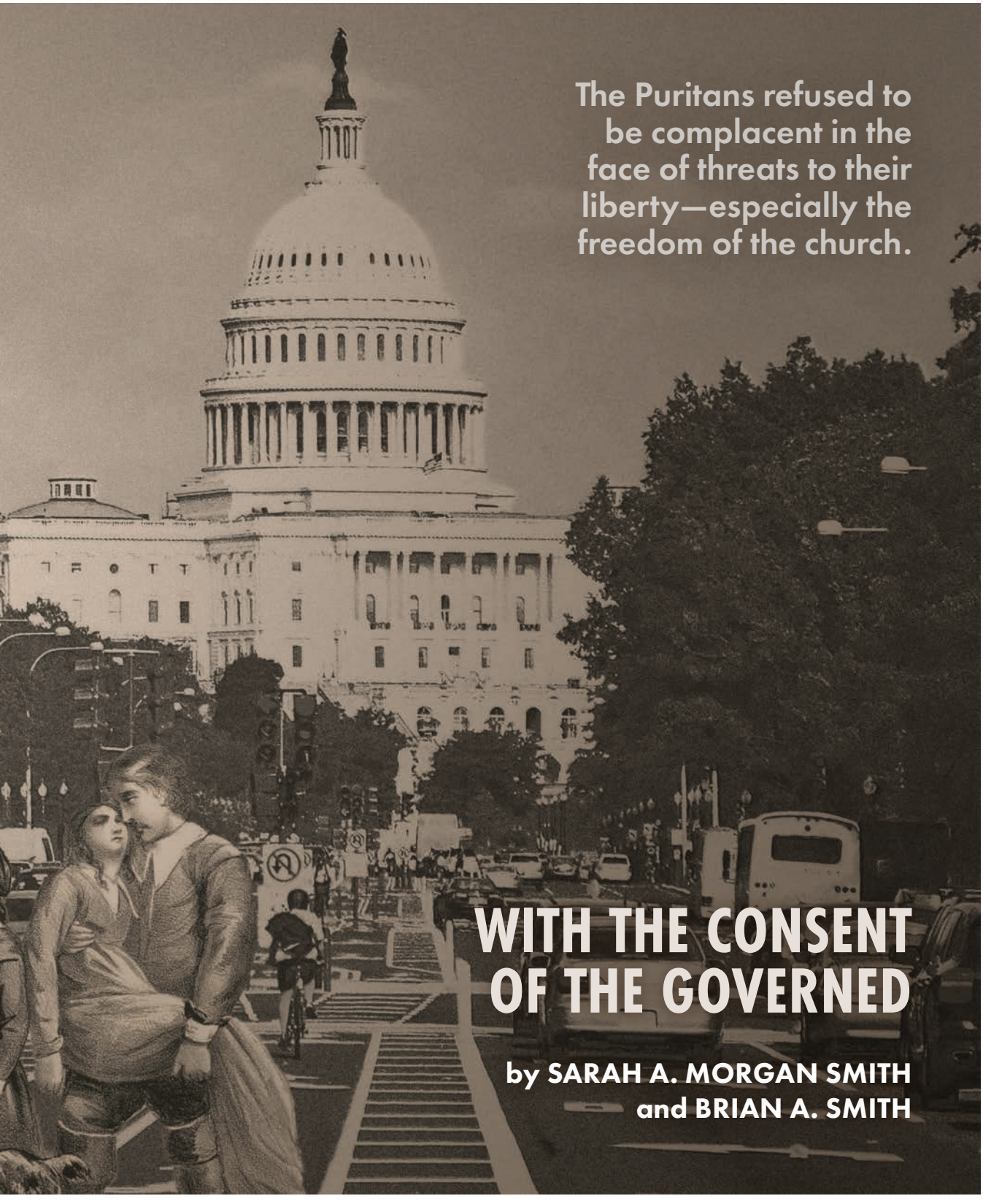


Composite image built using an 1876 Currier & Ives lithograph, *The Landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, Mass. Dec. 22nd 1620*, and a photo of Constitution Avenue in Washington, D.C. (peterspiro / iStock)

THE PURITAN AS *Governor*



The Puritans refused to be complacent in the face of threats to their liberty—especially the freedom of the church.

WITH THE CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED

by SARAH A. MORGAN SMITH and BRIAN A. SMITH

Portrait of Alexis de Tocqueville by Théodore Chassériau

DEVOTEES OF ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE'S *Democracy in America* will be more aware than most of the debt the United States owes the Puritans. While his account is impressionistic rather than historical, it captures the essential truth that Puritan notions concerning political participation, limited government, and the importance of natural and divine law shaped the nation in a variety of ways.

Yet Puritan views of government and the qualifications for godly rulers were largely of a piece with the rest of Christian political theology: All authority, rightly understood, was derived from God, and all rulers, from the king to the town selectmen, were merely His agents, responsible for the welfare of those they governed. Divine law as shown in both nature and revelation was seen as the animating force for positive law, as it not only marked the standards to which positive law ought to accord but also set limits to those things over which the state may legitimately exert its authority. Divine law was the principal source of human liberty, even as it served as the boundary keeper, preventing liberty from devolving into license.

None of this is exclusively Puritan—in the English tradition, John of Salisbury espoused similar views, even up to and including positing the legitimacy of tyrannicide. Nor would the Puritans have claimed to be offering up innovative political ideas; in politics, as in so much else, their own sense was that they were recovering an ancient biblical understanding, one reflected in the tradition of English common law.

Nevertheless, in their own time and in ours, Puritan views of government are worth studying precisely because they strove rigorously to apply biblical principles without the intermediary of tradition. In the English colonial settlements of the 17th century, Puritan thinkers were able to put their ideas into practice, testing the notion of a "godly commonwealth" grounded on a robust understanding of human equality and liberty.

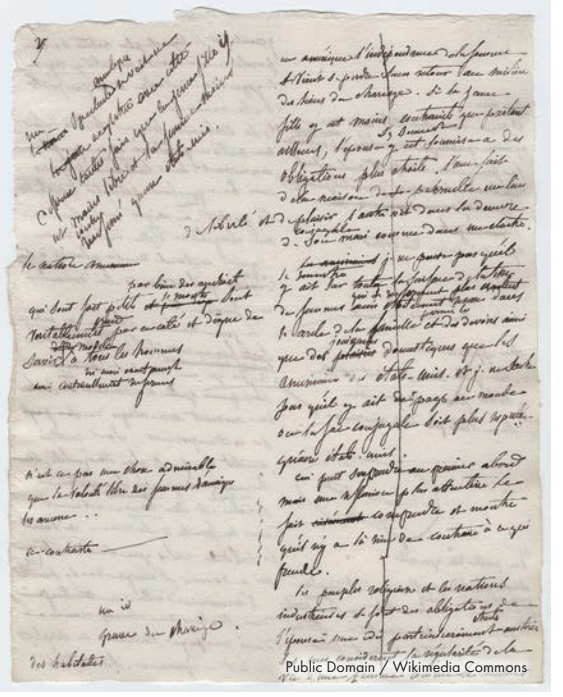
Convinced that Christ's church must be composed only of the elect (and not, for example, of everyone who happened to live within the geographical bounds of the parish), English Puritans often adopted the biblical notion of covenanting, the forming of communities bound by ties

of mutuality to one another and to God. While the Puritans acknowledged that men might fall into different ranks by the will of God, they did not imagine those to mitigate against the essential equality of men in status as created beings, image-bearers. The Puritans reasoned that human governments in both church and state derived their authority from the consent of the people. In this they were influenced by work in biblical interpretation that emerged in Europe in the 16th century providing a reading of the Old Testament that emphasized the republican elements of Israel's government before they asked God to give them a king "like all the other nations." This "Hebraic republicanism" showed God's original intention to work mediately through consensual, limited types of governments, and stood in stark opposition to theories of divine-right monarchy.

This approach to private associational life logically spilled from religious to civil societies in the context of New England, where the colonists regularly described themselves as "combining together" to create political societies on both the town and colony level. In 1630, John Winthrop wrote in his "Model of Christian Charity" that the goal of such communities was a radical unity: "For this end, we must be knit together, in this work, as one man. We must entertain each other in brotherly affection.…So shall we *keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*."

Unity and peace were lofty goals for those stalwart souls who were fleeing England's shores precisely because of their inability to refrain from dissent in their native land. Covenantal associations were voluntary, and the fractious nature of Puritanism meant that new towns and churches were often started because of an unresolved disagreement among the members of some older covenant. Yet for as long as an individual chose to remain in a particular community, his obligation to "walk" with his neighbors peaceably was also an opportunity—really, an obligation—to participate in shaping the local understanding of what such a walk ought to look like. Town meetings were places for discussion and debate, and historians have long recognized that participation in such meetings was customarily open to all residents of a community and not merely those who met the formal qualifications for freemanship and the suffrage privileges that went along with it.

Page from original manuscript of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (c. 1840)



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The Puritans understood their political covenant to be more than just a bond between individual citizens, but rather between their community as a whole and God. This led them to a radically different view of the bond between citizens and their representatives.

In the 1645 "Little Speech on Liberty," Winthrop argued that the relationship between magistrates and people was akin to that of a married couple. Taking his cue from Ephesians 5:21–24, he wrote: "The woman's own choice makes…a man her husband; yet being so chosen, he is her lord, and she is to be subject to him, yet in a way of liberty, not of bondage." As the husband was the ultimate head of the household, so too the magistrates were (for the duration of their election) the ultimate head of the commonwealth. Just as the wife would, one hopes, be regularly consulted in her husband's decision-making, so too Massachusetts' magistrates both expected and invited public consultation. Not only did the Laws and Liberties—Massachusetts' law code/constitution, whose history stretched back to the 1630s—explicitly protect the rights of "every man whether Inhabitant or Foreigner, Free or not Free" to participate "either by speech or writing" in all levels of civic government "to present any necessary motion, complaint, petition, bill or information," but the magistrates frequently requested the local

Engraving depicting John Winthrop's arrival at Salem

Woodcut depicting Anne Hutchinson's 1637 trial

town meetings to weigh in on questions facing the colony. It was not a perfect system, by any means, but the historical record indicates a robust level of participation.

This view of the magistrate as head of the civic household had other implications. John Winthrop's journal provides insights into the problem of those who neglected their obligation to the broader community, recording examples of individuals chosen to serve in positions of civic responsibility who attempted to resign mid-term. These attempts were always met with concern and generally disallowed in much the same way they would frown upon a divorce without biblical cause. To resign was to be guilty of "forsaking [one's] calling," as well as a breach of promise to serve the community. After one such incident, Winthrop reports that it was the unanimous opinion of the Massachusetts Bay leadership that a magistrate "could not leave his place, except by the same power which put him in," an attitude toward representative government that to some extent privileges the act of election (and the will of the electors in that moment) over the independent agency of the elected official who becomes the servant of the public. Then, too, it also suggests a moral if not legal responsibility of the voting public to be responsive to the changing attitudes of their representatives, and to be willing to free them from their public duties should they become overly burdensome.

Thus, the Puritan as governor must be understood to value consent not merely as a formality (i.e., in the act of elections) but as the ongoing dialogue between rulers and ruled, and thus a means of building genuine unity among the disparate members of a body politic. The Puritans faced a tremendous challenge, however, in the degree of unity their covenant required to function well.

If you ask most Americans what they know about the Puritans, chances are the response you get will have something to do with either witch trials (thank you, Arthur Miller) or their alleged hypocrisy in suppressing minority religious views. If the person you are speaking with is very well informed, they may name Anne Hutchinson when making the latter charge. Hutchinson's "antinomian" (literally, anti-law) views went against the teaching of the majority of Massachusetts' clergy that the Bible urged believers to observe morality and orderly behavior as guardrails against personal sin and public chaos.

Often portrayed as a proto-feminist boldly facing down the patriarchy, in fact Hutchinson threatened not just the governing authorities but the very roots of Protestantism. Her assertion that God's spirit spoke to her "by an immediate revelation" in a clear and incontrovertible way, and her refusal to acknowledge any other authority, went well beyond the pale of mainstream Protestantism and threatened the carefully cultivated sense of public unity that the magistrates valued so highly. Yet in dealing with Hutchinson (and with many others whose names are long forgotten), the General Court—which served as both legislative and judiciary for Massachusetts Bay—was far from hasty, offering multiple opportunities

over the span of several years for her to either persuade them of the legitimacy of her position or to recant, despite their severe concerns that those who were saved were absolved from the strictures of divine law and could live by grace alone.

While the goal of the magistrates was to foster a deep sense of unity among the people, they were not to pursue uniformity for uniformity's sake. The Puritans recognized that there was room for reasonable persons to disagree about even relatively major questions of religious doctrine or public policy and preferred to use the art of godly conversation, as well as the power of the press and pulpit, to change hearts and minds rather than simply to coerce conformity. In dealing with dissenters, as one commentator observed, the ideal was to use "convincing light for the means and compassionate love for the manner" and "till this course prevail…forbearance may be exercised to all sober people so it not be against piety or peace." Although Massachusetts' Laws and Liberties provided for the protection of conscience claims, these were restricted to those "orthodox in judgement and not scandalous in life"—a judgment, of course, that lay with the magistrates. Those whose beliefs were considered unorthodox in ways that specifically threatened the colony's stability found themselves invited to make their homes elsewhere. As foreign as this is to the modern mind, the ability to restrict membership in one's civil community to those who shared a particular set of fundamental views was not in and of itself controversial in the period. Puritanism as a political project doesn't make any sense if the community cannot, in fact, take measures to ensure its purity.

Consider the logic: When a civil society is formed by consent around a set of shared principles or beliefs, it is obviously the duty of those charged with governing that society to see that those principles are maintained. This might well require hard or unpleasant work. In a sermon preached in 1667, for example, Jonathan Mitchell wrote: "To [seek] a people's welfare is to put forth utmost and best endeavors to procure, promote, and maintain it; to study it and to speak for it; to act for it, as occasion is. It is not an empty wishing and woulding…but to do." Likewise, John Oxenbridge chided those standing for election in 1671: "If ye shall break down the hedge of your churches and commonwealth, you will lay the field open to such as want to make spoil of you…If you admit of a carnal party into the privileges due here to visible saints, they will be likely to eat out the heart of liberty and religion." Just as the ministers of Christ's church were to guard its purity, ensuring that only those who were truly faithful were admitted to communion, so it was the magistrates' duty to guard the commonwealth, ensuring that only those who were willing to abide by the covenant remained within its fold.

This watchfulness was for the good of all. Thomas Shepard, an esteemed Puritan minister who consulted regularly with members of the General Court, pointed to 1 Timothy 2:2 to assert that the divinely appointed

A Puritan pastor gives a sermon in the painting *Stony Ground* by Edwin Austin Abbey (c. 1884)

ends for government are "that we may lead a quiet and a peaceable life, in all godliness, and honesty." Yet the magistrates were not to rely upon their own judgement but on the standards set by the community at large. "Where laws rule, men do not," Shepard observed, presuming the laws to have been framed with the input of the community as a whole and therefore framed in such a way as to interfere minimally with the liberties of the people.

With their public commitments enshrined in just and well-framed laws, the people themselves provided orderly boundaries to both the exercise of individual liberty and arbitrary state power. Pride, in particular, was a woeful concern to the Puritan magistrate, for it led to the sort of "chronic distemper" of spirit that made men "in their own apprehension good enough to rule and too good to obey." The magistrates were expected, therefore, to take measures to encourage virtue and discourage vice by passing appropriate legislation. Although it was not possible for laws to address the inner vices that resulted in outward sins, it was nevertheless incumbent on the magistrates to do what they could to encourage "outward Reformation." The Puritans made much of the distinction between inward and outward government; whatever the true state of his heart, the man who was able to govern his own passions, restraining his tendencies towards sin and cultivating outward virtue, would require less direct rule by others.

"PRIDE LED TO THE SORT OF 'CHRONIC DISTEMPER' OF SPIRIT THAT MADE MEN 'IN THEIR OWN APPREHENSION GOOD ENOUGH TO RULE AND TOO GOOD TO OBEY.'"

Thus, private virtue served as a hedge against public corruption, abuses of power, and even tyranny. Were the people to find themselves with rulers who

Illustration of Gov. Andros taken prisoner in Boston (1876)

used civil power to further their own ends, rather than the good of the commonwealth, the people had a right to remonstrance, for, as John Davenport reasoned, "the power of government is originally in the people." Because men were "reasonable creatures," Davenport went on to explain that it was necessarily understood that the powers of civil government were limited in both their extent and duration. There were "set bounds and banks to the exercise of that power, so as it may not be exuberant, above the laws and due rights and liberties of the people," and were it to become detrimental to them, the people might reclaim the power from those they had deputized to wield it.

In dire cases, where ordinary elections were not sufficient to remove the offending magistrate, the Puritans were notable for their willingness to articulate a doctrine of active resistance. In his 1644 book *The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, John Cotton noted that where the higher powers were acting unjustly, it was the task of lesser magistrates to work together to ensure the "preservation and protection of the laws and liberties" of the people. In Massachusetts, this often took the form of colonial leaders resisting the incursion of royal authority.

After the Stuart Restoration of 1660, for example, petition after petition came into the General Court from the towns and clerical advisers urging the colony's leaders to resist the king's efforts against their charter privileges. Reasoning that their civil liberties were the gift of God and essential to sustaining their political existence, one group of ministers counseled the colonial government that it was incumbent upon them to resist because "men may not destroy their political any more than their natural lives" without guilt.

Thus, the General Court initiated a decades-long struggle with the king. When they did eventually take up arms against the king's representative in the colony, they were careful to clarify that this action had been done in an orderly and God-fearing way. Using the biblical reasoning that inspired so much of 17th century Anglophone colonization, the authors went on to say, "We have been quiet hitherto; and so still we should have been, had not the Great God at this time laid us under a *double engagement* to do something for our security." This "double engagement" was a fear for their very survival under Royal Governor Edmund Andros' maladministration, as well as the news of the actions of other "lesser magistrates" in England in overthrowing James II. As Cotton Mather would describe it, the Boston Revolution of 1689 was both "just and fair," for the pious men involved were "not resisting an ordinance of God but restraining a cursed violation of his ordinance" that, in fact, favored individual liberty. This reasoning would prove equally fruitful to the leaders of a later colonial rebellion in the century to come.

The United States is home to many experiments in religious association, but none was more influential than the one the Puritans established on our shores. Although the Puritans' desire for a covenant community bound by the Reformed faith is unlikely to be replicated, their clarity about what is required for maintaining unity and protecting against tyranny stands as an important reminder. The Puritans knew that a refusal to respect the boundaries of a political community is the surest path to its demise and took strong measures to maintain peace and affection among their citizens. Such clarity on these matters is in short supply today. While many in the West would find the substance of their commitments impossible to follow, they nonetheless show the importance of erecting hedges around a community's core commitments. That so few are even willing to countenance this today shows our loss of seriousness.

Even as they remain an imperfect model of how to deal with internal threats, the Puritan vigilance against abuses from above stands as a lesson to us today. Here, too, we could learn much from their example, both in terms of the restraint the Puritans showed by patiently petitioning first and only later pursuing rebellion through the lesser magistrates, and in their refusal to stand by and do nothing when their unique political identity was threatened by those charged to protect it. The Puritans refused to be complacent in the face of threats to their liberty, especially the freedom of the church, and this in particular should inspire Christians of all kinds to renew their own defense of the faith in public life. RL

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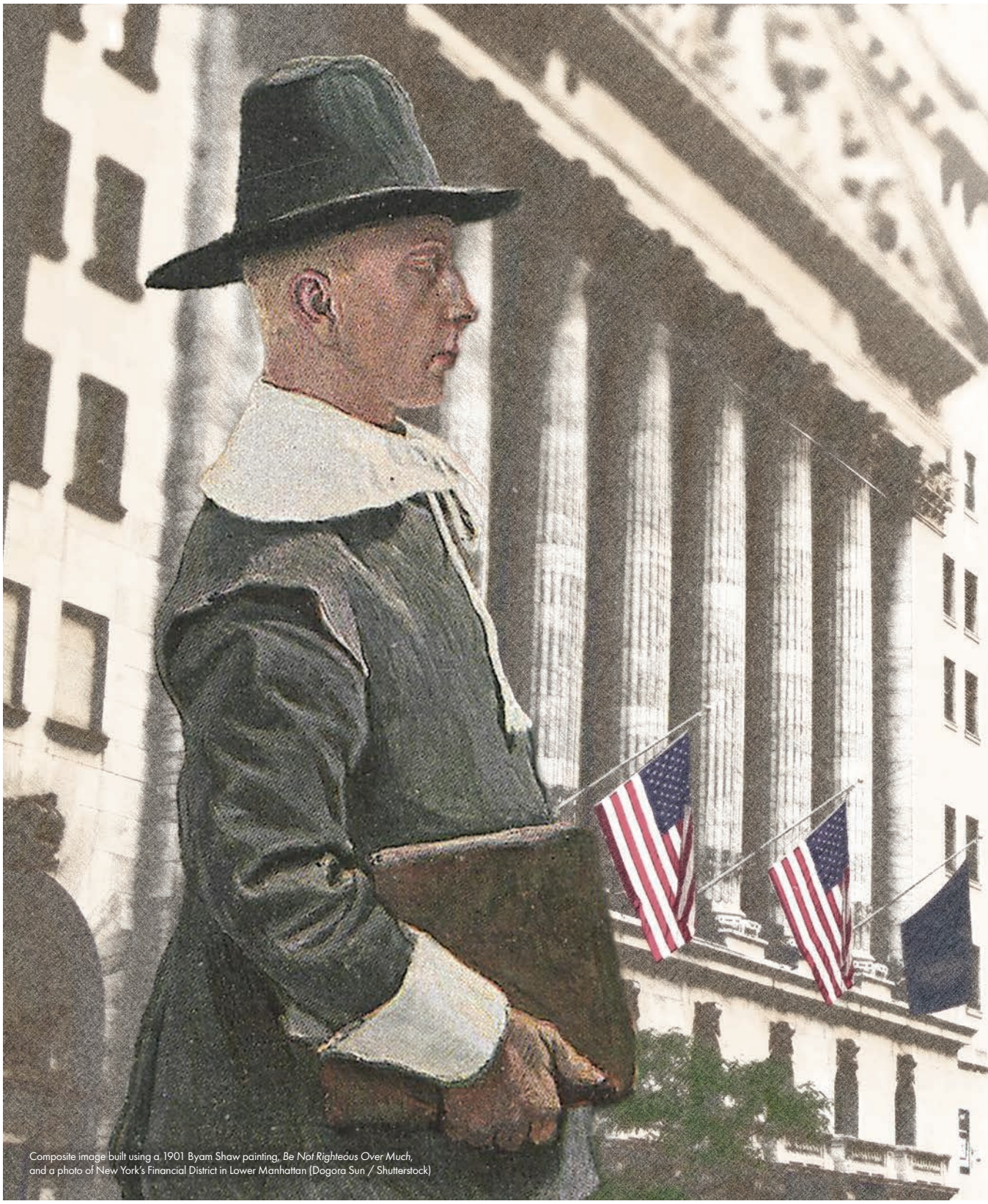
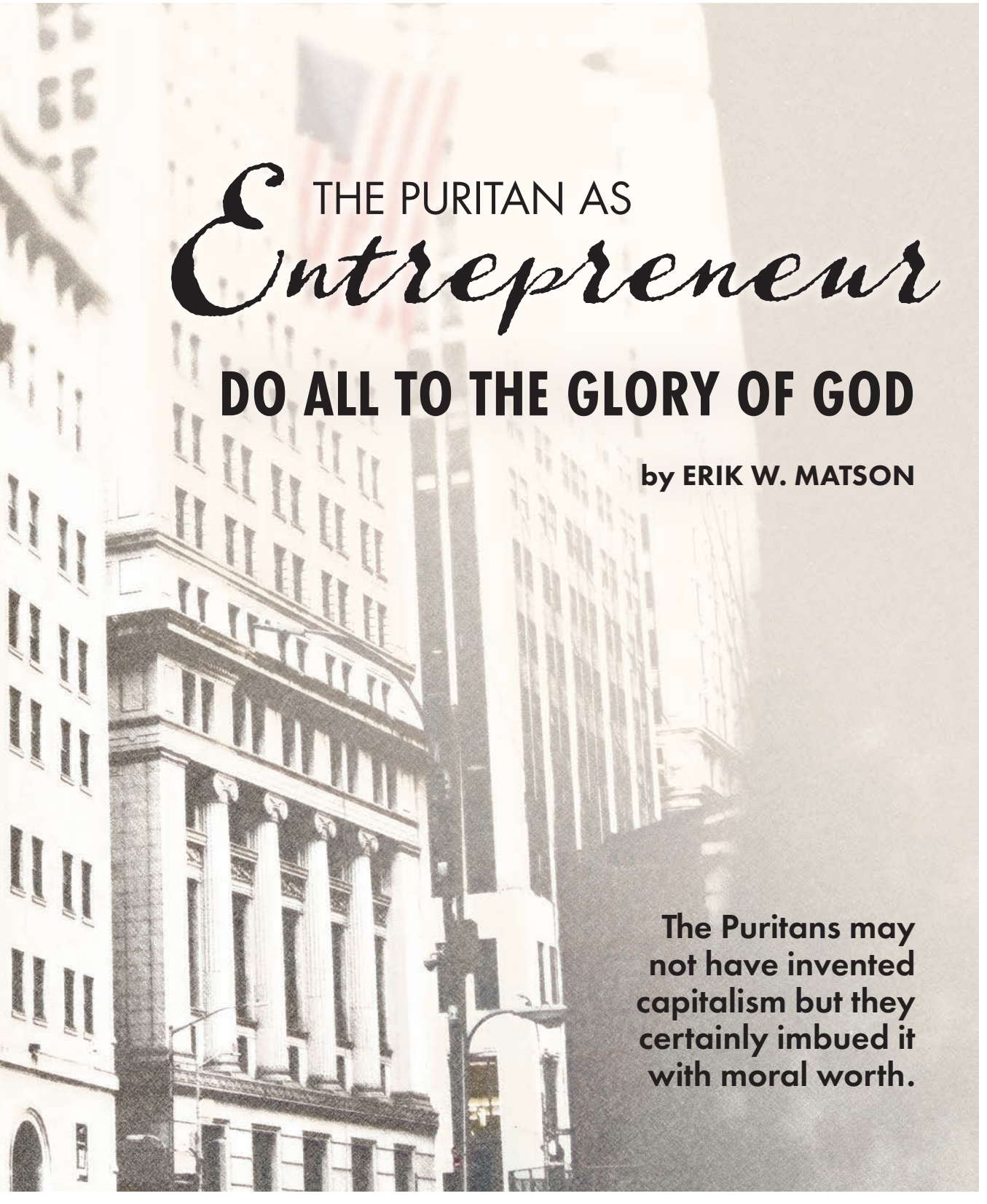


Composite image built using a 1901 Byam Shaw painting, *Be Not Righteous Over Much*, and a photo of New York's Financial District in Lower Manhattan (Dogora Sun / Shutterstock)

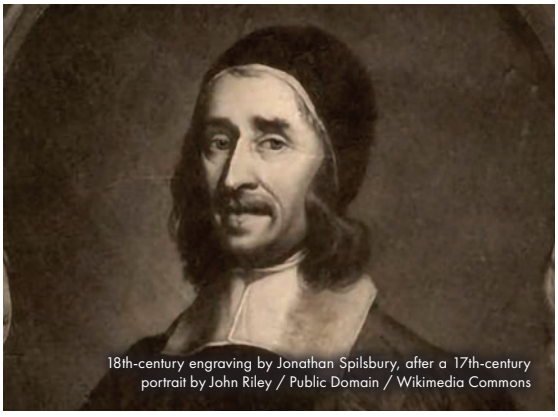


THE PURITAN AS *Entrepreneur*

DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD

by ERIK W. MATSON

The Puritans may not have invented capitalism but they certainly imbued it with moral worth.



18th-century engraving by Jonathan Spilsbury, after a 17th-century portrait by John Riley / Public Domain / Wikimedia Commons

Richard Baxter (1615–1691)

IN A POPULAR 17th century work called *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion*, the Anglican John Wilkins defended the proposition that "Religion is the Cause of Riches." The true Christian faith, he argued, prepares one for success because its ethical principles convey "all the lawful Arts of Gain and good Husbandry." These include a "heedfulness to improve all fitting Opportunities of providing for our selves and Families, being provident in our Expences, keeping within the Bounds of our Income, [and] not running out into needless Debts." Wilkins' discourse captures what was at the time a common English belief: Virtue, profitable commercial enterprise, religion, and the social good are of a piece.

Today many associate this belief with the English Protestant subgroup known as the Puritans, a movement that can roughly be identified, as historian Margo Todd has described it, by shared commitments "to purging the Church of England" of "Romish 'superstition,' ceremonies, vestments and liturgy, and to establishing a biblical discipline on the larger society, primarily through the preached word." The Puritans were not unique harbingers of English commercial spirit. But in their teaching and practice, they undeniably contributed to the spirit of the age. That spirit valorized commerce and elevated perceptions of merchants. By the 18th century, the figure of the merchant was no longer reviled but heralded, according to the writer and playwright Richard Steele, as "the greatest Benefactor of the *English* nation."

The Puritans inherited long-standing Christian suspicions about commercial life. William Perkins, a founding figure in the Puritan intellectual tradition, advanced traditional arguments against the practice of usury. He condemned common loan practices of the early 17th century as unethical. So, too, did he condemn price speculation. He argued that speculators should be kept from partaking in the Lord's Supper until they expressed penitence to the church community. Puritan perspectives changed, however.

Richard Baxter, the most influential Puritan teacher of the 17th century, wrote in his hugely influential *Christian Directory* that each has a duty to "labour in a manner as tendeth most to [his] success and lawful gain" and a responsibility to "lawfully get more" when the opportunity presents itself. That passage was later canonized by Max Weber as exemplifying the "Protestant ethic" out of which, he believed, the spirit of capitalism emerged. In 1684,

the minister Richard Steele, in his popular work *The Tradesman's Calling*, argued that the "Market-Price" is "the surest Rule" for justice in exchange, and the attempt to determine a moral rate of profit is a fool's errand. Across the Atlantic, Samuel Willard in Boston dismissed traditional Christian arguments against the charging of interest as "*Noise* and *Railery*, without solid Reason or Cogency or arguing." In contrast to the Aristotelian notion of money as sterile, Willard argued that money was "the most Fertile thing in the World." Commerce, in his opinion, should be liberated from the restrictive moral rules of church governance and left to the consciences and voluntary agreements of its practitioners.

Puritans exhibited increasing commercial spirit not only in theory but in practice. This can be clearly seen in the mercantile communities of New England, as Mark Valeri has cataloged in his book *Heavenly Merchandize: How Religion Shaped Commerce in Puritan America* (2010). Commercial heavyweights like the Bostonian John Hull pursued profits, in the 1660s and 1670s, through transatlantic credit and exchange on the understanding that these activities were not just consistent with their faith but also acts of public service to be pursued with diligence for the good of God's kingdom.

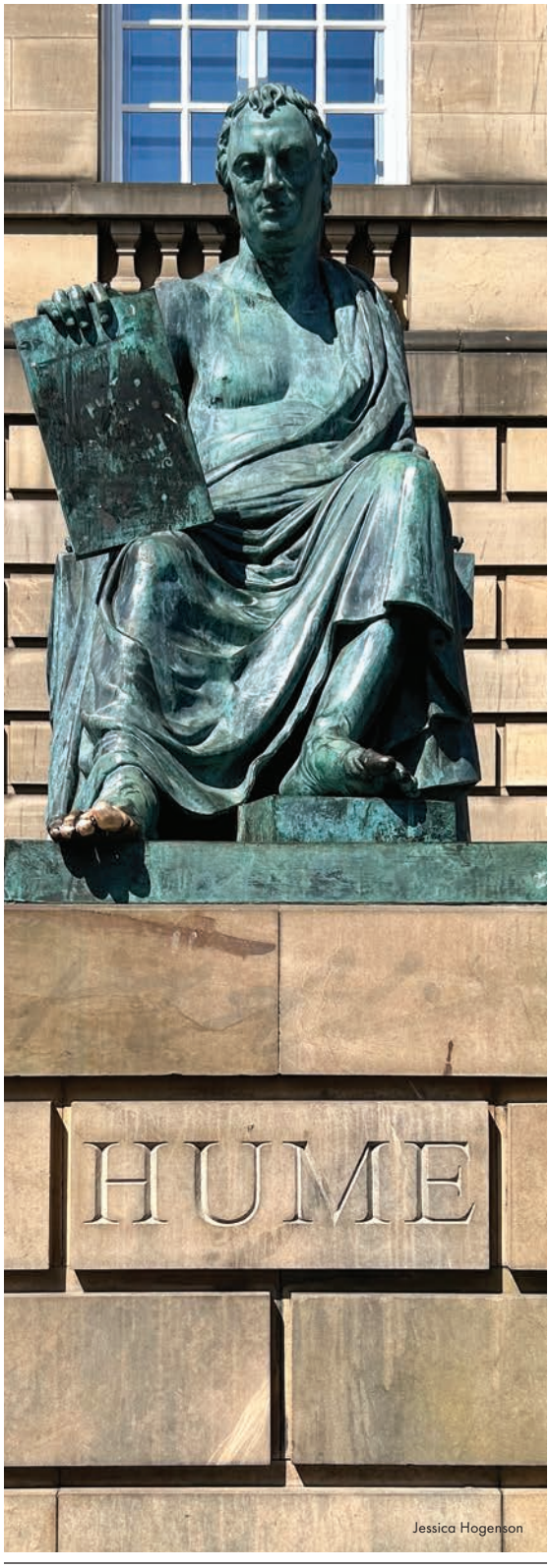
In England, the entrepreneurial spirit manifested similarly in commercial ventures, but also in Puritan zeal for technological and scientific innovation. The new experimental science, in the mode of Bacon and Newton, aimed at illuminating the order of God's creation and drawing fruit from creation. The fruit often took the form of commercially profitable commercial applications.

Notable Puritans of the day included polymath John Wilkins, chemist Robert Boyle, botanist John Ray, and the political economist William Petty. In their enthusiastic pursuit of practical knowledge and improvement, these men and their colleagues contributed to the proto-industrial developments of the century. The Puritans were not uniquely responsible for the rise of capitalism, but they certainly fostered what Joel Mokyr has called a "culture of growth." This culture was arguably a necessary precondition for the great enrichment of northwestern Europe and America that took off in the late 18th century.

What drove the development of Puritan economic ethics? Weber famously emphasized the doctrine of predestination. In the face of deep psychological uncertainty about the state of his salvation, the Puritan

21st-century commerce, as represented by a Massachusetts Hobby Lobby store (2014)

MediaNews Group /Boston Herald via Getty Images



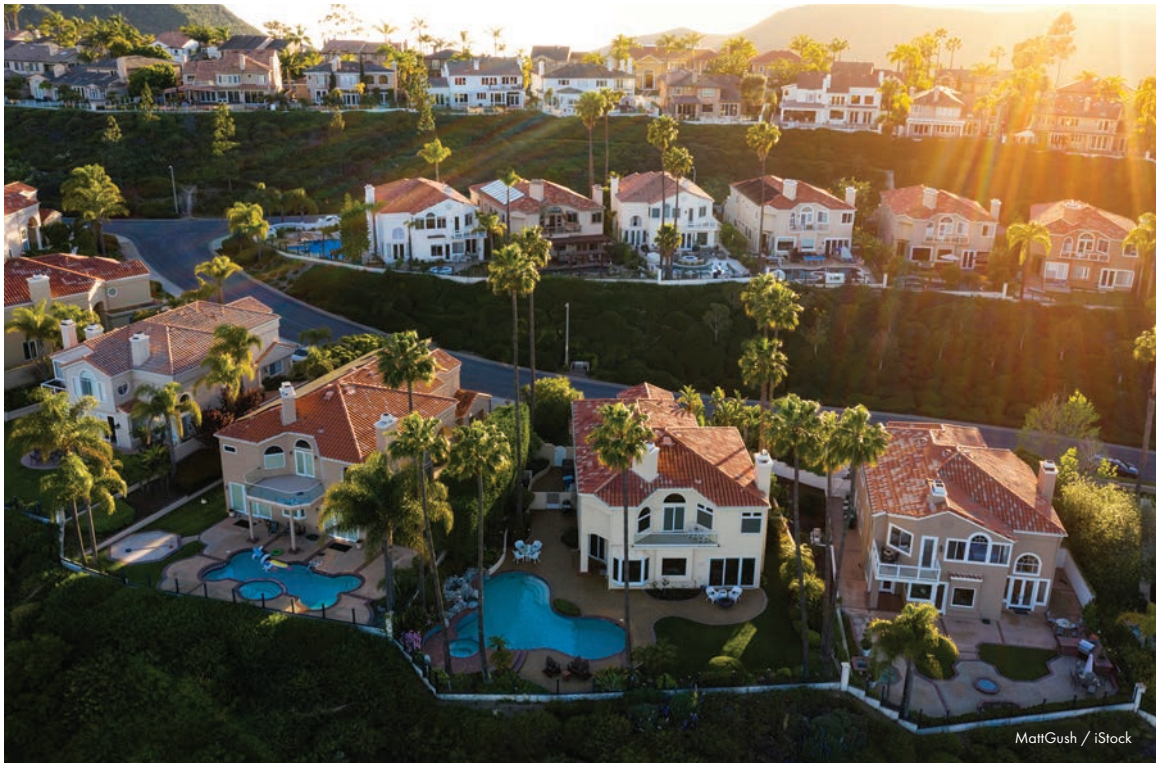
Statue of David Hume in Edinburgh

fell back on the industrious pursuit of material prosperity. The achievement of material prosperity, Weber theorized, served as a signal: Material success could be taken as an indication of God's favor; that indication signaled to the Puritan's community and to the Puritan himself that he was likely among God's elect. This part of Weber's theory falls flat for several reasons. The main reason pertains to historical theology. One is hard pressed to find evidence for such beliefs in the writings of the Puritans. They certainly are not present in the teachings of Calvin, for whom material prosperity was no sure indication of God's election.

A more nuanced suggestion comes from R.H. Tawney in his 1926 book, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*. Tawney claims that by the end of the 17th century, the Puritan consensus was to respect commerce as a separate sphere of life with its own logic. Tawney sometimes comes across as suggesting that Puritan divines simply lost interest in governing the conduct of actors in the marketplace or that economic interests usurped theological conviction. Attention to sermons and pamphlets of the period indicate that this was not the case. Tawney's broader point, however, is that the development of Puritan economic ethics must be understood in conversation with analytical developments in English political economy. "The progress of economic thought," he argues, "fortified the economic virtues" in the Puritan mind. The teachings of the early political economists informed the substance of Puritan moral theology, inclining them to reassess traditional perspectives more skeptical of commercial life.

The early political economists, such as William Petty (a Puritan), Josiah Child, Edward Misselden,

> **"A MERCHANT'S GAIN WAS PORTRAYED AS SERVING NOT ONLY HIS OWN BENEFIT BUT ALSO THAT OF THE COMMUNITY AND EVEN THE NATION."**


MattGush / iStock

Nicholas Barbon, Charles Davenant, and John Locke (the son of a Puritan), promoted the national benefits of mercantile activity. Their analyses called into question the traditional views of the superior dignity and usefulness of the landed aristocracy as compared to merchants. A merchant's gain was portrayed as serving not only his own benefit but that also of the community and even the nation. Building on decades of such arguments, Nicholas Barbon, in his *Discourse of Trade*, argued in 1690 that Europe had grown more populous, better fed, and healthier by virtue of trade and its enabling levers of credit. Through participation in commercial life, laborers, moreover, benefited themselves and their fellow citizens by refining the "Natural Stock" of their country's resources into "a Thousand useful Things."

Economic arguments intertwined with political discourses associating increased economic freedom with the interests of religious toleration and hence Protestant dissent. Since the reign of Elizabeth, Puritans had opposed such economic regulations as crown-chartered monopolies, trade restrictions, occupational licensing requirements, and certain taxes. Their opposition formed part of a broader program of resistance to extensive crown prerogatives and was motivated by concern for religious toleration. David Hume wrote in his *History of England* that under Charles I, when this opposition peaked in the middle of the 17th century, parliamentary "debates concerning tonnage and poundage went hand in hand with…theological or metaphysical controversies," and the "merchants who should voluntarily pay these duties, were denominated betrayers of English liberty, and public enemies."

The analytical arguments about the social benefits of commerce advanced the association of economic freedom and religious toleration. The emergent commercial ideology proved deeply congenial to some long-standing elements in Puritan moral theology: teachings on work, callings, and the common weal.

The Genesis creation narrative portrays work as a creative feature of God's design for humankind—it is only after the introduction of sin into the world that work turns to toil. Jesus' parables convey an obligation to stewardship, diligence, and even, as in the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14–30), the pursuit of honest gain. Positive visions of work can be found in the Christian tradition reaching back to the early church fathers,

affirmed and expanded by the teachings of early monastic figures such as Benedict of Nursia.

Teachings on the redemptive aspects of work came to the foreground during the Protestant Reformation, however. Part of the foregrounding came in polemical writings against monastic life and corruptions of the institutional church. Professional clerics, Protestants argued, have no monopoly on the claim to sanctified work. The people of God are together members of the priesthood of all believers. The priesthood spans a great variety of worldly occupations, including seemingly mundane activities, and it is often through faithfulness in such mundane activities that the kingdom of God moves forth.

These perspectives complemented Protestant theologies of works. Luther emphasized the importance of good works, not for salvation but for the good of one's community. God does not require our good works, but our neighbors do. For our neighbor's sake, once we have been reconciled to God in love through Christ, we are to move outward in love to socially profitable acts. In a Christmas sermon, Luther said: "In this conduct of the shepherds we find a valuable and beautiful lesson. After they have obtained the revelation from heaven, and the true knowledge of Christ, they do not run out into the dessert, as the foolish monks and nuns run into cloisters, but remain in their calling, and are useful to their fellow men." In a similar mode, Calvin taught of God's provision for humankind—a species of common grace—through a diversity of human activities. He emphasized the vital importance of our participation in God's providence through the stewarding of our gifts and talents for the good of our neighbors. We should, he wrote, "join zeal for another's benefit with care for our own advantage," ultimately subordinating "the latter to the former."

The emphasis on the potential sanctity of ordinary work and its contribution to the common weal found a strong foothold in the Puritan intellectual tradition. English Puritans focused on the distinction between the shared general calling of Christians to faith in Christ and the particular earthly calling of each Christian to a course of life beneficial to his community. The emphasis on considering the social benefits of a calling in forming one's life plans was pronounced. At the turn of the 17th century, William Perkins wrote that the Christian is "the freest man of all men in the world.…And yet, for all this, he must be a servant of every man. But how? By all the duties of love as occasion is offered, and that is for the common good of all men." Each must devote himself to a calling, Perkins continued, "so that he may be a good and profitable member of some society and body."

Etching of the Parable of the Talents by Jan Luyken (1712)

Art World / Alamy Stock Photo / Public Domain

> **IT WAS NOT TO CONFIRM THEIR ELECTION THAT THE PURITANS STRIVED BUT TO GLORIFY GOD IN MAKING A BECOMING USE OF THEIR RESOURCES.**

The stress on social benefits in Puritan moral theology can also be traced to the influence of Christian humanism. Associated with the Dutch theologian Desiderius Erasmus, humanist philosophy took hold in 16th and 17th century England, eventually leading to extensive reforms and changes in curricula at universities including Oxford and Cambridge. Like their continental counterparts, English humanists such as Thomas Starkey prioritized encounters with classical texts in the original languages and elevated the active over the contemplative life. The active life was to be pursued as a means of serving the common good; idle contemplation was to be avoided. As Starkey wrote in 1533: "To this all men are born and of nature brought forth: to commune such gifts as be to them given, each one to the profit of others." The humanist influence, interacting with Protestantism generally, contributed to the pronounced emphasis on social usefulness in English culture. That emphasis is well captured in the moral philosophy of David Hume in the 18th century. In a eulogy to merchants, he drew attention to their social usefulness, taking that usefulness as sufficient evidence of their moral worth: "In general, what praise is implied in the simple epithet *useful*! What reproach in the contrary!"

Puritan economic ethics grew from a matrix of Protestant teachings on the affirmation of the mundane and humanist emphases on the importance of an active life and the cultivation of civic virtue for the sake of the common weal. The combined influence of these strands of teaching help us begin to appreciate the Puritan valorization of ordinary striving, including the trades; exhortation for the faithful to select socially beneficial earthly callings; and stress on the importance of hard work and diligent application. It is in that basic theological context that Richard Baxter's statement about our obligation to pursue gain must be taken. Theologically speaking, it was not to confirm their election that the Puritans strived but to glorify God in making a becoming use of their resources, a beatitude corresponding to advancing the good of society.

In the context of discussing the Puritan Richard Steele, Tawney remarks in his book that "trade itself is a kind of religion." The point is overstated, but it highlights the influence of political economy on Puritan thought. Given the emphasis on the importance of social benefits and practicality, it should not come as a surprise that Puritan moral theology absorbed findings of new perspectives into the social consequences of commercial activity—findings of political economy. In Boston in 1701, Cotton Mather indicated the influence of these findings, emphasizing God's desire for humans to exist in mutually beneficial relations: "God hath made man a *Sociable* Creature. *We* expect Benefits from *Humane Society*. It is but equal, that *Humane Society* should Receive Benefits from *Us*. We are Beneficial to *Humane Society* by the Works of that Special Occupation, in which we are to be employ'd, according to the Order of God." Attention to the development of Puritan economic ethics reminds us that the disciplines of moral theology and social science do not exist in isolation, and they remain isolated from one another at their peril.

The Puritans were, as has been mentioned, not uniquely responsible for the rise of English commercial spirit, let alone the genesis of what some now call capitalism. But they certainly contributed to the moral affirmation of commercial life. They participated in the formation of the spirit of the age, a spirit that formed the English into, as William Blackstone describes them, "a polite and commercial people." In America, Alexis de Tocqueville later observed, "professions are more or less laborious, more or less profitable; but they are never either high or low: every honest calling is honorable." Here, too, can we discern part of the moral legacy of the Puritans. RL

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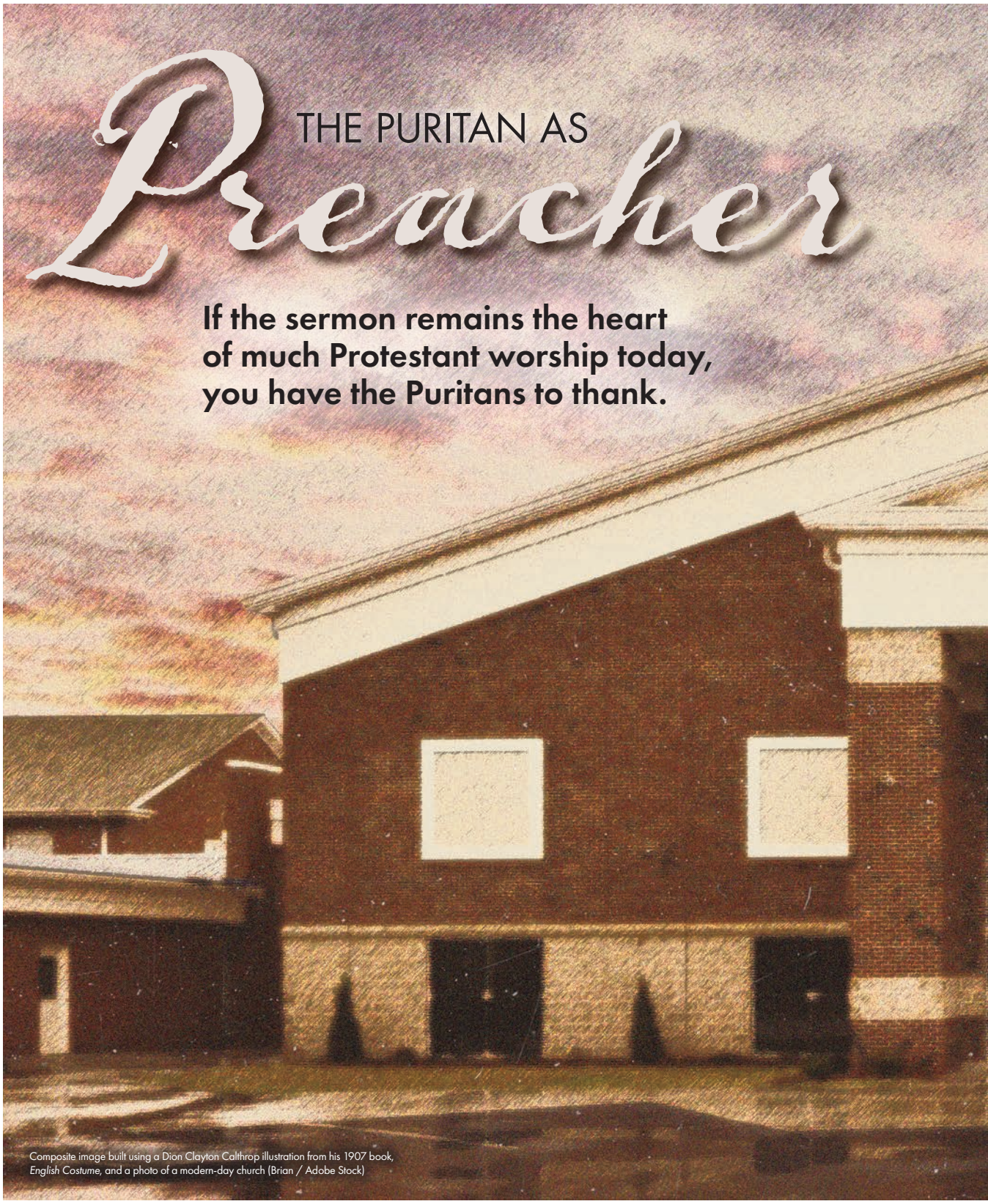
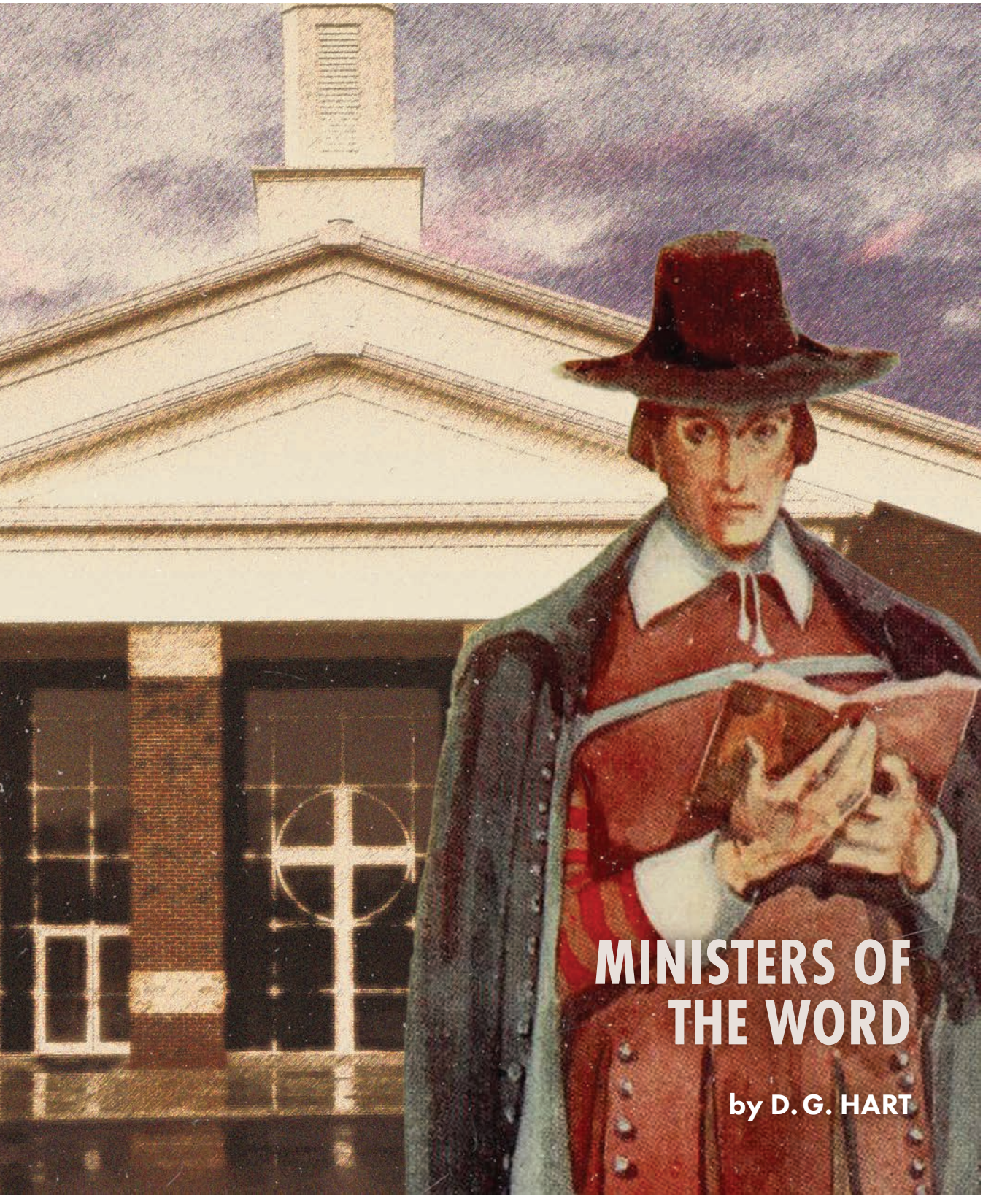
THE PURITAN AS *Preacher*

If the sermon remains the heart of much Protestant worship today, you have the Puritans to thank.



Composite image built using a Dion Clayton Calthrop illustration from his 1907 book, *English Costume*, and a photo of a modern-day church (Brian / Adobe Stock)



MINISTERS OF THE WORD

by D. G. HART

IN THE DEBATES between Roman Catholics and Protestants (such as they abide), the former have the advantage of a worship service that ends generally in an hour and features a rite that combines both mystery and communal feeling (the Eucharist). For their part, Protestants on the lower side of the high-church-to-low-church spectrum limp along with a service that, to finish in an hour, needs the pastor to preach for no more than 30 minutes. If Protestants add the Lord's Supper to the ordinary service, worshiping cooks who have forgotten that this was the week for the sacrament will invariably be worrying about the roast in the oven at home, which is to be ready for consumption when the family has heard a sermon, had a cup of coffee, and set the dining room table. In fact, if the Bible matters to the liturgy debates between the two parties of western Christianity, Protestants are hard pressed to understand how the Eucharist takes center stage in other Christian traditions when the New Testament is so explicit about preaching in direct instruction and examples.

Scripture does provide some instruction on the Lord's Supper, but the New Testament is far more explicit—as counterintuitive as it seems to modern outlooks—about the value and effectiveness of long-winded men speaking. In the so-called Great Commission, Jesus told the apostles to make disciples by teaching (he also mentions baptism). In Paul's instruction to his pastoral apprentice, Timothy, the apostle emphasizes the logocentrism for which Protestants are known (and sometimes dismissed): "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:1–2). Then there is the example of Peter early in the book of Acts, who on the very day of Pentecost marked its significance apparently *not* with the ceremony that resembled Christ's meal with his closest disciples on the night when he was betrayed. Instead, Peter "lifted up his voice and addressed" the assembled throng. He preached a sermon.

Among the Protestants best known for taking this part of biblical precedent seriously, the Puritans remain noteworthy. A label often misunderstood—H.L. Mencken once defined Puritanism as "the haunting fear that someone somewhere may be happy"—the Puritans were a wing of English Protestants that sought further reform (or purity) of the Church of England. Their calls for greater fidelity to Scripture and their study of the early church coincided with Elizabeth I's religious policies designed to steer both England and her established church through conflicts downwind from the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Dissatisfaction with both Elizabeth and her Stuart successors eventually prompted some Puritans to strike out on their own in a colony across the Atlantic in North America. Unshackled by bishops and crown officials, New England's Puritans attempted a holy commonwealth. The prospect of running their own colonies, first in Massachusetts and then in Connecticut, also gave

A Reformed pastor preaches a sermon (1968)

A Catholic priest holds up the Host

Puritan ministers the opportunity to institute worship services free from the taint of compromise.

At the heart and center of the Puritan worship service was the sermon. Anglicans at the time, at least in London, were also preaching long sermons—John Donne's were supposed to last an hour or more—but those verbal filet mignons (as opposed to word salads) came packaged in the liturgical forms of the Book of Common Prayer. Puritans kicked away state-church liturgies, prescribed prayers, vestments, and requirements for worshipers to kneel or make the sign of the cross, and gave wide berth to the sermon, which, according to Harry S. Stout in *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, was "the only regular medium of public communication," "the central ritual of social order and control." Not only was the Puritan sermon the public rite that bound the community together, but it was also the chief occupation of New England pastors. Stout adds that "twice on Sunday and often once during the week, every minister…delivered sermons lasting between one and two hours." He calculates that, over the course of the colonial period (1630–1763), ministers delivered five million separate sermons to a population that never exceeded 500,000. Those numbers indicate that the average churchgoer in New England heard roughly 7,000 sermons over the course of his or her life. That meant listening to a sermon for a total of 15,000 hours (or almost two years of a person's life). Talk about overcooked pot roast.

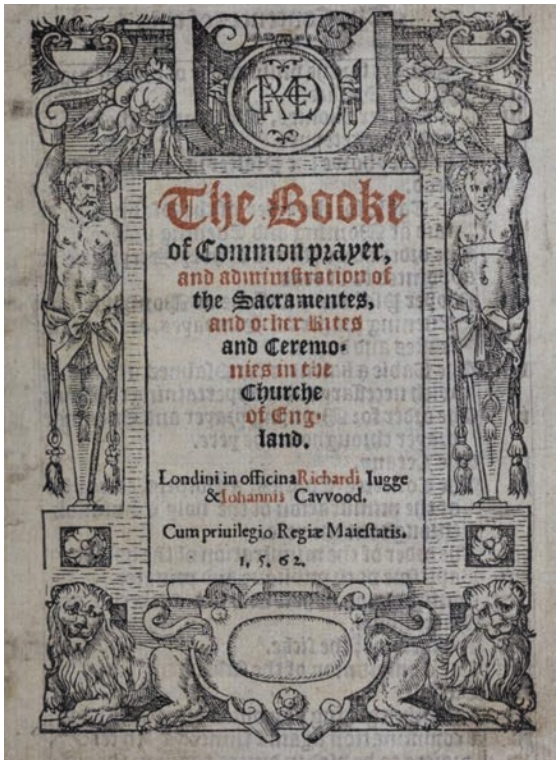
To observe that Protestants do not preach like that anymore is not simply a question of quantity but also one of erudition, because the Puritan sermon was a remarkable display of rhetorical skill. On the one hand, ministers were beneficiaries of a classical education that exposed them to the importance of grammar and rhetoric in verbal communication. This led to the use of metaphors that would appeal to hearers. Because church members were not familiar with the classical authors and ancient Greek and Latin texts, Puritans refrained from using classical allusions in sermons. They did, however, purposefully employ metaphors not simply fitted to the social experience of church members but that also influenced the separate faculties of the soul—the will, imagination, affections, and understanding. Successful sermons needed to involve all the faculties. Puritan preaching included illustrations from both Scripture and

common experience. As a sea-faring people, Puritans were prompted to use maritime imagery. Such language was not as prominent as using types and shadows from the Old Testament to point to Christ as the fulfillment of salvation history.

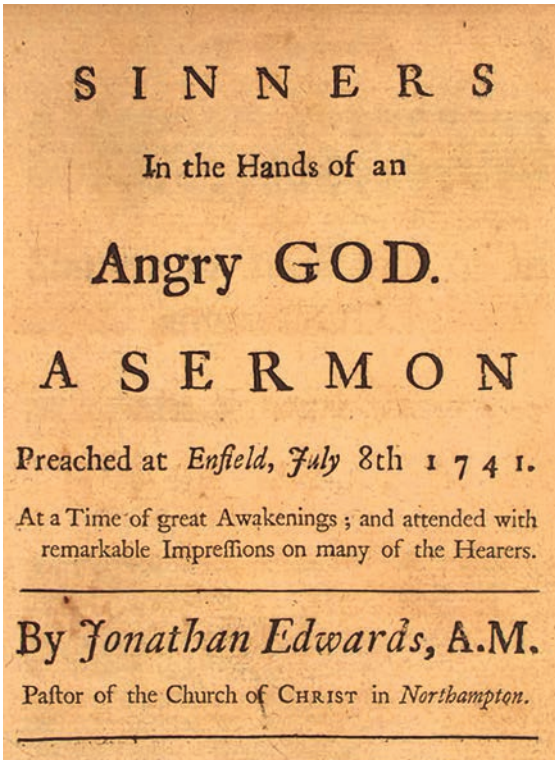
Puritan knowledge (and use) of the Old Testament drew upon Reformed Protestantism's highly elaborate covenant theology. The Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* invited close scrutiny of all Scripture, which in turn launched intricate interpretations of the covenants that God established with humans, from the covenant of works in the Garden of Eden to the covenant of grace that proceeds from Abraham and Moses to David and Jesus as the mediator of a "new" phase in the history of redemption. As much as covenant theology could lead Puritans to imagine themselves the New Israel with attendant obligations for personal and national obedience that could lapse into moralism, this theological grid also added another layer to the depth of Puritan intellectual achievement. Not only were Puritans well trained in the regular arts curriculum, but to stay conversant with their peers, pastors needed to give careful scrutiny to both Scripture and systematic theology.

One of the most famous Puritan sermons on American shores is Jonathan Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Born in 1703 (East Windsor, Connecticut), Edwards was several generations removed from New England pastors who cultivated the standards and style of Puritan preaching. Some even argue that by Edwards' time, the ideals of and hopes for Puritanism of the early 17th century had failed. However someone comes down on that point, Edwards' sermons demonstrate all the habits of Puritan preaching. "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," included in most anthologies of American literature, follows the standard order of a Puritan sermon: text, doctrine, reasons, and application. In this case, Edwards' text was Deuteronomy 32:35: "Their foot shall slide in due time." His doctrine was the sure destruction of sinners owing to their wickedness and unbelief, and that the only circumstance keeping persons "out of hell" was the "meer [*sic*] pleasure of God." From there, Edwards developed reasons for 25 paragraphs, all to support the assertion that "natural men are held in the hand of God over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to

A 1562 printing of the 1559 Book of Common Prayer



Cover sheet of Jonathan Edwards' famous 1741 sermon



> **PURITAN KNOWLEDGE (AND USE) OF THE OLD TESTAMENT DREW UPON REFORMED PROTESTANTISM'S HIGHLY ELABORATE COVENANT THEOLOGY.**

it." Even more dramatic, perhaps, was Edwards' additional comment that "the devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold of them, and swallow them up." The most famous part of the sermon came in the application, when Edwards employed the imagery of a spider, though his claims about God may strike moderns as more provocative:

> The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire;…you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes than the most hateful venomous serpent is in yours.

As Cara Ball argues, Edwards' sermon became famous not for the doctrines he explains but for its "sustained imagery." He employed so many images and made their realities so immediate that listeners "were left with no escape." Ball adds that what has impressed literary scholars is "the sermon's raw immediacy, intensely personal tone, escalating emotional appeal, syllogistic structure and pulsating rhythm." Yet "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" exhibits the sort of learning, theology, and attention to Scripture that characterizes Puritan sermons generally, even as it stands out among them.

When surveying Puritans in New England, Jonathan Edwards receives the lion's share of attention (in

Frontispiece of *A Compleat Body of Divinity in Two Hundred and Fifty Expository Lectures* by Samuel Willard (1726) / Public Domain / Wikimedia Commons

Engraved portrait of Samuel Willard (1640–1707)

England, he does not rank as high as Richard Baxter, John Owen, and Thomas Manton). Still, because Puritans excelled at preaching, the ranks of gifted pastors even in North America extend well beyond Edwards, who came at the tail end of Puritanism in its most vigorous expression. Among American Puritans, Samuel Willard, Urian Oakes, and Thomas Hooker—all 17th-century figures—stand out as skilled exemplars of Puritan preaching in the New World.

Samuel Willard (1640–1707) was born in Concord and trained for the ministry at Harvard College. His first call was to a church in Groton, a town roughly 25 miles northwest of Boston, then on the border between English settlements and Native American territories. In 1676, hostilities between the colonists and natives forced the town to scatter, at which point Willard received a call to Old South Church in Boston, where he ministered until his death. (He was also vice president of Harvard for the last six years of his life.)

Willard's funeral sermon for John Hull, Esq., on Psalm 116:15, "The High Esteem which God Hath of the Death of His Saints," mixed Puritan zeal and communal compassion. He reminded his congregation that the deceased's status as a saint was more important than family relations or friendship. "That they were Saints…makes their loss to be greater

***Hooker and Company Journeying through the Wilderness from Plymouth to Hartford, in 1636,* by Frederic Edwin Church (1846)**

than any other Relation doth or can." Others' tears are natural, but when a saint dies, he "deserves the *tears of Israel*." Although all praise for the deceased's accomplishments would fade compared to a life of faith in Christ, Willard acknowledged the significance of death in human terms. Boston's government had lost a magistrate, the town a benefactor, the church an "honourable member," his family a husband and father. Despite all these accomplishments, "this outshines them all: that he was a Saint upon Earth; that he lived like a Saint here and died the precious Death of a Saint, and now is gone to rest with the Saints in glory."

Urian Oakes (1631–1681) spanned the worlds of 17th-century Puritanism. Born in England, as a baby he accompanied his parents to Massachusetts Bay and eventually graduated from Harvard. In 1654 he returned to England only to be ejected in 1662 from his pulpit, thanks to the religious policies of Charles II. Back in North America, he was a pastor in Cambridge before presiding over Harvard for the last five years of his life. His 1677 Election Day sermon, "The Sovereign Efficacy of Divine Providence," based on Isaiah 41:14–15, was a reminder that for many Puritans the Protestant work ethic was never separate from God's control of all affairs. "In him we live and move, and have our being," Oakes explained. The counsels of civil magistrates, "how rational soever," would "not prosper" without God's blessing. The same went for pastors, "how sufficient soever, pious, learned, industrious, [and] zealous." They could convert or edify no man without God. Even in battle, training was in vain "unless the Lord bless." He added that "when valiant Souldiers come to fight; whatever Skill, and Strength, and Courage, and Conduct, and Advantages they have, yet they will be worsted, if the Lord do not give Success." Oakes did not say that human striving is pointless. Human agency was indeed valuable. But in the overall scheme of earthly affairs, the success of a proper use of human ability depended on God's sovereign plan.

As much as Puritans looked to God for succor in distress and acknowledged dependence on God's ultimate and hidden purposes, they did not neglect the interior life, as Thomas Hooker proved in his preaching. Born in 1586, Hooker came to America after Archbishop William Laud forced him out of the ministry. Hooker first pastored in Newtown, Massachusetts, before relocating in 1636 to Hartford, where he became the dominant figure in the Hartford colony's brief history. His 1656 sermon "The application of redemption by the effectual work of the word, and spirit of Christ," based on 1 Peter 1:18, is a reminder that Edwards was not unusual in describing the effects of sin. On the one hand, Hooker explained that sin's heinousness stemmed from its jostling "the Almighty out of the Throne of his Glorious Sovereignty" by placing the sinner's will above the divine. On the other hand, Hooker was not reluctant to use the consequences

of sin to scare his auditors. The enormity of sin made plausible that a "Terrible God" punished "a poor insolent worm" and sent him "packing to the pitt." Hooker could heap it on, such as when he declared, "Suppose thou heardest the Devils roaring, and sawest Hell gaping, and flames of everlasting burnings flashing before thine eyes; it's certain it were better for thee to be cast into those inconceivable torments than to commit the least sine against the Lord."

And yet Hooker was not all fire and brimstone. His counsel against sin came in one of his books, *Application of Redemption* (1656), where he correlated the effectiveness of preaching. Hooker drove home the point that Christians needed constantly to examine themselves. The ministry of the word was ineffectual among sinners. Instead, God "drives the sinner to sad thoughts of heart, and makes him keep an audit in his soul by serious meditation, and pondering his waies" before "working kindly" through the preaching of the word.

As intellectually challenging and as heavily doctrinal as Puritan sermons could be (especially by contemporary standards), preaching was not merely a way for pastors to show off. Many historians have argued that the care Puritans devoted to their sermons stemmed directly from pastoral care for the cure of souls. David D. Hall, one of the greatest American historians of Puritanism, highlights the simple reality of Puritan (and Reformed) piety, namely, that preaching was "the chief means of grace." The best way to attend to the health of church members' souls was by preaching sermons that were both accurate in their presentation of biblical truth and that took Scripture teaching from bare abstraction to immediate appeals to the hearts (or faculties) of believers.

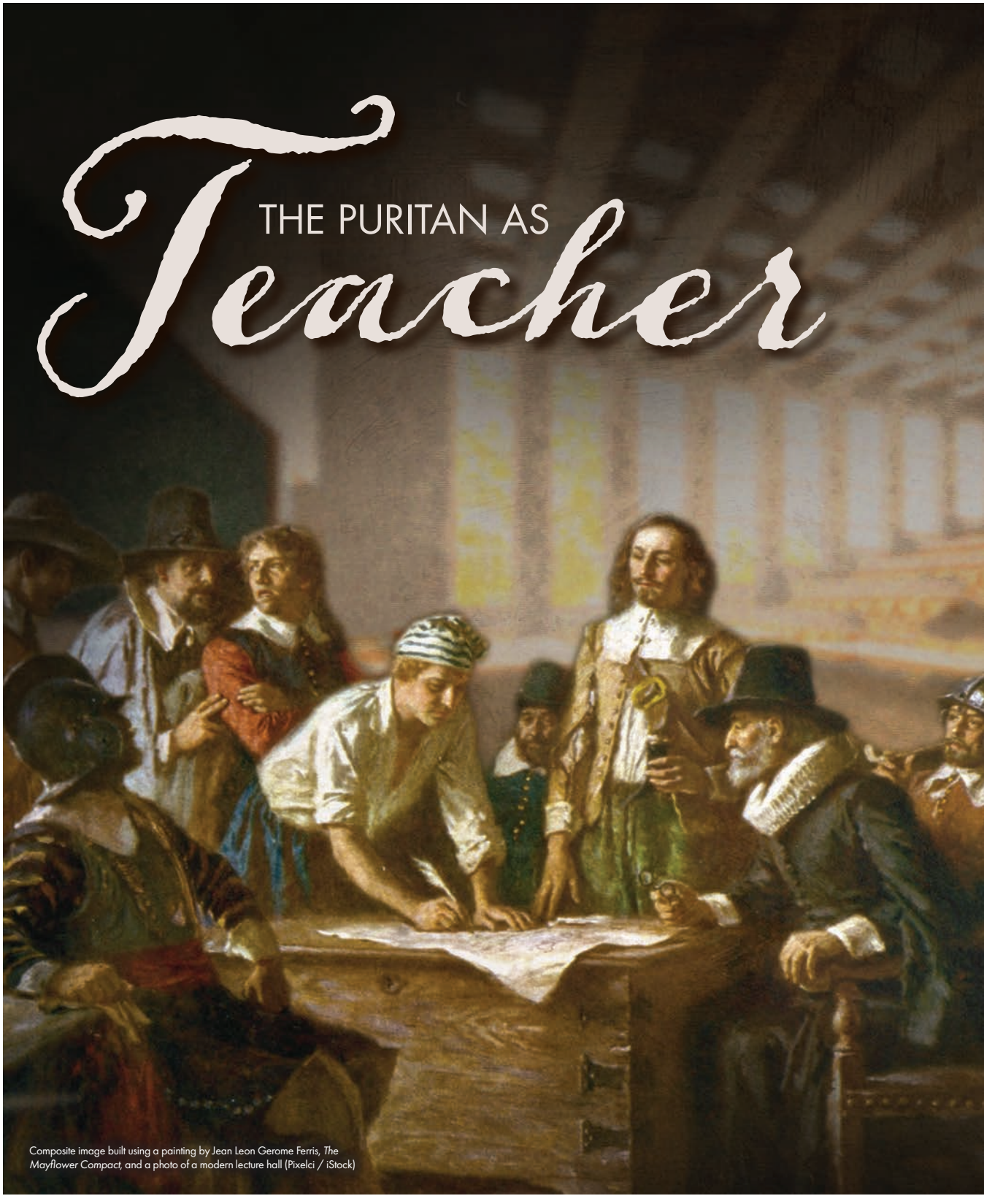

Jesse Kunerth / Shutterstock

Although Puritans did not subscribe to the Second Helvetic Confession, their high estimate of preaching was akin to the first chapter of the Zurich church's statement of faith (1566). Because Scripture was the source of "true wisdom and godliness, the reformation and government of churches," preaching the word "is the word of God." "Wherefore when this Word of God is now preached in the church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very Word of God is proclaimed, and received by the faithful." Even if the pastor were "evil and a sinner," the word preached "remains still true and good." Again, the Puritans themselves did not necessarily affirm this Swiss confession, but English Puritans were in the vicinity of it when they wrote in the Westminster Shorter Catechism that the Spirit made "the reading but especially the preaching of the Word" an effectual means of salvation.

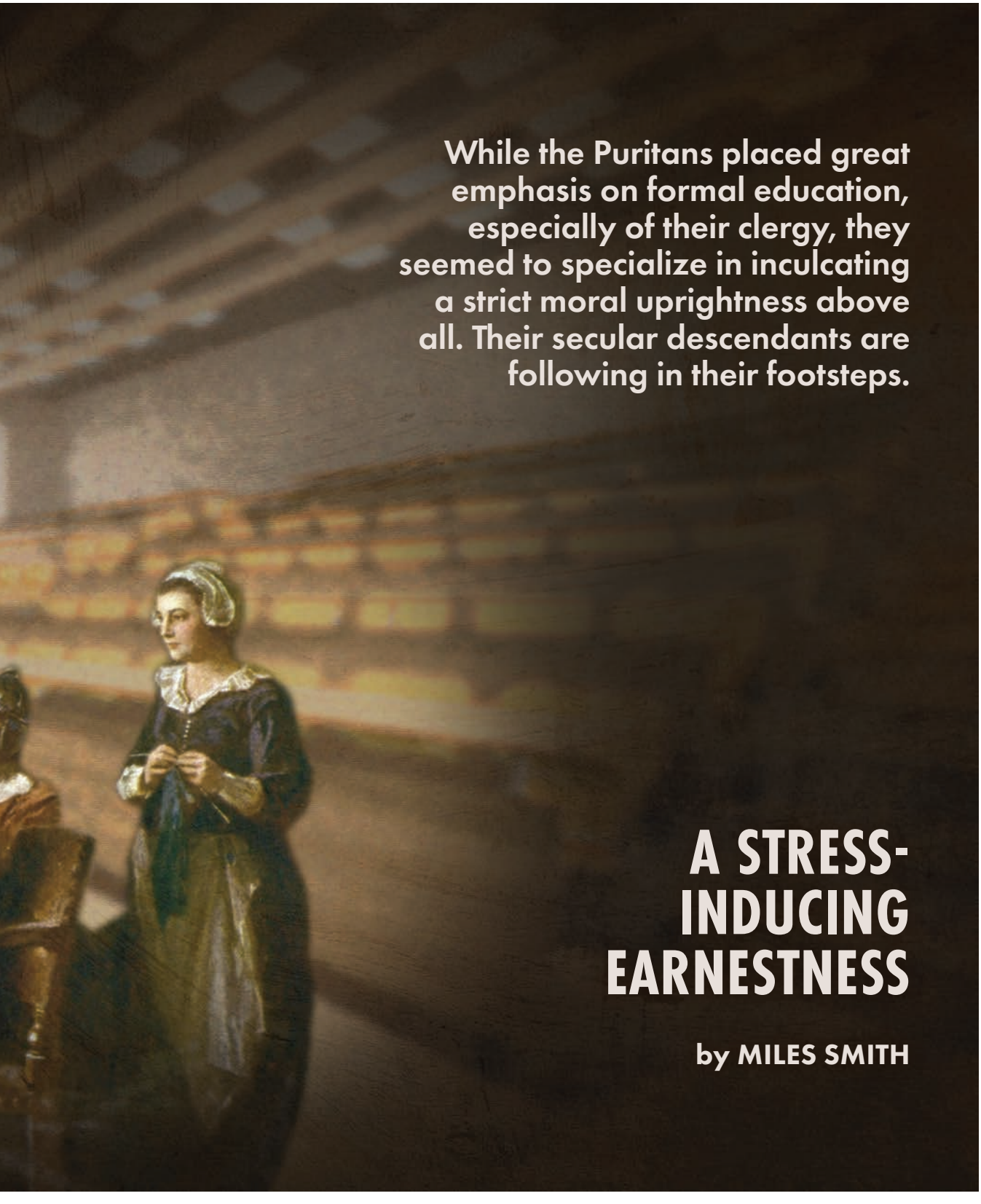
Of course, Protestants reduced the western church's sacraments from seven to two—baptism and the Lord's Supper—and did not conceive of preaching as a sacrament. But the effect of the early Protestant estimate of preaching was to endow the words of the pastor during worship services on the Sabbath with a meaning and function that resembled Roman Catholics' high regard for the Mass. The legacy of Puritan preaching is still discernible in contemporary Protestant worship. As much as the liturgy of praise bands and Hawaiian-shirt-wearing megachurch pastors has reduced Protestant worship to 30 minutes of singing and 30 minutes of speaking, preaching remains a defining characteristic of Protestant expectations for worship services. Contemporary sermons may seem more like TED talks than deep dives into Scripture. Acquaintance with theology and rhetoric may be far removed from distracting illustrations and lame attempts at humor. But Protestant leaders of churches and the people who go to them still expect a longish period of instruction based on some part of the Bible. If today's Protestants do not compare favorably with the Puritans, the tradition of preaching that those English Protestants in both Old and New England developed remains strangely alive. RL

D.G. Hart *teaches history at Hillsdale College and is the author most recently of* Benjamin Franklin: Cultural Protestant.

THE PURITAN AS *Teacher*



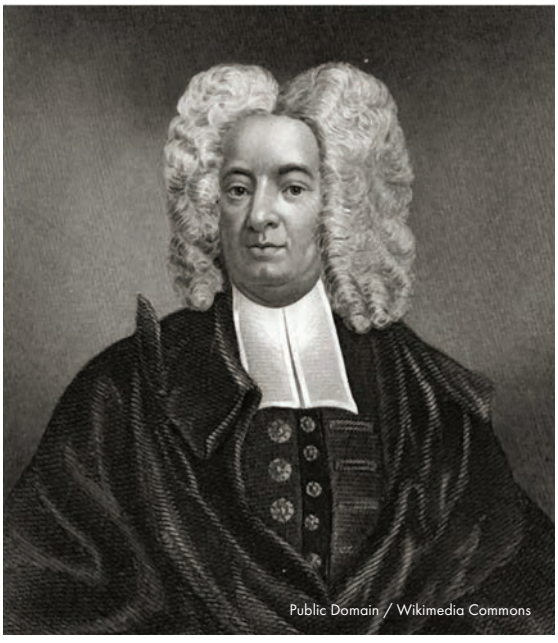
Composite image built using a painting by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris, *The Mayflower Compact*, and a photo of a modern lecture hall (Pixelci / iStock)



While the Puritans placed great emphasis on formal education, especially of their clergy, they seemed to specialize in inculcating a strict moral uprightness above all. Their secular descendants are following in their footsteps.

A STRESS-INDUCING EARNESTNESS

by MILES SMITH



Mezzotint of Cotton Mather (1663–1728) by Peter Pelham

IN THINKING ABOUT the Puritan education legacy, Yale and Harvard come immediately to mind. In fact, in 1702 Cotton Mather, the leading Puritan intellectual in colonial New England, published his *Magnalia Christi Americana: or, the Ecclesiastical History of New-England*. Mather extolled his Puritan forebears for their emphasis on educational institutions and commitment to the liberal arts. Even the so-called Pilgrims, who wanted to separate from what they believed were hopelessly corrupt British governmental and religious institutions in the Old World, believed that the creation of educational institutions was vital for the good of their new godly commonwealth. William Bradford, the Pilgrim leader, "attained unto a notable skill in languages: the Dutch tongue was become almost as vernacular to him as the English; the French tongue he could also manage; the Latin and the Greek he had mastered." Bradford "was also well skilled in History, in Antiquity, and in Philosophy." John Winthrop, whose "city on a hill" image so influenced American politics, studied Greek and Latin in his boyhood as well as the works of Virgil, Horace, Cicero, Caesar, and Sallust. When the Puritans created their own colleges—Harvard in 1636 and Yale in 1701—they continued a firm institutional commitment to the liberal arts inherited from the medievals and the early moderns. Harvard's 1650 charter announced that "through the good hand of God many well devoted persons have been and daily are moved and stirred up to give and bestow sundry gifts, legacies, lands, and revenues for the advancement of all good literature arts and sciences in Harvard College." Harvard's mission was to provide the "necessary provisions that may conduce to the education of the English and Indian youth of this country in knowledge and godliness."

Yet, the case could be made that this is not their real legacy. As early as 1828, Yale published an educational report that addressed a loosening of standards, as more American colleges offered an increasingly democratized curriculum that deemphasized

> **MATHER EXTOLLED HIS PURITAN FOREBEARS FOR THEIR EMPHASIS ON EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND COMMITMENT TO THE LIBERAL ARTS.**

classical languages and history. The offering of electives and the downplaying of core curricula typified the new and often vibrant frontier colleges that sprouted up across the Old Northwest—the modern Midwest—and the trans-Appalachian South. Yale, however, unambiguously sided with a conservative and highly institutional educational framework, rejecting the idea that ancient languages were "dead languages" and declared to the republic that the Classics and their adjoining languages would continue to be not only prioritized but central to the college's educational mission. Theirs would prove a quixotic effort, as the real influence of Puritanism on how we think, especially how we think about ourselves, lay elsewhere.

In 2022, conservative commentator, journalist, and writer Noah Rothman published *The Rise of the New Puritans*. His thesis seemed self-explanatory; he intended to "establish parallels linking efforts in the Anglo-American world to guard the public morality against degeneracy throughout history from the late sixteenth century to today." Rothman's feelings about the Puritans' latter-day successors were unambiguous. Rothman's purpose was "not only to condemn and inform but to popularize this case against new puritanism." Rothman nonetheless recognized the virtues of the puritan impulse. "The mission in which the modern left is engaged is grounded in an older value system that has survived throughout the centuries because of its manifest virtues." Unquestionably, "those who believe in this project have gone overboard in its pursuit.…But their excesses are a by-product of their belief in high-minded principles and the desire to leave our children with a better world than the one into which we were born." The new puritans, like the old ones, were people, not "one-dimensional villains." Fundamentally the new puritan pursuit is a single-minded attempt to resurrect the social compact. Decadence, humor, and levity must be crushed. The new puritan project, Rothman humorously and simply observes, "is not going to be fun." But then again, neither was the old Puritan project, despite its manifold achievements. Even the venerable Puritan legacy of the so-called Pilgrims of New England was never particularly popular, even in the 17th and 18th centuries.

By the 19th century, latter-day Puritans like Nathaniel Hawthorne questioned their ancestors' legacy. Arlo Bates, literature professor at MIT at the turn of the 20th century, summed up the conflicted Puritan legacy in his 1899 novel, *The Puritans*, when one character tells another: "We are all the children of the Puritans.…Of course there is an ethical strain in all of us." Nonetheless, even the scions of the Puritans were "oppressed by the weight of the Puritan creed," while others found even Puritanism hardly strict enough. Rothman, like Bates, recognizes the disparity between the influence of the Puritans and their contested legacy. "The old Puritanism left an indelible mark on American culture and politics, but the Puritans are not remembered fondly for their efforts. Their utopian and conformist vision of how society should be structured set them up for failure."

Despite their lost influence, the Puritans are still with us, for better or worse. And they still teach us, for better or worse. Bates hit on the heart of the Puritans' relationship to the American republic past and present when he wrote of the "stress of Puritanism." Stress can overwhelm the student and lead to dysfunction; it can also strengthen the learner. Puritanism was, and still is, the stress that has taught the American order its greatest vices, and most pronounced virtues. And that Puritan stress, as Rothman notes, shows no sign of going away in the 21st century.

The Puritans' penchant for teaching showed itself from almost the moment they landed at Salem and Boston at the end of the 1620s. Unlike the separationist English Protestants—known in the era as Brownists—who founded the Plymouth Colony in 1620, New England's Puritans included men with relatively elite educations and

Portrait of John Winthrop (1588–1649) by unknown artist

with impressive social pedigrees. The Brownists loathed state intervention in religion and actually did come to the New World seeking a legitimately expansive understanding of religious freedom, especially for the 17th century. The Puritans, however, remained committed to the particular English Protestant Erastianism inherited from the Anglican Church of England of the 16th and early 17th centuries. The state, like the Bible, was a teacher, and a state wedded to the Bible á la the Puritan Commonwealth was committed to using state power to teach, whether the laity—or citizenry, given that there wasn't much of a distinction in New England—liked it or not.

John Winthrop's "Modell of Christian Charity" argued explicitly that the Bible and the law were not only teachers but *stern* teachers that placed a certain amount of stress on its citizen-students. The law of God, Winthrop said, was not something that could be treated lightly or even used universally. Those who learned the Puritan understanding of the law as a teacher accepted that the same law taught that Christians must be separated from unbelievers. The law "so teaches us to put a difference between Christians and others. Do good to all, especially to the household of faith; upon this ground the Israelites were to put a difference between the brethren of such as were strangers though not of Canaanites." The New England Commonwealth of the 17th century made Christianity synonymous with citizenship. There was, therefore, an implicitly sectarian and even xenophobic message learned from Puritan teachers. The Puritans not only were different from their neighbors; they had a divine right to rule over them.

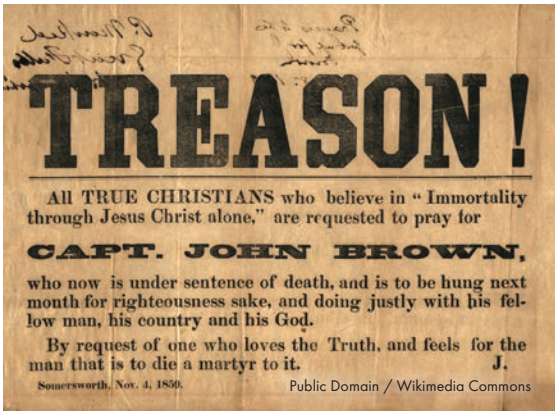
Puritan moral teaching was not seen as something that made Puritans' lives easier than the lives of those they separated from, however. Puritan teaching placed a certain amount of stressful expectation on the Puritans themselves. The Puritans, declared Winthrop, would "be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us, so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world." Puritan failures would "open the mouths of enemies to speak evil of the ways of God, and all professors for God's sake. We shall shame the faces of many of God's worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into curses upon us till we be consumed out of the good land whither we are going." As Richard M. Gamble, Anna Margaret Ross Alexander Chair in History and Politics at Hillsdale College, notes in his *In Search of the City on a Hill: The Making and Unmaking of an American Myth*, Winthrop's city on a hill image was more a stress-inducing warning than a claim to proto-American exceptionalism.

Yet the expectation and stress of Puritan teaching paid off. Historian David Hall of Harvard Divinity School and author of *The Puritans* notes that, by the middle of the 17th century, "the good news outweighed the bad" in the Puritan Commonwealth. The stress of being the city on a hill, it seems, had taught the population more good lessons than bad ones. "The several colonial governments were well on the road to stability…efforts to sustain 'mutual love' when it came to initial grants of land created something akin to equality." Politically and socially, "the colonists were ahead of their times." By 1640, New England's Puritans shared "a structure of government that, by European standards, was remarkably democratic." Any adult, free or slave, male or female, had a right to petition the government. Even non–church members gained access to property ownership. As Great Britain tore itself apart over monarchy and parliamentary sovereignty in the middle of the 17th century, Puritan New England emerged as a democratic, egalitarian, and stable Protestant state in North America.

Puritan stability, however, was not a synonym for Puritan satisfaction. Eighteenth-century Puritans inherited their predecessors' conception of a perfectly holy God who made demands—often stressful demands—on his chosen people. The American desire—the American need—to change the world for the better can be traced to the Puritans' desire to reform constantly their own society. The essential transitional figure who recast the Puritan legacy into a form consumable for the new American republic was Jonathan Edwards. Historians such as George Marsden, Mark Noll, and William Goetzmann all have noted Edwards' role in the development of the eventual American intellectual tradition. That Edwards was an educator seems fitting; he taught the United States how to think of God, and how to understand the high demands and expectations God had for His people. Perry Miller noted that Edwards got to the heart of the Puritan understanding of the world when he wrote that "the particular time will never come when it can be said, the union is now infinitely perfect." The union between God and man would never be perfect, so Edwards and the Puritans of the 18th century maintained the same stress-inducing earnest striving that drove their ancestors to create political New England. Edwards' presidency of the Presbyterian College of New Jersey exported that same union of educational institutionalism and sociomoral stress to the Mid-Atlantic colonies, which became the cultural and social powerhouse of the new American republic at the end of the 18th century.

This stress-induced earnestness was not seen as a vice but a virtue of Puritan teaching. By the 19th century, Puritan presumptions about their role in doing God's will, the stress they laid on actualizing the divine will, created a society confident enough to march toward what they believed was inevitable moral reform—slavery being among the foremost institutions they wanted to eradicate—while also breeding a nearly unassailable moral presumption. The stress that Puritans felt, the earnestness with which they felt called to live their lives, drove Congregationalist minister John Dudley in 1851 Danville, Vermont, to place that earnestness on his parish. Moral stress was not a burden; it was an asset. Dudley preached from Acts 4:13, which stated that the early apostolic church "took knowledge of them that had been with Jesus." That passage, according to Dudley, embodied the "principle which in a very few years spread the Christian religion over the known world" and unfolded "the secret of that power, which, so far as human agency was concerned, overturned the world, and filled the Roman Empire—her colonies, cities, and villages; her forum and schools; her offices and armies—with Christians." The principle of earnestness, proclaimed Dudley, was "the manifestation of sincerity in what one professes to believe, and an earnestness in propagating that belief."

> "STRESS-INDUCED EARNESTNESS WAS NOT SEEN AS A VICE BUT A VIRTUE OF PURITAN TEACHING."


TREASON!

All TRUE CHRISTIANS who believe in "Immortality through Jesus Christ alone," are requested to pray for

CAPT. JOHN BROWN,

who now is under sentence of death, and is to be hung next month for righteousness sake, and doing justly with his fellow man, his country and his God.

By request of one who loves the Truth, and feels for the man that is to die a martyr to it. J.

Somersworth, Nov. 4, 1859.

Public Domain / Wikimedia Commons

November 1859 broadside prayer request for John Brown

Dudley invested Christian earnestness with world-changing power. "The world of mind," he proclaimed, "is in earnest for something; moving on and on with resistless force, gathering momentum with every stride. Everything gives symptoms of the earnestness which is impelling men to live in a hurry." The rest of the world, everyone around him, he extolled, "was rushing headlong, and we must run with them or be run over and trampled down by the crowd. Everything puts on the feature of earnestness." Even God's providences, he stated, were in

earnest. "The whole fabric of society trembles, as if shaken by a thousand earthquakes. The horizon darkens, the entire concave puts on the looks of agitation, as if all nature were in agony." New tokens of divine favor arose regularly, "which give assurance that Jehovah is in earnest, amid the tumult, and will bring order out of confusion." The stress that Puritans felt was an asset, according to men like Dudley. And maybe it was; Puritan stock drove Dudley politically and religiously to be a leading anti-slavery advocate and champion of abolition in his state.

New England's moral stress drove the Puritans' descendants to the heights of sacrificial moral action to free enslaved black Americans. And the same moral stress taught New Englanders to justify the depths of human depravity provided the end was deemed consistent with ostensibly biblical virtues. In 1856 John Brown, an abolitionist scion of Puritan New England, killed, mutilated, and dismembered six defenseless men in Kansas because he thought that his actions would help end slavery in the United States. In 1859, he tried to take over a federal weapons arsenal in Harper's Ferry, Virginia. The federal government executed Brown but not before his terrorism had been hailed as nobility in certain quarters of Northern opinion. Abraham Lincoln thought Brown got what was coming to him, as did most anti-slavery advocates. But it was left to another scion of the Puritans to issue perhaps the most definitive judgment on Brown, when an indignant Nathaniel Hawthorne declared of Brown that "never was a man more justly hanged." That the stressful morality of Puritans taught Brown to pursue violence in the service of moral ends and taught Hawthorne to accept the morally ambivalent order of his day over and against political violence illustrated the essential paradox of Puritanism in both the 19th and the early 21st centuries.

Poster for the 1995 film adaptation of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*

That the Puritans continue to influence and teach Americans in 2024 seems an unremarkable claim. Harry Stout, Jonathan Edwards Professor of American Christianity at Yale University, takes pains to mitigate the idea that the Puritans saw stress as a necessary teacher. The Puritans, Stout says, saw life as a grand adventure. They loved bright clothes and good food. They weren't, he notes, the dour scolds that their 20th-century enemies like Arthur Miller and H.L. Mencken made them out to be. And they undoubtedly

"NEW ENGLAND'S MORAL STRESS DROVE THE PURITANS' DESCENDANTS TO THE HEIGHTS OF SACRIFICIAL MORAL ACTION TO FREE ENSLAVED BLACK AMERICANS."

President Reagan meeting with President Carter in the Oval Office in 1981

taught America. "The Puritans believed that education was central to the Christian life. Harvard was formed while people were digging out the first settlements.…For the next two centuries, Harvard and Yale were emulated widely—until this century, when the university became secularized." The Puritans gave America a world-regenerative creed, a vision that America is "a city set upon a hill." That vision infuses American literature, foreign policy—our entire sense of identity. American presidents Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton spoke "of 'destiny' and 'providence.' Or civil-rights leaders speak of a dream of equal treatment under the law. All of these people are drawing from Puritan roots, whether they know it or not."

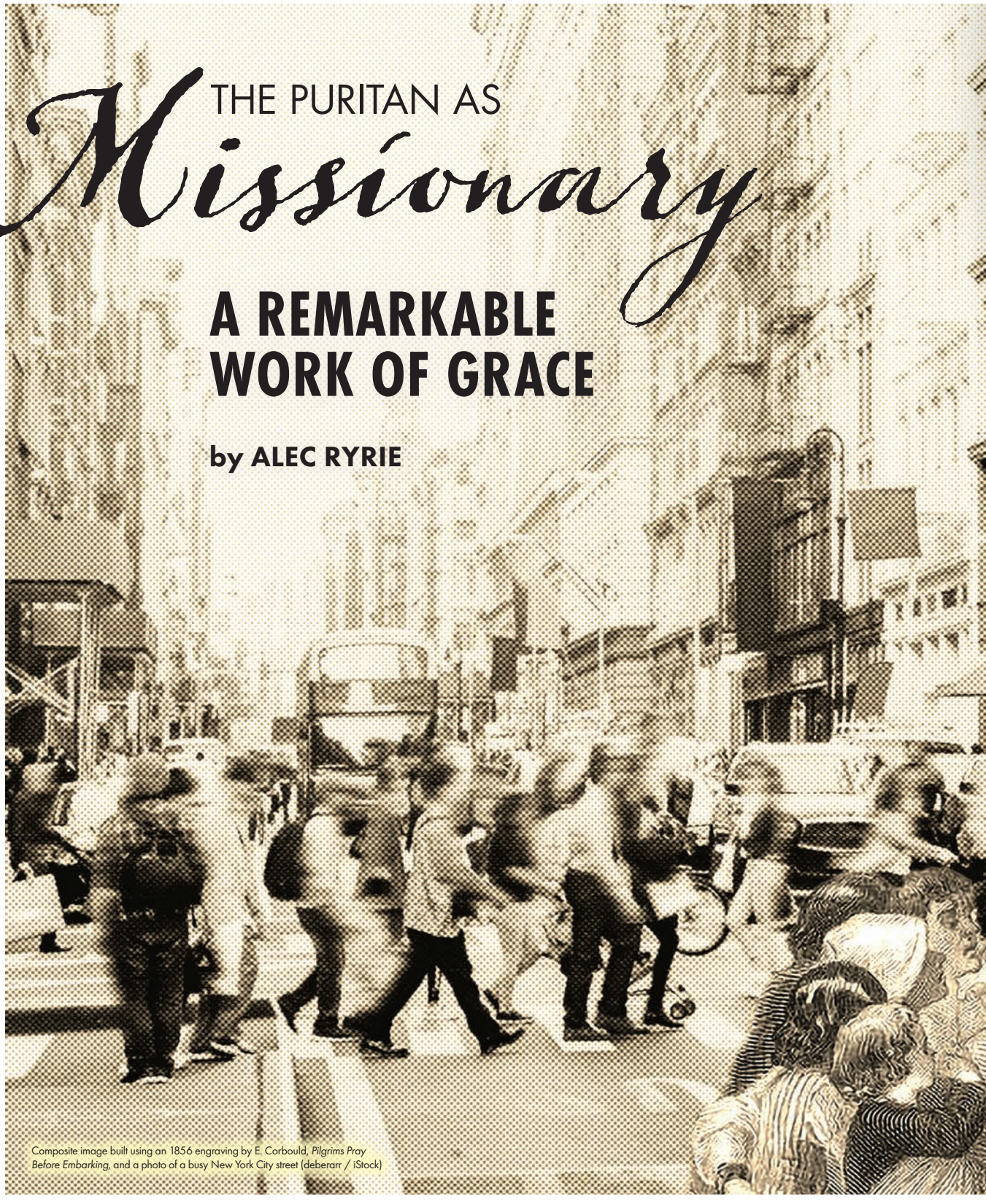
Americans have, incontrovertibly, learned from the Puritans. The moral stress that Puritan belief taught colonial New Englanders and then citizens of the United States offered the ethics necessary for very real political and moral achievements. The only problem, as Noah Rothman notes, is that no one likes them anymore. In the popular imagination, Puritans became laughingstocks "because they were so uncompromising, so unyielding in their value system. I foresee the same fate will befall the modern puritanical movement and its practitioners because they refuse to moderate their behavior." Moderation—a word that might better be translated in our own time as learning to chill out a bit—isn't a lesson the Puritans or their latter-day successors on both the left and the new right seem very interested in learning. Stress, apparently, remains valuable as an intellectual and social propellant. But no one likes stressed-out people, no matter how much they accomplish in 1624, 1724, 1824, or 2024. The best thing the Puritan legacy can offer is a moderated version of its virtues, shorn of the moral stress that so motivates the Puritans' illiberal devotees. If that makes the modern puritans a bit less Puritan, that might not be a bad thing. RL

Miles Smith *is a historian of the American South and the Atlantic World. He has taught at Hillsdale College, Regent University, and Texas Christian University, and is the author most recently of* Religion and Republic: Christian America from the Founding to the Civil War.

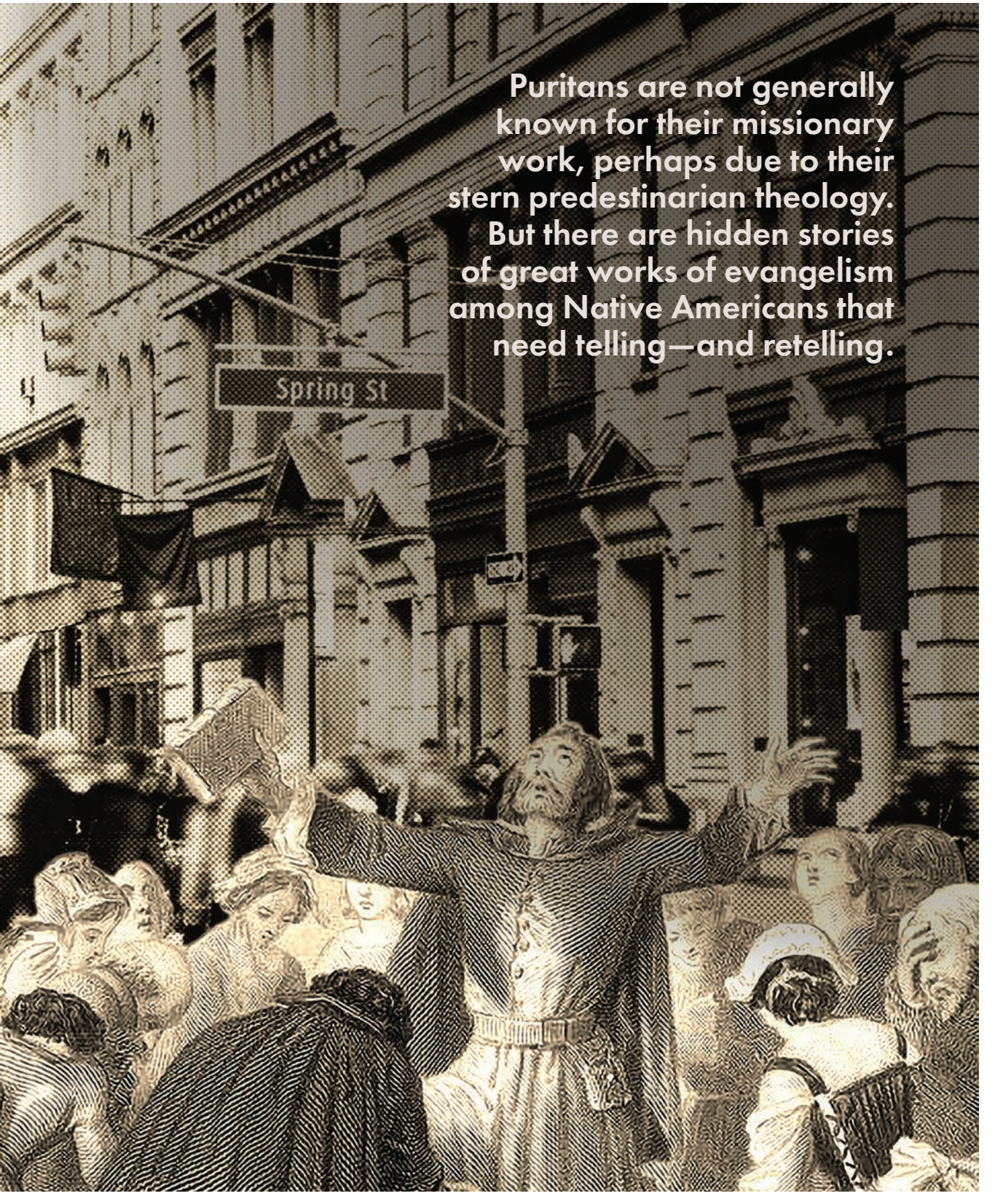
THE PURITAN AS *Missionary*

A REMARKABLE WORK OF GRACE

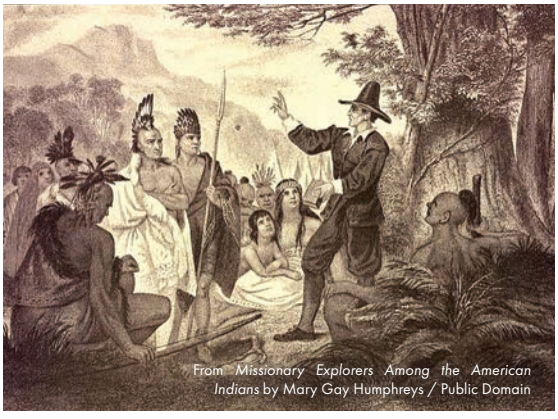
by ALEC RYRIE



Composite image built using an 1856 engraving by E. Corbould, *Pilgrims Pray Before Embarking,* and a photo of a busy New York City street (deberarr / iStock)



Puritans are not generally known for their missionary work, perhaps due to their stern predestinarian theology. But there are hidden stories of great works of evangelism among Native Americans that need telling—and retelling.



John Eliot preaching to Native Americans, unknown artist

THERE ARE GOOD REASONS to avoid the subject of missionary Puritanism—it is too fraught. Nowadays, Christian missions reek of white-savior cultural imperialism (at best). Puritans have a bad enough reputation already without this one being added to their charge sheet. And anyway, we tend to think they were not guilty. Their reputation in their own time, and since, was of being moralistic busybodies, too inward-facing and self-satisfied to bother with the godless heathen.

There is one famous exception: John Eliot, preacher at Roxbury, Massachusetts, known in his own lifetime as "the Apostle to the Indians." But the "praying towns," the self-governing Native American Christian republics he founded, were shattered by the bloody settler-Native conflict known as King Philip's War (1675–8). Eliot looks less like an exemplar than a voice crying in the wilderness to a Puritan culture that did not want to hear.

But there is a little more to be said about Puritan efforts to convert non-Christians in the colonial era. Eliot's contemporaries may not look like active missionaries, but they had their reasons for acting as they did, reasons that might seem disconcertingly modern. Nor did Puritan missions die with Eliot; there are stories from the 1700s that show how Puritan missions were caught up in—and sometimes transcended—the cruelties and tragedies of an era of colonial rapacity.

It is sometimes said that Calvinist doctrines of predestination made Puritans indifferent to missionary efforts, but this is simply untrue. It was often the most convinced predestinarians—like Eliot—who were the most determined to claim the honor of finding God's elect saints hidden in the heathen darkness. The early New England colonists, staunch defenders of predestinarian orthodoxy, claimed that "the propagating of the Gospel is the thing we do profess above all to be our aim in settling this Plantation." But their theology did shape their distinctive view of how it should be done.

Their hope, as the first formal instructions issued to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1629 put it, was to "draw the Heathen by our good example to the embracing of Christ and his Gospel." Their predecessors at Plymouth shared the same ethos: to live such exemplary lives, as a preacher there in 1621 had

told them, that Native Americans "should see and take knowledge of our labours, orders, and diligence, both for this life and a better," and would thereby be persuaded of the merits of their religion. The Puritans' "city on a hill" would be visible not only to Christendom but also to the pagan lands to the west.

This sort of talk may look desperately naive, or indeed a lazy excuse for inaction, but it was meant in earnest. For if there was one thing Puritan settlers passionately wanted to believe about themselves, it was that they were completely unlike the wicked Spaniards, who had enforced their false religion onto hapless Native Americans with cruel tortures. It became a matter of pride and of conscience: Puritans would not allow even a hint of religious coercion.

Instead, through their scrupulous fair dealing they would demonstrate that their faith was utterly unlike the Spaniards' corrupt idolatry. They would not pressure "the heathen" in any way to convert. Nor would they have to, since Native Americans would be allured by the self-evident simplicity of the Puritans' worship, the superiority of their doctrines, and the holiness of their lives. This was how the elect would be revealed. The Puritans' only responsibility, and their only right, was to be witnesses and exemplars. There are moments when this scrupulous respect for the independent spiritual agency of Native Americans feels startlingly in tune with 21st-century pluralism.

This blithe faith that mere benevolent example would be all that was needed to win converts could almost be charming if it did not have a dark streak running through it. We can see its sincerity in the way that repeated failure produced genuine bafflement. In 1723, after a century of "allurement" had not borne very much fruit, Solomon Stoddard admitted he was flummoxed by how, when such a pious people settled among the Native Americans, "they did not enquire into it whether the Doctrine that they professed was [true], or not." What was wrong with these people?

Perhaps it was the settlers' fault, since the embarrassing truth was that they did not, in fact, set a terribly good moral example. For all their high hopes, the real example the English set for Native Americans was of greed, drunkenness, prejudice, sharp dealing, and land-hungry rapacity. It was also clear that sermons were not going to solve that problem. So another explanation beckoned: It was the Native Americans' own fault. Stoddard concluded that they resisted Puritan allurement because they were "brutish," mere animals. "We gave the Heathen an Example, and if they had not been miserably besotted, they would have taken more notice of it." Indeed, settlers told themselves, Native Americans had not merely ignored the kindness and forbearance of their new neighbours; they had repayed it with violence. "Great care and pains hath been taken by us" with Native Americans, wrote one Massachusetts minister during King Philip's War; and now, he observed with malicious relish, look how they thank us! Plainly they had proved themselves "unworthy of the grace of the Gospel." All that the naivety of allurement achieved, in the end, was to allow the Puritans to cast themselves as the unlikely victims of the settler-Native encounter.

> "WHEN DAVID JONES MET A NATIVE AMERICAN WHO ASKED HIM WHEN EASTER WOULD FALL THAT YEAR, HE REPLIED THAT 'MY SOUL WAS FILLED WITH HORROR.'"

And so missionary Puritanism withered. We are left with figures like David Jones, a New Jersey Presbyterian who in 1772 took himself on a mission to the uncharted lands west of the Ohio river, intending to proclaim "the day of GOD's mercy and visitation of these *neglected* savage nations." His mission was an utter failure. Not only was he ignorant of Native American languages; he was also contemptuous of his interpreter, and bitterly resented how much he had to pay him. "Indians, from the greatest to the least, seem mercenary and excessively greedy of gain." Nor was it much better when he did succeed in communicating. When Jones met a Native American who asked him when Easter would fall that year, his immediate reaction was that his soul "was filled with horror," leading him to expostulate against the "superstitious relics of the scarlet whore," meaning not just Easter but the December festival he called "Popemas." You can take the Presbyterian out of Princeton, but you can't take Princeton out of the Presbyterian.

Portrait of Samson Occom (1723–1792) by Nathaniel Smibert

Portrait of Eleazar Wheelock (1711–1779) by Joseph Steward

But there is more to missionary Puritanism than this. Two remarkable 18th-century cases show how hard it was for missionary Puritans to work against the background of rapacious settler expansion, but also show that, even in that context, something could be done.

Samson Occom was a Mohegan Indian from Connecticut, born in 1723, converted by a revivalist preacher in his teens, and educated by the Congregationalist pioneer of Native American education, Eleazar Wheelock. Occom became a schoolmaster among the Mohegans of Long Island and in 1759 received Presbyterian ordination. He lived simply among his flock, supported himself and his family with the work of his hands, led an evangelical awakening on the island, and took what he called "a mild way" that avoided the divisions so often sparked by the revivals of this era. You could be forgiven for imagining him a man of saintly patience.

But that was not Occom, who knew exactly what it meant to be a Native American missionary in a white church. For one thing, he knew how little he was paid: £15 a year even after a decade's service, less than a third of what the New England Company's commissioners would have given to a callow white minister. "I Can't Conceive how these gentlemen would have me Live," he wrote. "What can be the Reason that they used me after this manner?…I believe it is because I am a poor Indian. I Can't help that God has made me So; I did not make my self So." When a neighbouring white schoolmaster, Robert Clelland, tried to seize some of Occom's lands, Occom responded with fury:

> Take Care that you don't turn your Self out of Heaven—…you represent me to be the Vilest Creature in Mohegan; I own I am bad enough, and too bad, Yet I am Heartily glad that I am not that old Robert Clelland, his Sins won't be Charged to me.…I am, Sir, Just What you Please, S. Occom.

This sort of thing got him labeled a troublemaker. Eventually his stipend was stopped altogether.

He had one supporter, however: his old teacher Eleazar Wheelock, who now made a suggestion of his own. Wheelock's Native American school was underfunded and dogged by accusations that he was using his pupils as forced labor. He hoped to reestablish it with a proper endowment. Occom agreed to travel to Britain to raise funds.

He was there from 1766 to 1768, and hated it. On its fact, the tour was a storming success: He raised some £13,000. But he bitterly missed his wife and

family, and he did not much like his hosts, to whom he was merely "a Spectacle and a Gazing Stock." British crowds wanted to gawp at him, not listen to him. And, like any good Puritan, he despised England's bishops, who "don't look like Gospel Bishops or ministers of Christ." They gave him lukewarm encouragement and no money:

> It seems to me that they are very indifferent whether the poor Indians go to Heaven or Hell. I can't help my thoughts; and I am apt to think they don't want the Indians to go to Heaven with them.

But he posed for crowds and bit his tongue.

When he finally returned home, his situation deteriorated further. In 1769 he was accused of drunkenness, which seems simply to have related to self-medicating after a shoulder injury, but given the stereotype of Native American alcoholism, this accusation was lethal. Wheelock now took the opportunity to drop his fundraiser. When he established his new institution, Dartmouth College, with Occom's funds, it rapidly became clear that this was not going to be a missionary school but just another college for wealthy young white men.

Occom's sense of betrayal was complete. In a volcanic letter to Wheelock, he wrote:

> Your Seminary…is already adorned up too much like the Popish Virgin Mary.…Your College has too much Worldly Grandeur for the Poor Indians; they'll never have much benefit of it.

Like a fool, he said, he had believed Wheelock's promises, left his young family, crossed the ocean, and humiliated himself for months on end in pursuit of a missionary dream. "Now I am afraid, we shall be Deemed as Liars and Deceivers." He recalled a conversation he had with the great evangelical preacher George Whitefield before he left England:

> Ah, says he, you have been a fine Tool to get Money for them, but when you get home, they won't Regard you, they'll Set you adrift.—I am ready to believe it Now.

Occom and Wheelock had a final meeting, but all Occom could do was tell his former mentor he would answer before God for his deceit.

And yet Occom was unbowed. He continued ministering. A sermon he preached at an execution in 1772 became a bestseller, going through 19 editions. No Native American writer had ever achieved anything like that kind of success, and it made him a sought-after celebrity preacher. He used his fame to establish a new, pantribal Native American Christian community named Brothertown in upstate New York, where a neighbouring minister believed that "there is no Indian…who has more inveterate prejudices against white people than Mr. Occom." In fact, Occom could also be unsparing about his own people's failings, but it is true that he would not wink at white folks' sins, in particular at slavery. He never kept anyone in slavery himself, insisting that those who did so "are no Christians; they are unbelievers."

So his story is one of prejudice, defeat, and betrayal; but also of Puritan virtues: righteous anger and mulish persistence. And the legacy he left is deep. The Brothertown Indian Nation that he forged in the wake of the American Revolution relocated to Wisconsin in the 1830s and survives as a thousands-strong community down to the present, despite being denied formal federal recognition. Occom would recognize both that community's ongoing struggles and its stubborn endurance.

Dartmouth College in 2011

Msact at English Wikipedia / CC BY-SA 3.0 / Wikimedia Commons

A sign welcoming visitors to Tatamy, Pennsylvania

David Brainerd's case is very different. He was the 18th century's most celebrated missionary to Native Americans—and another staunch predestinarian—but at the heart of his much-told story is a mystery that enables us to see his ministry, and with it missionary Puritanism more widely, in a different light.

When Brainerd died in 1747, aged 29, he had spent less than four years as a missionary, first at the forks of the Delaware River in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and then at Crossweeksung, New Jersey. Until the final year of his mission, he admitted he had not "had any considerable appearance of special Success"—that is, his ministry had been outwardly almost fruitless. He was certainly fervently committed to "the enlightening and conversion of the poor Heathen," but he was already gravely ill with tuberculosis and prey to weeks-long bouts of debilitating spiritual anxiety and depression. He was also, naturally, entirely dependent on interpreters. When he moved to Crossweeksung in June 1745, he was "exceedingly depressed with a View of the Unsuccessfulness of my Labours," believed himself to be a worthless burden to his sponsors, and considered resigning.

And then something remarkable happened. He preached to the seven or eight Native Americans living near his new base. The next day, they asked him to preach again. "None made any Objection, as *Indians* in other Places have usually done." After three days, his congregation was nearly 30 strong; a week or two later, 40. Some began to show signs of being struck to the heart by his message. Brainerd was sure this awakening would soon subside, but it only strengthened. Barely a month after arriving, he baptized his first converts. Many more followed over the next year. On August 8, "the Power of God seemed to descend upon the Assembly *like a rushing mighty Wind*.…They were almost universally praying and crying for Mercy in every Part of the House.…A surprising Day of God's Power."

Surprising indeed, but naturally Brainerd's admirers have had no desire to explain the mystery. The glory of this awakening lies in its very improbability. If this solitary, sickly, depressive minister showed no previous signs of being able to kindle such flames, that simply demonstrates that God's Spirit was at work through him. Which may be true, but there is another solution hiding in plain sight: Brainerd had just changed his interpreter.

The man's name was Moses Tunda Tatamy—a name Brainerd mentioned only once, amid several references to him simply as "my Interpreter." Tatamy

first catches our eye because he and his wife were the first two converts baptized in July 1745. Brainerd had first hired him because of his linguistic skills, but initially worried that "he seemed to have little or no Impression of Religion upon his Mind, and in that Respect was very *unfit* for his Work.…I laboured under great disadvantages in addressing the *Indians*, for want of his having an experimental, as well as more doctrinal Acquaintance with divine Truths."

And yet, over the winter of 1744–5, Tatamy was "somewhat awakened" by Brainerd's preaching. Brainerd was initially skeptical about this conversion, but what convinced him was the change in his work as Brainerd's interpreter when they came to Crossweeksung:

> There was a surprising Alteration in his public Performances. He now addressed the *Indians* with admirable Fervency, and scarce knew when to leave off: And sometimes when I had concluded my Discourse, and was returning homeward, he would tarry behind to repeat and inculcate what had been spoken.

Tatamy is a constant, understated presence throughout Brainerd's account of the awakening. The converts "were much assisted by my *Interpreter*, who was with them Day and Night." Tatamy informed Brainerd of who was "under Concern' and who had "received Comfort" before accompanying him to counsel them individually. When Brainerd himself traveled, he worried that the fervor would fade in his absence and praised God on his return to find it had not, for Tatamy had been there the whole time. By contrast, in September 1745, fresh from the revival, Brainerd visited another nation, on the Susquehanna river; but his preaching there fell on stony ground. Tatamy did not speak their language.

Brainerd openly, if not quite fully, recognized Tatamy's contribution. Preaching through an interpreter was generally a poor business, but thanks to Tatamy's "sense of divine Things," Brainerd believed his sermons had lost nothing "of the Power or Pungency with which they were made." He also knew that Tatamy was not merely translating:

> He was rendered capable of understanding and communicating, without mistakes, the *Intent* and *Meaning* of my Discourses, and that without being confined *strictly* and obliged to interpret *verbatim*.…When I was…enabled to speak with more than common *Freedom*, *Fervency* and *Power*, under a *lively* and *affecting Sense* of divine Things, he was usually affected in the *same Manner* almost instantly.

"TATAMY IS A CONSTANT, UNDERSTATED PRESENCE THROUGHOUT BRAINERD'S ACCOUNT OF THE AWAKENING."

This was not Brainerd's mission. It was his and Tatamy's—or perhaps Tatamy's and his. At least it was until Brainerd's posthumous hagiographers wrote the interpreter out of the story.

Brainerd went on to early death and great posthumous fame. Tatamy, nearly 30 years his senior, lived until 1760 and became a preacher in his own right, as did his son after him, but has largely vanished into obscurity. He is mostly remembered now for a dispute over lands he purchased and that, later, Delaware Indians tried in vain to reclaim. There is a borough named after him in eastern Pennsylvania and a swamp named after him in the New Jersey town where Orson Welles set his infamous radio version of *The War of the Worlds*.

The point of Tatamy's story is not simply to rescue a remarkable figure from obscurity. Cases like his and Samson Occom's show that missionary Puritanism cannot be separated from its context of ethnic conflict, prejudice, and dispossession. But they also show it cannot be *reduced* to that context. Puritanism was capable of going beyond the naive and condescending talk of "allurement" and fostering a Native American Christianity that could put down roots even in the harshest of circumstances. That alone might be seen as, as the title of Brainerd's memoir called it, "a remarkable work of grace." RL

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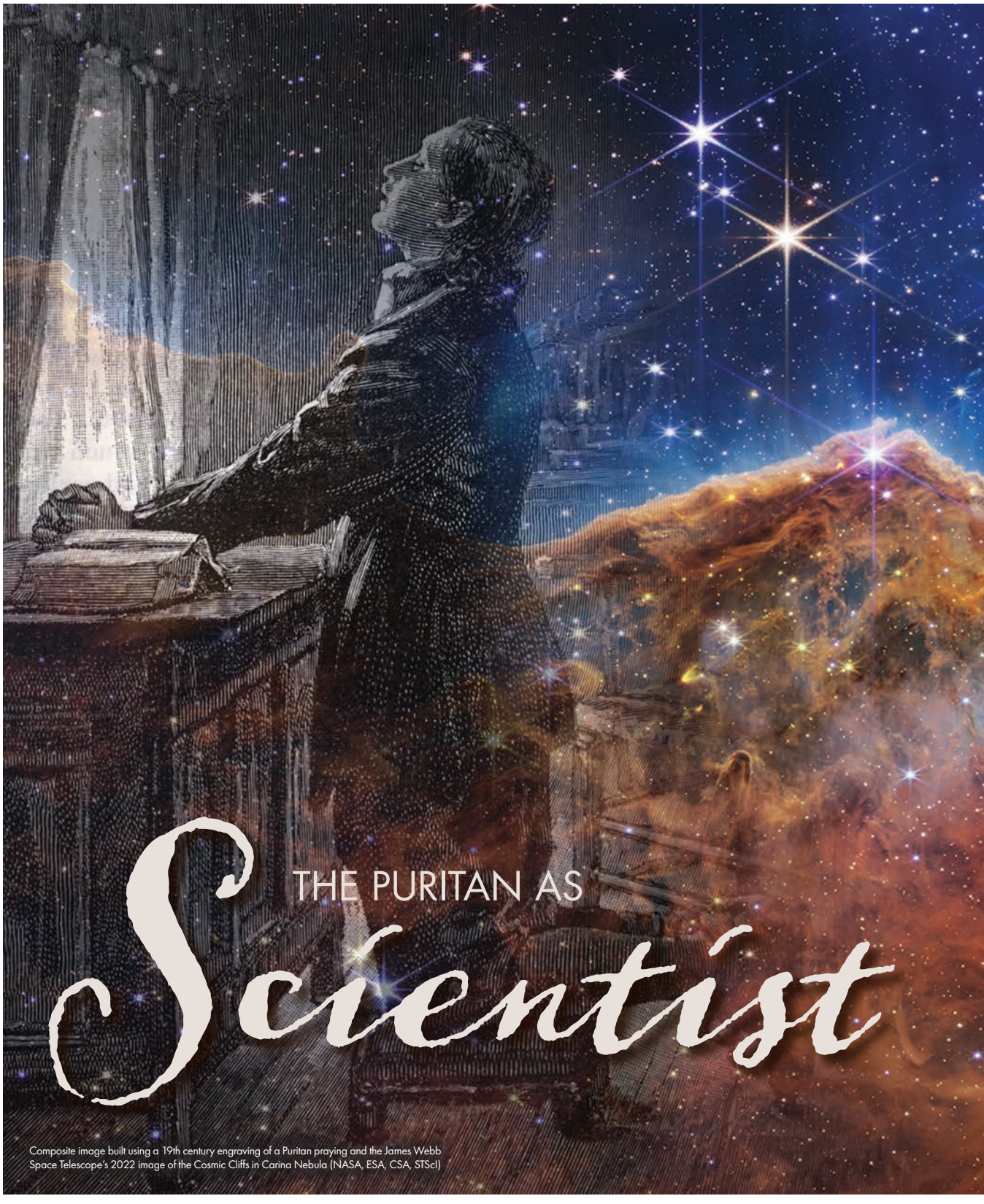
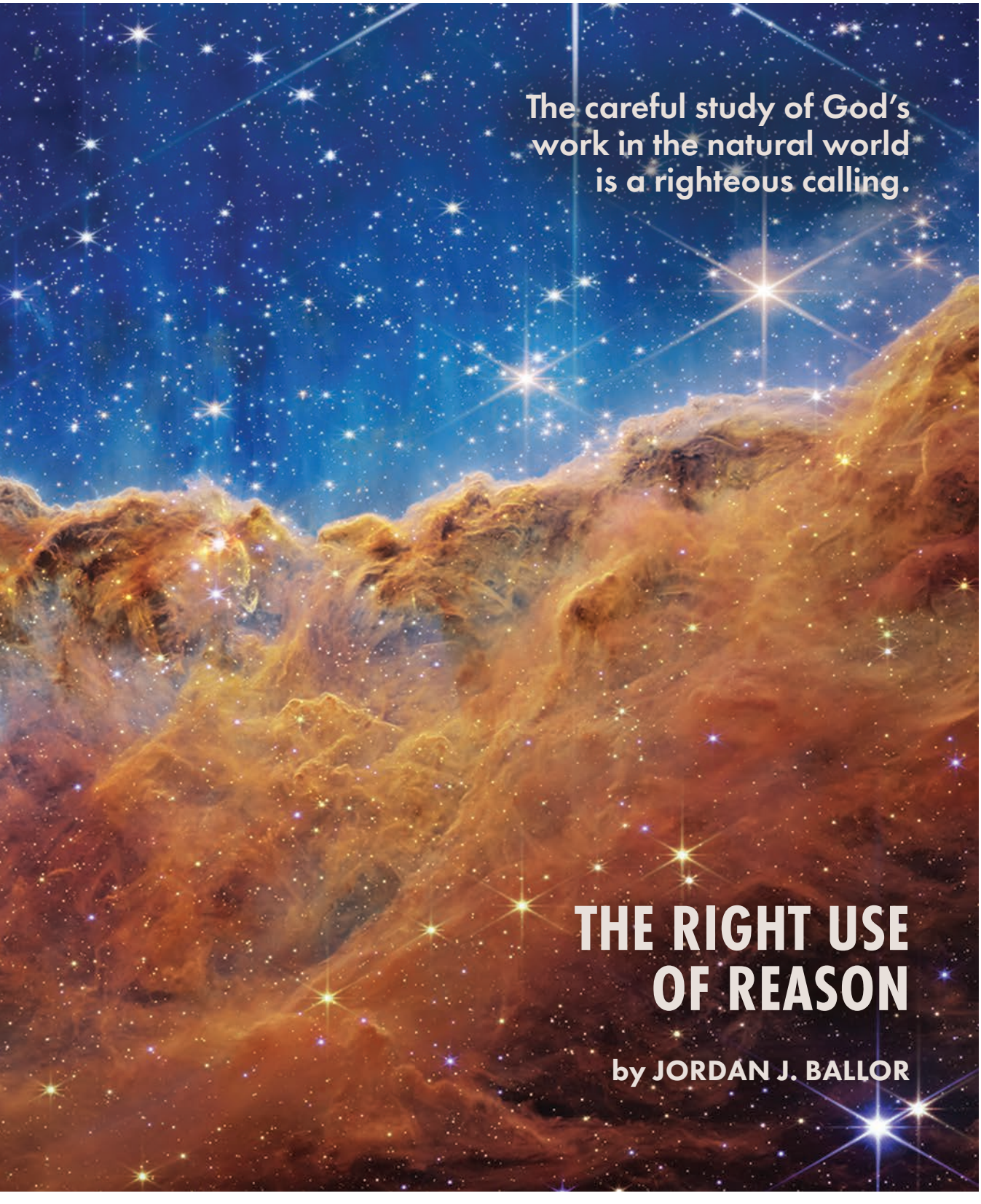


THE PURITAN AS Scientist

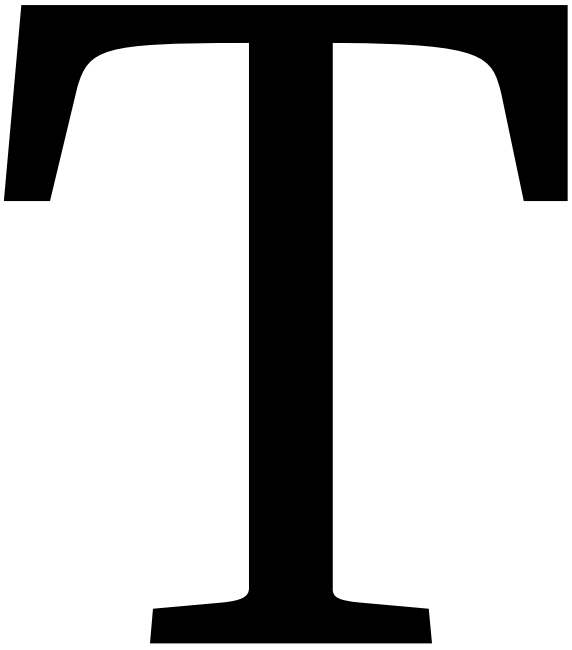
Composite image built using a 19th century engraving of a Puritan praying and the James Webb Space Telescope's 2022 image of the Cosmic Cliffs in Carina Nebula (NASA, ESA, CSA, STScI)



The careful study of God's work in the natural world is a righteous calling.

THE RIGHT USE OF REASON

by JORDAN J. BALLOR

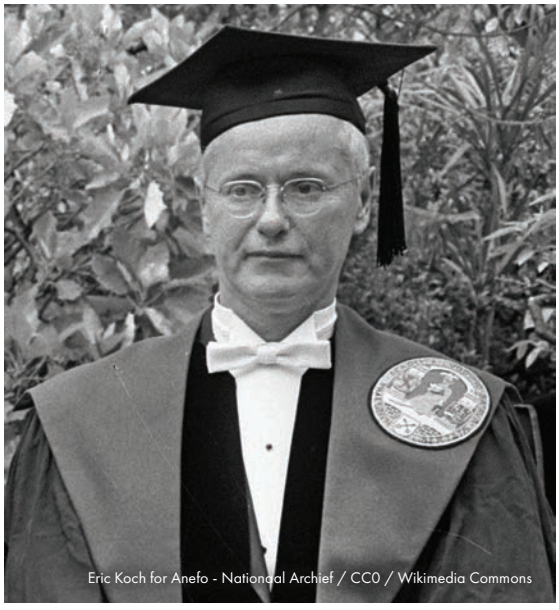


THE MOST FAMOUS "THESIS" concerning Protestantism and modernity is undoubtedly that of the German sociologist and historian Max Weber (1864–1920). The "Weber thesis" has to do with the origins of modern capitalism and the Protestant ethic that gave economics its spiritual force. The Puritan plays a major role in Weber's thesis, functioning as the mechanism for the original combination of pious fervor and practical sense. "The Puritan wanted to work in a calling," concluded Weber. "We are forced to do so." Weber's thesis turns in part on the role of a Protestant and particularly Puritan conception of vocation. But it also turns on a popular, if largely mistaken, stereotype of the Puritan as dour and somber. Weber goes so far as to claim that "the English, Dutch, and American Puritans were characterized by the exact opposite of the joy of living."

Another contribution to this issue by Erik Matson explores the Puritan as entrepreneur. But the understanding of calling that Weber rightly understands as important but wrongly construes as joyless is significant not only for the development of modern economics but also for modern science. And here we must turn to another less-famous but perhaps no less influential thesis, the so-called "Merton thesis," named for the American sociologist Robert K. Merton (1910–2003). Merton's work, particularly in his 1938 essay "Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England," argued for a positive connection between the piety and devotional life of Puritanism and the character of experimental science in the early modern period.

Merton observed something significant about the British Puritan ethic that contributed to an outsize impact on the development of science, as evidenced by the Puritan representation among the membership in The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, for instance, founded in 1660. The Puritan ethic affirmed a subsidiary and yet substantial role for human reason in responding to the duty to glorify God. "With the Puritans, who so fully exemplify a mercantile and scientific age, the term *reason* takes on a new connotation: the rational consideration of empirical data," writes Merton. "The test of reality," he continues, "comes not from scholastic logic, which adds nothing to knowledge and may perpetuate falsehood, but from the observation of facts. It was this accent, coupled with an 'irrational' faith in the efficacy and utility of science, which characterizes both Puritanism and modern science."

This empirical focus, associated with Francis Bacon (1561–1626), is for the Puritan rooted in the order and rationality embedded in the created order by God. It is thus an entirely legitimate, and indeed an honorable and socially beneficial, calling to explore the inherent logic and order of the material world. Natural science becomes a kind of spiritual endeavor, as Christians learn about the character of God from his works. Human reason is itself one of God's good gifts, and the Puritan sensibility held that all such gifts were to be put to proper and productive use. God has provided human beings with sense perception and reason to bring order to what is observed, to draw out implications, to speculate and hypothesize,



Robert K. Merton receiving an honorary degree in Leiden (1965)

to test and to experiment. All these basic elements of modern experimental science are borne out in a religious context that sees the world as an expression of God's grace and glory.

Much as the Puritan ethic legitimized entrepreneurship, so too did the Puritan ethic legitimize science as a God-honoring and neighbor-serving vocation. As the historian Joel Mokyr observes, "It is not easy to associate Puritanism as such directly with any specific scientific advance, but Puritans greatly enhanced the social prestige of experimental science, and thus helped prepare the ground for the Industrial Enlightenment."

In some cases, the relationship between Protestantism more generally and Puritanism in particular and modernity is cast as a kind of unintended or accidental causal one. Thus the historian Brad S. Gregory describes an "unintended" Reformation, and Merton claims "that the most significant influence of Puritanism upon science was largely *unintended* by the Puritan leaders." When applied to the rise of secularism, rationalism, and contemporary ideologies and the deployment of advanced technologies, such characterizations are largely indisputable. But it is nevertheless the case that there are important inherent and cogent factors that led Protestants—perhaps especially Calvinists and Puritans—to emphasize the importance of engaging the observable world created by God. Thus Merton's observation is worth interrogating: "That Calvin himself deprecated science only enhances the paradox that from him stemmed a vigorous movement which furthered interest in this very field."

Calvinism, like its progeny Puritanism, is oft-misunderstood and misrepresented. Some consider Calvinism to be a form of metaphysical determinism and even fatalism. Calvin's contemporary Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560) referred to Calvin as "Zeno," an allusion to the ancient Stoic philosopher associated with fatalist necessitarianism.

On his own terms, however, Calvin affirmed the importance of the natural world and temporal causality. The proper valuation of eternal blessedness does not derogate but rather infuses the created order with significance. The twofold knowledge of God as creator and redeemer are bound together in Calvin's thought. While these can be distinguished, they must be held together and in proper relationship. As Calvin writes,

> It is one thing to feel that God as our Maker supports us by his power, governs us by his providence, nourishes us by his goodness, and attends us with all sorts of blessings—and another thing to embrace the grace of reconciliation offered to us in Christ. First, as much in the fashioning of the universe as in the general teaching of Scripture the Lord shows himself to be simply the Creator. Then in the face of Christ [cf. 2 Cor. 4:6] he shows himself the Redeemer.

Likewise the relationship between general and special revelation must be properly maintained. The Bible provides clear and compelling saving knowledge of God and his works. It also corrects and clarifies our fallible understanding of the natural world. So Scripture is necessary for correction, but the world itself, particularly when effectively grounded in special revelation, teaches us about God.

This is a view of the world that is deeply sacramental, in the sense that all creation is the result of and manifests God's grace. "Wherever you cast your eyes," writes Calvin, "there is no spot in the universe wherein you cannot discern at least some sparks of his glory. You cannot in one glance survey this most vast and beautiful system of the universe, in its wide expanse, without being completely overwhelmed by the boundless force of its brightness." Nature, "the

order prescribed by God," is a "magnificent theater of heaven and earth."

The Reformed tradition uses the imagery of "two books" to describe the difference between special and general revelation. The Belgic Confession of 1561 affirms two distinct "means" for God's self-revelation. One is "by the creation, preservation and government of the universe." The order of creation "is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to 'see clearly the invisible things of God, even his everlasting power and divinity,'" quoting Paul's letter to the Romans. There is a second book, another means by which God reveals himself. God "makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word," that is, in the book of Holy Scripture.

These two books are to be read together. In Calvin's words, "Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God." Scripture gives us clear and correct saving knowledge of God, and like a pair of reading glasses allows us to more distinctly and rightly see God at work in the creation, preservation, and governance of the natural world.

In this way, the task of theologians is primarily to parse the proper understanding of the book of Scripture, but there is also a legitimate and indeed righteous calling for others to explore the book of nature. "The Christian heart," writes Calvin, "since it has been thoroughly persuaded that all things happen by God's plan, and that nothing takes place by chance, will ever look to him as the principal cause of things, yet will give attention to the secondary causes in their proper place." There is not a zero-sum relationship between primary and secondary causality, or between due diligence for the Scriptures and for natural science. Some are called to be theologians and pastors, while others are called to be merchants and magistrates. And still others are called to be scholars and scientists. Calvin and the Reformed tradition thus ennoble the scientific calling, since, as Calvin writes, "a godly man will not overlook the secondary causes" by which God makes himself known and through which he teaches us about himself, ourselves, and the workings of his world.

Works in the 17th century like those of the Presbyterian John Flavel (c. 1627–1691) aimed at marrying piety and practical science. Flavel's *Husbandry Spiritualized and Navigation Spiritualized* focused on providing guidance for spiritual growth and development for those employed as farmers and seafarers. But these treatises also sought to advance practical knowledge of agriculture, geography, and other sciences. As Flavel put it, one purpose of such works was to give direction "to the most excellent improvements of their common employments." In the Netherlands, Petrus Plancius (1552–1622) is a noteworthy figure, credited with advancements in astronomy and cartography that helped provide the Dutch with the scientific understanding to build a vast seafaring network of trade, exploration, and colonization.

The nonconformist pastor and theologian Richard Baxter (1615–1691) is typically seen as the leading representative of Puritanism in 17th-century England. His many works across a wide variety of genres evince a synthesis of intellectual rigor and spiritual devotion. A recent study by historical theologian David S. Sytsma, *Richard Baxter and the Mechanical Philosophers*, explores his polemical engagements with the "new" philosophy of figures like Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655) and René Descartes (1596–1650).

Mechanical philosophers in general were inspired by a renewal of ancient Epicureanism and atomism and focused on material causes. Baxter was intent on critiquing the shortcomings of such approaches. Materialist and mechanical metaphysical conceptions of reality were reductive and hostile to orthodox understandings of God and spiritual reality. But Baxter was also intent on promoting a proper Christian approach to natural philosophy. This involved a restrained but reformed use of human reason to delve into the nuances and details of the interactions of created realities.

Mechanical philosophy in the early modern period bracketed concerns about primal and final causality, two of the significant categories bequeathed by a Christian Aristotelianism. By restricting inquiry merely to secondary causes, a secularized scientific approach became increasingly plausible. But more than simply eliminating grounding in first and final causes, the mechanical philosophers were inclined to elide all secondary causes into material and merely physical causation. While this did not necessarily deny spiritual realities, it did enable a strictly

materialistic methodology and explanatory apparatus. Baxter diagnosed these shortcomings even as he affirmed the use of philosophy and reason, rightly understood.

As Sytsma puts it, "Baxter could not accept the reduction of activity in nature to explanations of matter in motion, however complex such explanations might be." And while Baxter's own philosophical theology could be understood as eclectic or even idiosyncratic, his approach to the relationship of reason and revelation fits well within the tradition of Reformed orthodoxy. He was active in London in 1660, at both the Restoration and the founding of the Royal Society. He was also a correspondent and a collocutor with the luminaries of British intellectual circles, including Robert Boyle, Henry More, and Matthew Hale.

Philosophy, including natural philosophy, should be understood as an aid to theology and the study of the Sacred Scriptures. This broadly Thomistic understanding of the relationship between nature and grace and between reason and revelation undergirds Baxter's constrained affirmation of rational human inquiry. As Sytsma puts it, "In the study of natural philosophy, Baxter advised that the Christian should study it in relation to God as to the beginning and end of all things and not as if it were in some sense an independent principle." He quotes Baxter's instructions from his *Christian Directory*:

> Join together the study of physics and theology; and take not your physics as separated from or independent of theology, but as the study of God in his works, and of his works as leading to himself. Otherwise you will be but like a scrivener or printer who maketh his letters well but knoweth not what they signify.

If Baxter was the leading British Puritan of the 17th century, Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) was the leading American Puritan theologian of the 18th. And Edwards' approach to natural philosophy, human reason, and scientific inquiry continues the general Puritan affirmation of these endeavors as legitimate and honorable callings.

Science, understood as the exercise of the human faculty of reason to explore and understand the created order, is a way of glorifying God and serving one's neighbor. Human reason, rightly ordered and properly constrained, can be used to better understand and articulate theological truth even as it can also be used to advance human knowledge of the world and God's works within it.

"'TAKE NOT YOUR PHYSICS AS SEPARATED FROM OR INDEPENDENT OF THEOLOGY, BUT AS THE STUDY OF GOD IN HIS WORKS, AND OF HIS WORKS AS LEADING TO HIMSELF.'"

For Edwards as for many Puritan thinkers, deep theological reflection and pious contemplation of God was a motivation toward sustained appreciation for and consideration of the natural world. As the historian H.G. Townsend wrote of Edwards in 1940, "Given sufficient patience and discernment, one can find in his published writings some evidence that he did retain throughout his life an active interest in nature and a sharp eye to discern her moods and secrets, notwithstanding his absorbed preoccupation with clerical duties and theological disputes."

Many modern scholars since the work of Merton have appreciated this positive relationship between Puritanism and science. Contra many modern interpretations, however, this fruitful relationship was not accidental or paradoxical. The Puritan was as much a scientist as he was a theologian and an entrepreneur, and all these were lauded as righteous callings within a perspective that joyfully celebrated the world as a theater of God's glory and grace. RL

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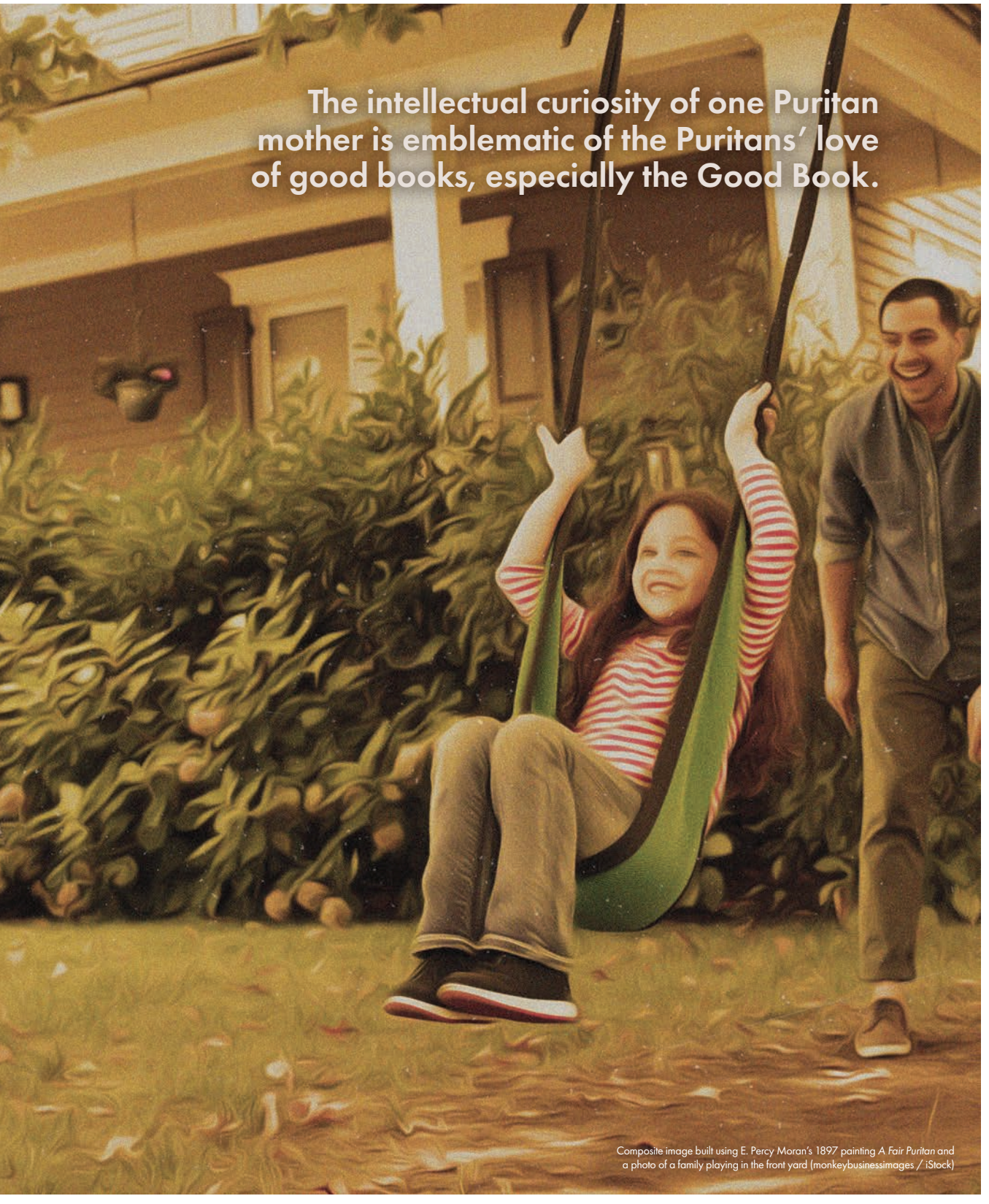
THE PURITAN AS *Materfamilias*

THE WITNESS OF BRILLIANA HARLEY

by MICHAEL A. G. HAYKIN



Composite image built using E. Percy Moran's 1897 painting *A Fair Puritan* and a photo of a family playing in the front yard (monkeybusinessimages / iStock)

Brilliana Harley (1598–1643)

THE PURITAN PENCHANT FOR curious names for their children is well known. For example, Hate-evill Greenhill, a baby girl who may have been related to the Puritan commentator William Greenhill (1591–1671), was baptized in April of 1661 in Banbury. The mother of Edward Polhill (1622–1693/4), another celebrated Puritan author, was Faint-not Polhill, a favorite name, it appears, for girls. Certainly not as bizarre as these girls' names, but equally fascinating, is the name of the wife of a prominent English Presbyterian, Robert Harley (1579–1656), namely, Brilliana Harley (1598–1643).

Brilliana Harley, née Conway, was born in 1598 at the seaport of Brill (Brielle in Dutch), near Rotterdam, the daughter of Edward Conway (1564–1630) and Dorothy Tracy Conway (1563–1612). Her father, Sir Edward Conway (later Viscount Conway), was the governor of Brill at the time of her birth, hence her unique name. Brill was one of three so-called Cautionary Towns, key seaports in the Dutch Republic that had been garrisoned by English troops from 1585 onward when the English aided the Dutch in their fight against the domination of the Spanish in what is known as the Eighty Years War or the Dutch Revolt (1566/1568–1648). They were governed as English colonies—hence Brilliana's father as the governor of Brielle—and were eventually returned to the Dutch Republic in 1616. Sir Edward was later appointed in 1623 by James I, the king of England, as his secretary of state.

There is much that we do not know about Brilliana's early years, but her education included French and Latin. Later in life, she tutored her sons in Latin when she felt that the local schoolmaster was unreliable. She acknowledged that she was more at home reading French than English. She was also well read in contemporary theological literature and had what Wallace Notestein, an American historian and professor at Yale University, called "a continental breadth" in her reading interests.

When she was in her mid-20s, Brilliana married Robert Harley (1579–1656) of Brampton Bryan Castle, on July 16, 1623. Her husband's ancestral home was in the small village of Brampton Bryan in northwestern Herefordshire, close to the Welsh border. The castle, dating back to the 1290s, guarded a vital route into Central Wales and was thus of military importance.

Robert Harley had been twice-widowed and, before marrying Brilliana, he had also buried 10 children. His mother, née Margaret Corbett, was a committed Puritan and had taken great pains to pass on her Protestant faith to her family. Shaped by this spiritual heritage, Robert Harley became a prominent and distinguished Presbyterian. At his funeral, for instance, the presiding minister, Thomas Froysell (c. 1610–1673), recalled that Harley was "a great saint by grace" and "if other saints are candles, he was a torch."

Brilliana and Robert had seven surviving children, of whom the eldest was Edward (1624–1700), affectionately nicknamed Ned.

The Harleys were full-throated Puritans, but the county of Herefordshire surrounding Brampton Bryan was largely Royalist, and hostile to the Harley family. In 1641, as the nation began to slide toward civil war, Brilliana stationed guards on the battlements of the castle and brought into the castle a stock of bullets. One of Brilliana's letters to her son Ned—written in December 1642—describes the climate in northwestern Herefordshire at the time: "They [some of her wealthy neighbors] are in mighty violence against me.…I never was in such sorrows,…I hope the Lord will deliver me; but they are most cruelly bent against me."

However, despite being surrounded by those committed to the Royalist cause in the civil wars, the gentry in the rest of the county appear to have been reluctant to attack the Harley family home, which was partly out of their personal respect for Brilliana. Nevertheless, eight months after the letter cited above, on July 26, 1643, the castle was attacked and besieged by Royalist forces under the command of Sir William Vavasour, the governor of Hereford, since the castle commanded a major route into central Wales. Vavasour surrounded Brampton Bryan with a mixed force of cavalry and infantrymen of about 700 soldiers. The formidable Brilliana held the castle in the face of this onslaught and siege until September 9.

The Royalists burnt all the buildings in the neighboring village of Brampton Bryan, and the castle was bombarded nearly every day. Although the bombardment left the castle roofless, casualties were low and only one death and a few injuries are recorded. The attackers, on the other hand, lost nearly 70 men who were either killed or injured. At one point, Brilliana discovered that the Royalists were planning to fire on the castle with grenades. In an audacious move, she sent 10 men out of the castle to find the building in which the grenades were being kept. They did so and were able to destroy them all.

The king, Charles I, himself wrote Brilliana on August 21, encouraging her to surrender. But she refused. In her reply to the king, she stated that he had made

> many solemn promises that he would maintain the laws and liberties of this kingdom. I cannot then think he would give a command to take anything away from his loyal subject, and much less to take away my house…I must endeavor to keep what is mine as well as I can, in which I have the law of nature, of reason, and of the land on my side, and you [that is, the King and his troops] none to take it from me.

The siege was lifted on September 9 when the Royalists left to join an attack on the city of Gloucester.

A second siege took place in the spring of 1644. This time the Royalists prevailed and took the castle after only three weeks. Using mines and more powerful artillery, the Royalists inflicted further substantial damage upon the castle. The siege ended when the castle was surrendered to the attacking forces. The building was sacked and burnt—the ruins are there to this day—and 67 prisoners were taken to Shrewsbury for a year. Brilliana, though, was not alive to witness the surrender of the castle, for she had died the previous autumn, on October 29, 1643.

Brilliana was a prolific letter writer. Approximately 400 of her letters written from 1623 until her death in October 1643 have survived. They provide a detailed picture of her married life, the outbreak of the civil war in Herefordshire, and the life of a family at odds with local political sentiment. The majority of these letters are to her eldest son, Edward (Ned).

Edward Harley, Brilliana and Robert's eldest son, went up to Magdalen Hall at Oxford University in 1638, which was to Oxford what Emmanuel College

was to Cambridge, namely, a seedbed for Puritanism. He stayed at Oxford for two years, went down in 1640, and when the Civil War broke out in 1642, he fought with the Parliamentary armies. He supported the Presbyterians, and later opposed Oliver Cromwell, and thus fell out of favor with the government of the Commonwealth. He supported the Restoration of Charles II but also the religious toleration of non-Anglicans, known as Dissenters or Nonconformists.

From 1660 onward, Edward was a member of Parliament during the reigns of Charles II and William III. And while he attended the state church, he also went to hear the preaching of Richard Baxter (1615–1691). According to one account of his life, Edward Harley developed "a very Christian temper" and was "a good and religious man, untainted by the evils of that most licentious age." This was owing, this account continued, to God's grace and his constant reading of the Scriptures. But one also must think of the way God used the influence of his mother's piety.

The spirituality of Brilliana Harley was grounded in the Calvinist soil of England's Puritan world: centered upon the sovereignty of God in salvation and all of life, with its ultimate telos being God's glory. As she wrote in a "commonplace book" (a kind of diary) in 1622: "It is God that first turns our will to that which is good and we are converted by the power of God only." Seventeen years later, a prayer for her son revealed the same conviction about the sovereignty of God and the end for which all creatures exist:

> I beseech the Lord who has your times in his hand and is the preserver of man, that he would add many years to your life, that you may be full of days and full of grace, that you may live here to the glory of your God, to which end you were made and that after this life you may inherit eternity.

In her convictions regarding these two key elements of the Christian faith, she was only reproducing what had been central to the theology of John Calvin, with whose writings, as has been noted, she was quite familiar.

Brilliana's conviction of the necessity of the insuperable work of God in conversion was tied to her Augustinian conception of the innate sinfulness of humanity. In her letters to her son, she warned him about the dangers of sin. "Nothing hurts the soul like that deadly poison of sin," she told him in the summer of 1639. And that fall, she urged him: "Let it be your resolution and practice in your life, rather to die than sin against your gracious and holy God. We have so gracious a God, that nothing can put a distance between him and our souls, but sin; watch therefore against that enemy." In fact, she asserted, "it was sin that crucified our Lord."

So dire was this human situation that only divine help could free the will and refashion the affections. It is no surprise, therefore, that Brilliana was strongly committed to the doctrine of unconditional election, which was also central to the debate with both Dutch and English Arminianism. Thus, Brilliana prayed in November of 1638 that her son would be a recipient of those "choice blessings of his Spirit, which none but his dear elect are partakers of; that so you may taste that sweetness in God's service which indeed is in it: but the men of this world cannot perceive it." It is significant that Brilliana yokes together here the doctrine of election with the believer's experience. Her conviction about election did not simply entail an intellectual commitment to the doctrine but was one that was profoundly experiential. Again, she reminded Ned that the experience of the "love of the Lord is not common to all." To be sure, divine mercies are the common experience for all human beings, but only some, the elect, know their origin. As she put it:

> None are partakers of his love but his children; and he so loved them, that he gave his Son to die for them. O that we could but see the depth of that love of God in Christ to us: then sure, love would constrain us to serve the Lord, with all our hearts most willingly.

Once again, Brilliana moved seamlessly from the concept of divine election to human affections. In this case, she reflected on the fact that personal assurance of Christ's atoning death for the elect soul should issue in wholehearted service to Christ and to God.

At every turn, Brilliana's letters bear witness to a passionate soul and an affective piety. First, there is her deep love for her husband. In a letter written in 1628, for instance, she stated: "I much long to hear from you, but more a thousand times to see you, which I presume you will not believe, because you cannot possibly measure my love.…If I thought it would hasten your coming

home, I would entreat you to do so." As Jacqueline Eales has noted, Brilliana "clearly valued her husband's company and the times when he was absent from her were keenly felt." When her second son, Robert, was born in 1626, the father was not at home for the christening and his naming. Brilliana informed him that she had called him by the name that "I love best, being yours." Sixteen years later, her love for her husband was just as ardent and unabated: "You are the great comfort of my life," she told him in May of 1642. Since we do not have any of Robert's letters to Brilliana she may well have destroyed them during the siege lest they fall into enemy hands historians have been divided over whether the depth of Brilliana's love was reciprocated. Jacqueline Eales and Anthony Fletcher are of the opinion that Robert's love for his wife deepened with the passing years. On the other hand, 19th-century students of Brilliana's letters were not so sanguine. One 19th-century editor of her letters, Richard Ward, commented about Robert's absence from the siege of Brampton Bryan: "It is difficult for us to understand why he did not either permit her to go away or take some active steps for the protection of his family." John Webb and his son, T.W. Webb, who compiled a history of the civil war in Herefordshire, reasoned on the basis of the extant correspondence of Brilliana to her husband:

> It is difficult to peruse the…letters…without an impression that the course of years and events had somewhat impaired the warmth of conjugal affection which had evidently existed at an earlier and less distracted period. Correspondence between herself and her husband was not indeed altogether intermitted, but "dear Ned" had become the principal depositary of her anxieties and distresses, many important requests were transmitted to the husband through the son, and to him were addressed those sad and touching regrets, chastened by the most devout submission to the Divine Will, which give to these letters their peculiar charm. The fact of her unaided and uncheered desolation at Brampton points in the same direction.

Brilliana's letters also bear witness to her deep love for her son Ned. They are replete with concern for his physical health, advice regarding his diet and medicine, and notification of gifts of food being sent from Brampton to Oxford. Seamlessly intermingled with such mundane matters are precepts for godly living, nuggets of spiritual advice, and discussion of books the two of them have been reading. The latter are especially intriguing and reveal Brilliana to have been a voracious reader with a wide variety of literary interests, ranging from theological treatises by celebrated authors like John Calvin and William Perkins to Roman Catholic works, from pamphlets containing the latest news to the science fiction of Francis Godwin (1562–1633), *The Man in the Moone*.

In her spiritual advice to her son, a number of items are especially prominent: the importance of regular communion with God in prayer and the private reading of Scripture, "the sweet waters of God's Word," and other devotional works. Brilliana encouraged him to be earnest in observing the Sabbath, though Edward complained that he could not find a preaching ministry as powerful as that which he had enjoyed at Brampton. What is conspicuous by its absence, though, is any reference to the Lord's Supper.

Finally, there is Brilliana's love for her God. Rooted firmly in God's Word and the Augustinian tradition of Puritanism, it was unashamedly affective and experiential. Her use of the word "sweet" and its cognates, for example, provides an excellent window on her conviction in this regard. To open one's heart in prayer, for God's elect, is "a sweet thing." Thus, she prayed for her son that he might "so…taste that sweetness in God's service which indeed is in it." "The men of this world cannot perceive it," she emphasized, for it is one of the choice blessings that accompanies the indwelling of the Spirit. Indeed, she stressed, "the service of the Lord is more sweet, more peaceable, more delightful, than the enjoying of all the fading pleasures of the world."

In the mid-1630s, one of Brilliana's siblings, her brother Edward (1594–1655), a loyal Royalist, wrote to Robert Harley that "in your house the order of things is inverted, you write to me of cheeses and my sister writes about a good scholar"! In a nutshell, this captures a key side of Brilliana's character: her vivacious intellectual curiosity. But, as this essay on her life and piety has sought to show, it was also a vivacity that was ultimately informed by a deep commitment to the Puritan vision of Christian godliness. RL

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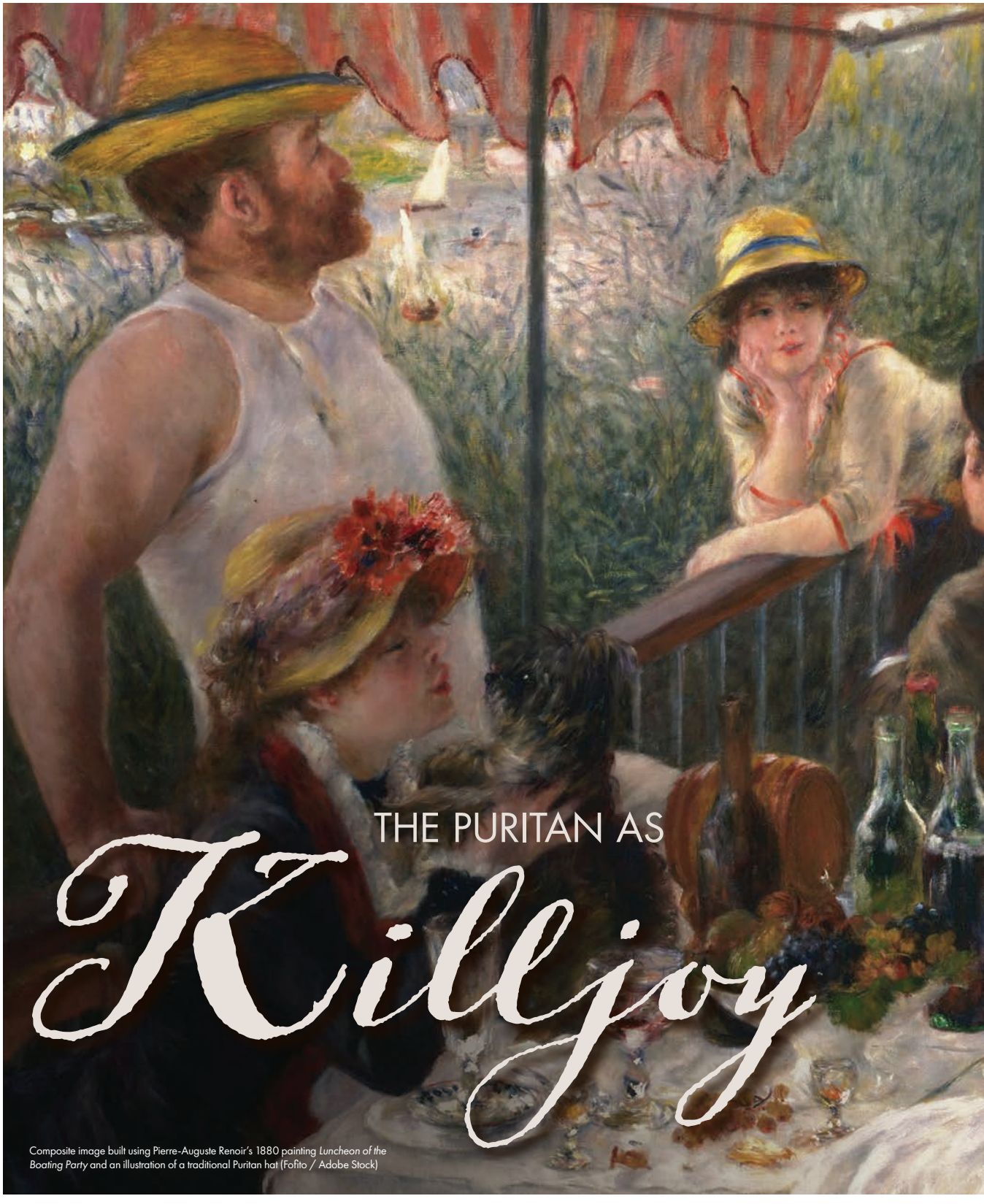

THE PURITAN AS *Killjoy*

Composite image built using Pierre-Auguste Renoir's 1880 painting *Luncheon of the Boating Party* and an illustration of a traditional Puritan hat (Fofito / Adobe Stock)

Believe it or not, they drank, they smoked, they enjoyed recreation and even, in keeping with their station, fancy dress. And they loved their spouses. Even in their severe piety, the Puritans were more like Christians of earlier eras than outliers. If they seem harsh or superstitious today, perhaps it's because we're the weird ones.

TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION

by TIMON CLINE

Bulstrode Whitelocke (1605–1675)

THE SUPPOSITION THAT Puritans, on both sides of the Atlantic, were party poopers and fun suckers, ashen-faced and humorless, is an image constructed by theater and novels. This caricature developed early in the 19th century and has endured to the present with rare exceptions, like the Catholic convert Orestes Brownson's periodically coming to their defense. Like many monikers, "Puritan" began as a pejorative, was eventually embraced by its recipients, and now serves, once again, as an insult for someone who is hyperactively moralistic and censorious—the type of person you do not invite to parties. Notably, it is typically hypocritical of our own day to preachily condemn alternative, foreign ways of life for being too preachy and particular, but I digress.

Of course, stereotypes are always overinclusive. For every Puritan that shunned any holiday not commanded in Scripture, there was a Matthew Hale, the great jurist of Puritan stock, who maintained his love for Christmas throughout his life. Although less than Calvinist in his soteriology, he remained staunchly Sabbatarian, reserving the Lord's Day for worship and rest.

For every critic of theater and lavish waistcoats, there was a Bulstrode Whitelocke, a Puritan parliamentarian, who while dismayed by the loose morals of some of his friends nevertheless composed music, directed plays, and even let his servants play cards provided the stakes were kept sensibly low. Whitelocke was a notoriously ostentatious dresser, but even his cinnamon-colored suits and vibrant capes did not create the stir that John Owen's thigh-high boots of Spanish leather did. As proponents of traditional hierarchy, a sentiment found most notably in John Winthrop's *Model of Christian Charity* (1630), the governing rule for Puritans was not so much that colorful clothing was sinful but rather that dressing according to one's station was paramount for social order and due modesty. Puritans are remembered for being rather drab, but that's because most 17th-century middle-class people were comparatively drab in appearance.

A Christian family gathers to read the Bible in *The Sabbath Eve* by Alexander Johnston (1850)

For every one of the "hotter sort" of English Protestant who rejected the Elizabethan settlement, especially as perpetuated by the Stuarts, and most especially in its Caroline expression, as insufficiently reformed, there was a nonconformist like Richard Baxter who never missed service at his conformist parish. Or there was a Richard Sibbes, who remained within the church while prioritizing Puritan emphases in his devotional writing and preaching.

What is a Puritan then? Definitional battles occupy much of the secondary literature on Puritanism. At bottom, a Puritan is simply a 16th- or 17th-century English reformist Protestant. If further distinctives are added, the water becomes muddied fast. For instance, the Puritan label is typically ascribed to John Milton. As a reformist, indeed nonconformist, English Protestant, the label is deserved. And yet Milton expressed, shall we say, dissenting views on divorce and, more concerningly, a heterodox Christology—as did John Locke, himself of Puritan origins, familial and educational. The Puritan tent is rather big, it turns out, and must therefore account for varying opinions. Like any *ism*, Puritanism evades exhaustive, monolithic description.

What about recreation and *fun*? Puritans capitalized off the reissuance in 1633 of the *Book of Sports*, originally published in 1617, as a threat to Sabbatarianism, but this was primarily political, representative of further jurisdictional incursions from the arch anti-Puritan Archbishop Laud. In any case, sport as such was not considered an invention of the devil. Many nonconformist ministers openly advocated exercise and recreation. Such things, rightly ordered, were not necessarily tantamount to laziness and frivolity.

John Cotton's *Practical Commentary upon John* refutes the popular impression of this Puritan attitude toward rest and relaxation. God was to be glorified in "eating and drinking, sleeping and recreating." Cotton himself was a friend of good food and good drink, as were most of his compatriots. When the synod was called at Cambridge in 1647–48, the Massachusetts General Court rewarded attendees with barrels of wine and kegs of beer to aid their labors—more than enough for each minister to be thoroughly inebriated if he so wished. Many Puritan ministers are remembered for their work ethic and neglect of sleep; some, like William Bridge, literally

worked themselves to death. But Cotton acknowledges that rest was for the good of the body and spirit. What was to be avoided was "love of Sleep and Ease" to the neglect of godly service. Likewise, recreation and play glorify God when they are properly enjoyed. That is, when pleasure and indulgence do not replace man's highest end or violate God's commands. What Christian would disagree with that rather innocuous claim, even today, even if not Sabbatarian? Moreover, we might remember that it was Augustine who first criticized theatrical spectacles for corrupting the soul; Plato, who had less than laudatory opinions about actors (and poets); and Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, who were iconoclastic well before the Puritans. Decent company all around.

Moving to the domestic front, in his *The Puritan Family* (1944), Edmund Morgan describes the remarkably relatable bliss and normalcy of Puritan family life, a study intentionally ignored, it seems, by popular sentiment today. Caricatures are much easier to maintain. As with Luther's doctrine of vocation generally, the Puritans sought to uphold marriage as desirable, contra Catholics who "speak reproachfully of it," to quote Samuel Willard's *Compleat Body of Divinity*. Marriage was no longer a sacrament, but neither was celibacy ideal. Marriage, rather, was a necessity for gregarious creatures. Without women, said John Cotton, "there is no comfortable living for man." Morgan adds that "in celebrating the wedding after the ceremony the Puritans were no kill-joys." The early New Englanders did not allow "riotous merry-making" on any occasion, but a wedding was indeed a time when feasting was appropriate. Neither were they prudes about sex. As Leland Ryken rightly explains in *Worldly Saints* (1986), chastity did not apply to the marital bedroom, nor was the Augustinian view of sex as purely procreative in its ends embraced. Most often, premarital sex was addressed by performing a marriage between the two parties.

Divorce was certainly frowned upon, as we might expect, but provisions for divorce in the case of "malicious desertion," infidelity, and the like were recognized, as they broke the marriage covenant. Inside the marriage, as Benjamin Wadsworth described in *The Well-Ordered Family*, the "duty of love is mutual." Husband and wife were to "endeavour to have their affections really, cordially and closely knit, to each other.…They should (out of conscience to God) study and strive to render each other's life easy, quiet and comfortable; to please, gratifie and oblige one another."

> "BULSTRODE WHITELOCKE, A PURITAN PARLIAMENTARIAN, COMPOSED MUSIC, DIRECTED PLAYS, AND EVEN LET HIS SERVANTS PLAY CARDS PROVIDED THE STAKES WERE KEPT SENSIBLY LOW."

The Puritans were like their contemporaries, patriarchal and anti-egalitarian. But this was no license for tyranny. As Wadsworth instructed, a good husband was to rule "as that his wife may take delight in [his headship], and not account it a slavery but a liberty and privilege." The laws against wayward or disobedient children in New England are often cited for shock value by modern historians. These laws were, in fact, never enforced. More actionable were laws in the same jurisdiction against child neglect, spiritual and physical. The family was frequently described as a commonwealth in miniature. Its disorder would spell disaster for society; failure to raise children well would spell its death. Regarding discipline of children, Anne Bradstreet and Samuel Willard both advised "gentle discipline" befitting the particular personalities and inclinations of individual children, with the use of "severity as the last means." Most important was that parents served as good examples for the character and conduct of their children, otherwise any instruction or discipline would fall flat.

But even if we set aside the aforementioned diversity, stereotypes usually exist for a reason. On the whole, the censoriousness and strict moralism applies to most if not all Puritans in most ways. What we find, however, is that what is mocked or ridiculed in the Puritans was

simply a feature of the time. In other words, most of what supplies the modern stereotype is descriptive of Christendom in the 16th and 17th centuries generally.

A reformation of manners, a second reformation, was not unique to Puritans—those who desired further liturgical correction in the Church of England—nor was it shared in all particulars. Protestants in the Netherlands similarly called for the sociopolitical extension of the reformation. Even there, however, we do not locate the origins of the Puritan mood.

Drive for social and moral reform, intense piety, and biblicism did not spring from Puritanism or Protestantism. When people today criticize Puritans for being moralistic killjoys, they are really criticizing early modern Christianity—its morality and priorities.

Moreover, the aspiration of moral reform, piety, learning, and self-improvement, championed by the hotter sort of English Protestants, was not of their own invention. It was the movements of the prior century that delivered it to them. If people today dislike the Puritans so much, they should blame the Renaissance, which is most commonly remembered for supposedly unleashing modernity, a repudiation of all that proceeded it.

Indeed, Renaissance humanism offered many correctives to received medieval dogma, and this was in part the impetus for the Reformation itself. Luther stands out as one of the few non-humanists amongst the magisterial reformers. By contrast, Calvin was a trained humanist lawyer, educated in the New Learning, who first gained attention for his commentary on Seneca. The humanist influence on early modern theology itself is evident in both Reformation and Counter-Reformation texts, with its eclectic synthesis of Scripture, the church fathers, and the great pagans of antiquity.

But, in fact, it was specifically the Erasmian strand of the northern renaissance that inspired the Puritan posture in late 16th- and 17th-century England and New England.

Margo Todd expertly recounts in *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (1987) how the Puritan ambition for a reformation of manners and social improvement was not a product of either Protestantism or its Puritan expression but of the advent of the *vita activa* coupled with a Christian humanism. The Puritans were no innovators in this regard.

Puritans, like their more conformist counterparts, were reared in an intellectual milieu that prized Erasmus' *Enchiridion* and Cicero's *De Officiis* no less

A 2008 Berlin stage production of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*

than Calvin's *Institutes*. It was the "Greco-Roman and patristic Golden Age," says Todd, that inspired them, in both the recovery of Christian doctrine sanitized of late medieval innovations and the reformation of society, the elevation of the active life and the suppression of licentious laxity. None of this was at odds with an "overriding biblicism," as stated, but rather informed by it. If a Stoic asceticism was discernible, the morality in view was informed by the Bible. The "pagan classics were servants of Christianity." In the Stoics, doctrine that rhymed with or was supportive of Christian convictions, like human depravity, were found and employed for both social criticism and moral programming. A populist, so to speak, outlook also ensued, contra what Erasmus had satirized in *Praise of Folly* as the "argumentative Scotists and pigheaded Ockhamists" who were so preoccupied with *theory* to the neglect of the apostle Paul.

Self-improvement manuals, in the Erasmian vein, were hot commodities. All prescribed a self-discipline, for the individual and society, that was "at least as 'puritanical' as that of the followers of Calvin or Perkins, including a demand for daily self-examination." (And we might add that the same tradition, one begun most obviously with Augustine's *Confessions*, endured in the works of the deist Benjamin Franklin and the Stoic Thomas Jefferson.)

The result?

> The new biblicism, conditioned by revived classical moralism, defined a new social type: a pious, self-controlled, industrious lay person, active in civic and ecclesiastical affairs, seeking always the common good. This combination of good citizen and Christian soldier was to be the essential building block of the new society. (Todd)

Winthrop's "city on a hill," the new Israel, does not seem so outlandish and unique in this light. It was grounded in this new optimism of Christian humanism. Again, this was not distinctly Puritan. Thomas More's Utopia is a paradigmatic case. As J.H. Hexter surmised in *The Vision of Politics on the Eve of the Reformation* (1973), "so many things that a good many people want are banned in Utopia that Calvin's Geneva looks a bit frivolous by comparison." Drunkenness, gluttony, gambling, blasphemy, and Sabbath breaking were, at the time, universally recognized as grave social ills, not to mention sinful, destructive to any godly society—the aspiration of all Christendom.

In other words, Puritans simply believed what other English Protestants (and other Christians besides) believed, if sometimes "more intensely." That these emphases extended into ecclesial life is no surprise, but the expression thereof is often exaggerated. Descriptions of membership examination in New England, in particular, often reflect later revivalistic practices of the "anxious bench" more than historical practice. Increase Mather and other ministers wrote frequently to their fellow clergy to be gentle with the consciences of communicants. Many times, personal testimonies for membership took the form of simple affirmation of confessional doctrine. Church discipline, too, has been exaggerated for theatrical effect by later observers. On one occasion, it took the ministers of Boston 12 years to enact discipline on a congregant who openly and notoriously rejected infant baptism. The delay was not owed to difficulty in locating the man but rather the result of pastoral patience. Even the famed Anne Hutchinson Affair is overblown today. Prior to any civil action against the Antinomians, due to their increasingly disruptive public behavior, Boston clergy went to great lengths to convince and convert via theological disputation.

Keeping Sunday, **a 1901 cartoon depicting a joyless 17th-century Puritan eyeing a group of revelers with disdain**

The Century Edition of Cassell's *History of England* / Classic Image / Alamy Stock Photo

In the end, as with the Quakers and Anabaptists, however, open and disruptive dissent presented a sociopolitical problem requiring attention from the magistrates of any godly commonwealth. Up through the 19th century, American common law continued to recognize blasphemy, reviling of Christianity, and Sabbath breaking as threats to peace and good order.

Regarding enforcement, we must recognize with Perry Miller (*Errand into the Wilderness*) that Puritans in Boston were no less tolerant than Jesuits in Madrid. That moderns are uncomfortable with the prospect of 17th-century Christian society is predictable; that discomfort simply cannot serve as a focused indictment of Puritans as killjoys and scolds. Modern critics must be accurate and fair. Condemn the morality of the whole of medieval and early modern Christendom or don't condemn at all. That Christians should take sin, especially public sin, seriously should not be some earth-shattering revelation.

Before we leave the topic of enforcement, we must address the elephant in the room: witchcraft. The thing, oddly, Puritans are most remembered for, at least in America. As David Hall has described in *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment* (1990), the Puritans believed in a real spiritual world, the home of a cosmic battle, which was intertwined with lingering folklore.

But then most Christians for most of history have believed in a real spiritual world, real spirits, real angels and demons interacting with this world, the one God made flesh himself visited. On Reformation Day, Protestants still sing with Luther, *And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us*—but they do not feel this cosmic reality in the same way that Heiko Oberman describes in his magisterial *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*. The Puritans were nearer to Luther than we are.

It might seem quaint and folksy that, say, Richard Baxter relayed credible accounts he had received of poltergeists and the like. But what then do we make of the Desert Fathers? In any case, the superstitions of the Puritans were shared by most other Christians of their era, and that includes the existence of witches and the sinfulness of fraternizing with the devil or engaging in witchcraft.

James I/VI, who could never be mistaken for a Puritan, wrote the leading text of the day on witches. Similar instructions for prosecuting spiritual warfare were abundant in that era, as were accounts of witch trials and exorcisms. The only remarkable thing about Salem 1692 is how few people were accused, tried, and executed, and that thereafter public remorse was expressed by clergy and magistrate alike for improper procedure—specifically, the reliance on spectral evidence.

Far more witch trials occurred in England than in New England, and on the continent than the other two combined. Over the course of the centuries in view, Roman Catholics executed far more witches than Protestants. All of which to say: Witch hunting is not a Puritan invention, nor were they all that passionate about it. To single out Salem as uniquely conspiratorial and hysterical is, again, the work of theater, not history. New England was more like old England in this regard, and no one in the motherland questioned the viability of colonial accounts of demonic occurrences.

In the scope of history, the only strange thing is that our moral and spiritual imagination has little room for what the Puritans believed—namely, that witches are real (as the Bible teaches), that evil spirits are involved in the affairs of men, and that natural disasters have providential import. We are the weird ones, censoring historical consciousness and castigating the same as improbable or immoral. Moreover, it is our disordered public morality, one that aggressively protects licentiousness according to individual taste, that is, in a sense, a "puritanical" anomaly. RL

The burning of a woman in Switzerland in 1447

From the Schilling of Lucerne (1513) / Public Domain / Wikimedia Commons

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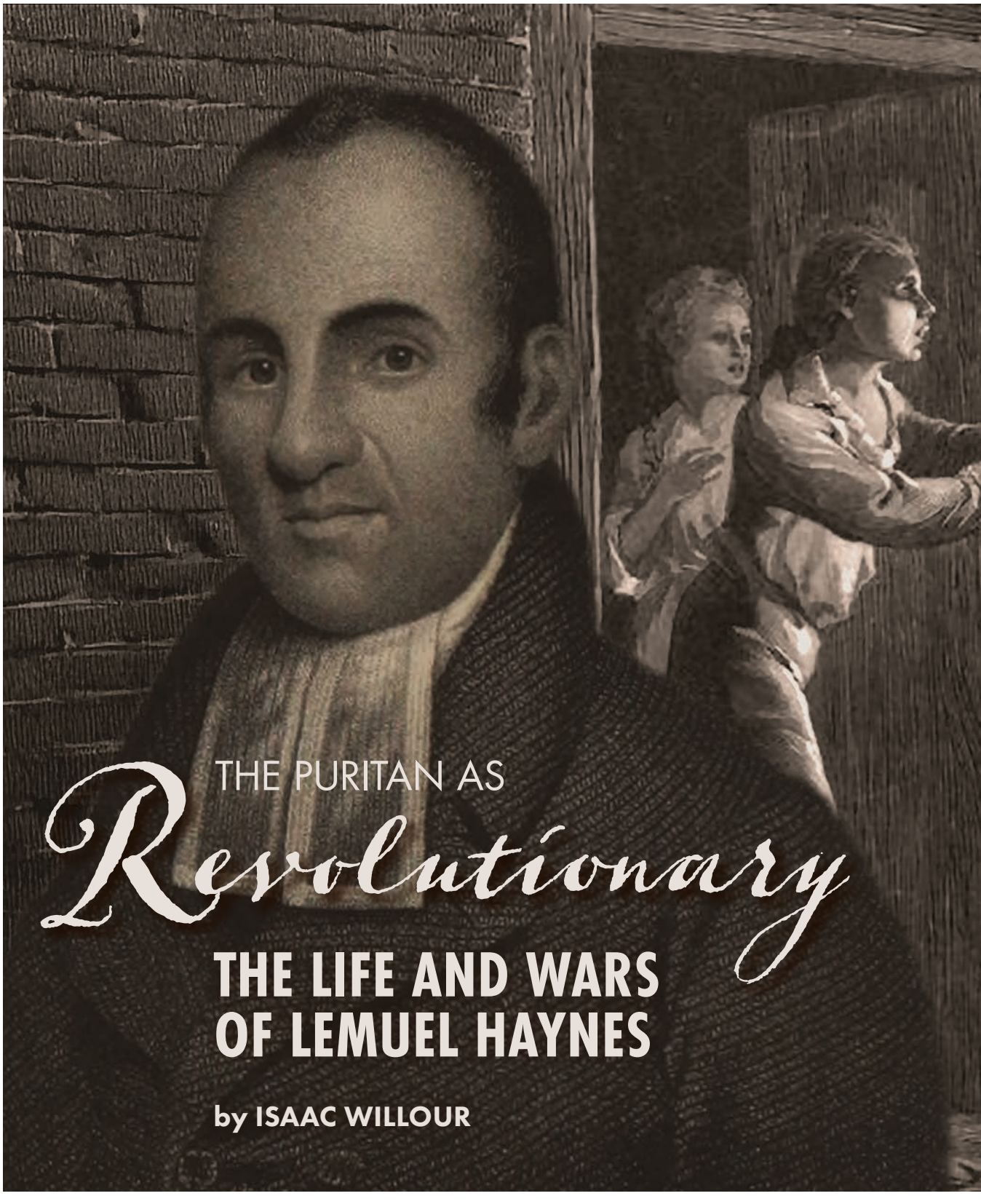
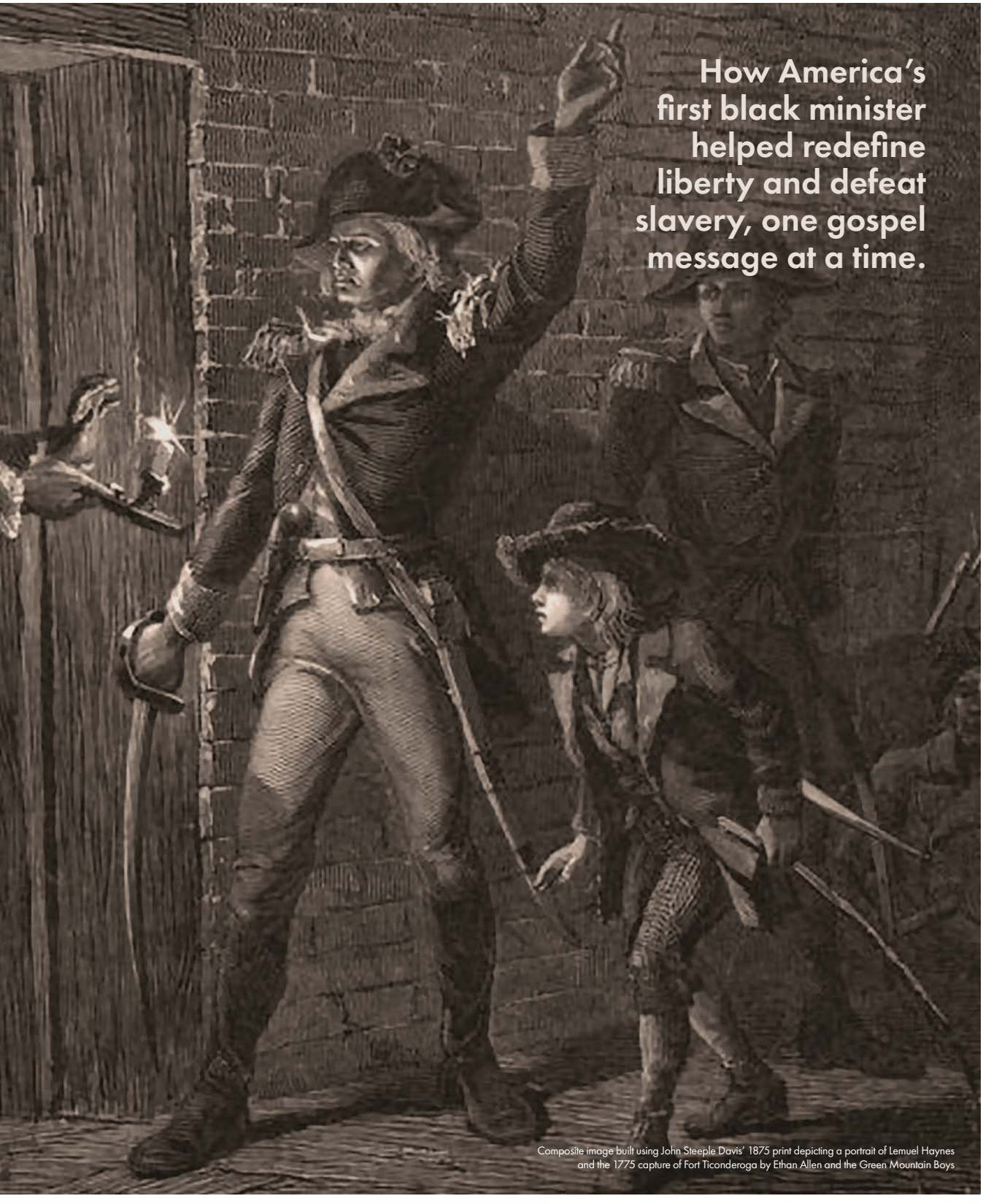


THE PURITAN AS *Revolutionary*

THE LIFE AND WARS OF LEMUEL HAYNES

by ISAAC WILLOUR



How America's first black minister helped redefine liberty and defeat slavery, one gospel message at a time.

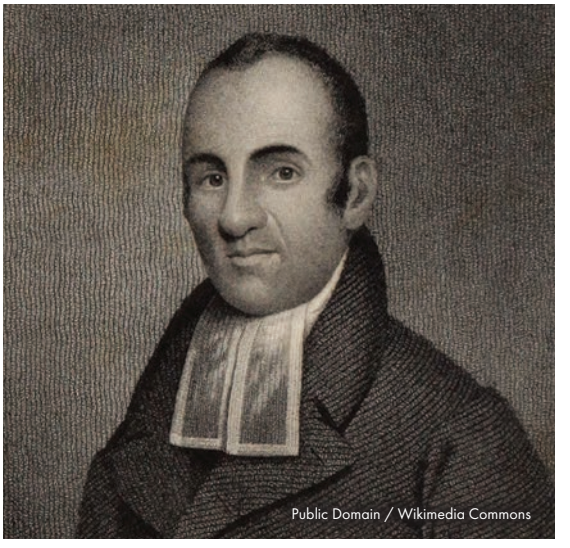
Composite image built using John Steeple Davis' 1875 print depicting a portrait of Lemuel Haynes and the 1775 capture of Fort Ticonderoga by Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys

IT WAS 1775, and an invasion was afoot. The misty dark hung over Vermont's Lake Champlain as a group of small boats cut their way across the surface of the water. On those boats huddled a contingent of American Minutemen, hardly daring to breathe as they neared the other side of the lake. In the dim starlight, the force of fewer than 200 ragtag rebels could just make out the towering stone walls of their target: Fort Ticonderoga, a garrison laid out in the shape of a five-pointed star that secured not only the strategic pathway to Canada and the north, but also harbored a significant cache of weapons, including heavy artillery. If the Minutemen succeeded, the fort's capture would be a desperately needed boon for the Continental Army, and a flicker of hope for a desperate nation ramping up its fight for independence.

Aboard the unwieldy craft, militia leader Ethan Allen knew he had to act quickly. The light would soon come, and then his force, dubbed the Green Mountain Boys, would have to fend off the 50 British soldiers stationed within Ticonderoga's walls. With officer Benedict Arnold at his side, the two commanders decided to attack. Silently, the Green Mountain Boys jumped ashore and overcame the single sentry on duty, pushing their way into the officer's quarters. A stunned and surprised British officer, facing a crowd of muskets, demanded of Allen to know under whose authority Ticonderoga was being raided. As tradition would have, the dogged Vermont frontiersman shot back: "In the name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress." Whether by God or gunpowder, Fort Ticonderoga now belonged to America's fledgling army—and the capture proceeded without a single death on either side.

As the Green Mountain Boys unfurled their flag to declare victory and celebrated with the alcohol found within the fort's stores, however, a lone soldier within the occupying company had more on his mind than liquor and revelry. The battle might be won, but his personal war for independence involved far more than captured forts and hard-won territory. His fight had been raging since birth, and would rage for decades longer, becoming directly intertwined with the fate of the nation he'd taken up his musket to defend. He was Lemuel Haynes of Connecticut, and his life and work would stand as an affront to both the political power of the British Empire and the spiritual power of the devil—and earn him a spot among America's greatest black patriots.

Haynes, like almost all black Americans at the time, hailed from the humblest of beginnings. The child of a white (Scottish) mother and black (enslaved) father in West Hartford, Connecticut, he was abandoned soon after his birth in 1753, a fate that should have been a death knell in a world where one child out of every 10 died before reaching the age of five. Yet the infant Haynes avoided this fate; instead, he was assigned as an indentured servant to the Rose family, white Puritans in New Granville, Massachusetts. Deacon David Rose would have an immeasurable impact on the young Haynes' life, instilling in him a profound love of theology that would, intentionally or otherwise, mold him into an incisive, if unexpected, voice for American liberty.



Lemuel Haynes (1753–1833)

Haynes' first love was preaching, crediting his start down the pastoral road with the positive response he received while extemporaneously expounding the Scriptures to the Rose family one night. Yet his love of preaching would soon be put on hold: his indenture to the Roses expired in 1774, and there were forces at work far greater than Haynes' happy and pious existence in New Granville. The newly formed Continental Army was on the move, and struggling to face the forces of the British Empire in the field. Haynes, buoyed by both religious and political conviction, volunteered as a Minuteman shortly after his indenture expired, officially joining the ranks of the Army in 1776, shortly after the nation suffered crushing defeats at Valcour Bay and White Plains, sending shockwaves of uncertainty through the troops—and increasing the weight upon the shoulders of young Virginian general George Washington. Haynes marched as an American soldier, including at the garrison of Fort Ticonderoga, until leaving the army later that year after contracting typhus. With his short stint in the military over, Haynes' true life battle would begin.

Haynes had carried his love of preaching to war with him, writing sermons while deployed in Boston and the surrounding area. With his military career ended, Haynes was once again free to pursue his first love. He held services within his local parish, preaching to any who would listen while looking for opportunities to further his still mostly self-gained education. And opportunities would come, at a level Haynes could not have expected—he rejected an

Fort Ticonderoga, New York

open offer to pursue studies at Dartmouth College in favor of studying Latin and Greek closer to home. Throughout the course of his life, he would go on to receive an honorary master's degree from Middlebury College in Vermont, the first black man ever to receive the honor. In 1780, the 27-year-old Haynes would finally be licensed to preach by the Congregational Association and would become America's first black ordained minister and the latest member of the growing New Divinity movement, an offshoot of revivalist Jonathan Edwards' theology, which emphasized both the sovereignty of God and the need for rational social critique. The movement, although spearheaded by white theologians like Samuel Hopkins (a disciple of Edwards), specifically targeted the institution of slavery as damnable.

In an era when many critics of slavery were finding receptive ears among Americans newly focused on questions of natural rights and law, Haynes and his fellow New Divines concentrated their arguments as expressly theological, biblical critiques of humans as property. For thinkers like Haynes, the argument against slavery was the same as the argument for American liberty: if natural rights meant anything, they meant freedom for *all* Americans against *all* forms of servitude. It was more than abstract Calvinist philosophy—it was a deeply *humanizing* argument for black Americans like Haynes, who felt God's hand of liberation upon them just as firmly as did their fellow white patriots. As biographer John Saillant notes: "From Calvinism, this generation of black authors drew a vision of God at work providentially in the lives of black people, directing their sufferings yet promising the faithful among them a restoration to his favor and his presence."

Haynes' task as a preacher was more than parsing theological truths. It was representing such truths as a black man in an era when his mixed race was perceived as a hindrance. Haynes completed his ordination in 1785, in a northwestern Connecticut town called Torrington, and not all his listeners were easily swayed by the spiritual guidance of a black pastor. Some persistently mocked and dismissed Haynes, wearing hats in church to protest his sermons (at the time, a cardinal breach of protocol). Yet, as historian Samuel Orcutt put it, "curiosity conquered

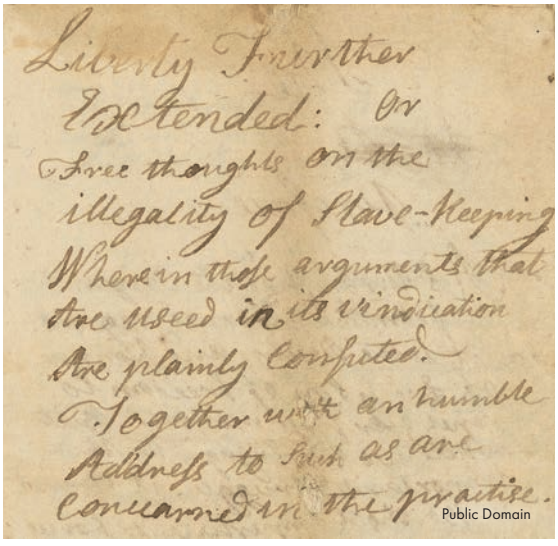
Preaching in the Old First Church, **a 1939 painting by William Tefft Schwarz depicting Lemuel Haynes in the pulpit**

prejudice," and soon even congregants who once protested his ministry now flocked to Torrington to hear the black evangelist, further encouraged by Haynes' fellow Reformed clergy, who never viewed his race as disqualifying.

Throughout his early years in the pulpit, Haynes refused to allow controversy to affect his love of preaching. He pressed on, and the preaching circuit would soon lead him into the neighboring republic of Vermont. Be it New England's comparative racial tolerance or simply an unyielding need for preachers in the still-developing American colonies, Haynes soon found himself at the head of West Parish Church, an all-white church in Rutland. It proved a pastoral relationship that lasted three decades.

Haynes was said to possess a lightning-fast wit. According to some accounts, after one of Haynes' fellow clergymen had lost all his scholarly work to a fire, the black preacher remarked that they had produced more illumination as fire starters than they ever had as sermons. While his demeanor in the pulpit was more austere, he spoke with a giftedness and natural passion that served to draw listeners to him. Over the decades in Rutland, Haynes' church grew tremendously, from fewer than 50 to a congregation of more than 300 at its peak. Haynes spoke boldly, proclaiming a heavily Calvinist message that kept the gospel as central and vociferously critiqued the notion of universal salvation. In the words of one observer, "When he ascended the pulpit, it was with a gravity which seemed to indicate that he felt the amazing weight of his charge as an ambassador of God to dying men." Haynes' work communicated a keen focus on the *obligations* of the Christian life for preacher and listener alike, and applied the gospel to his listeners in a manner that consistently hearkened to the inability of anyone, black or white, to truly prevail against divine judgment save by the grace of Christ.

This emphasis on obligation drove Haynes, like many of his contemporaries in the New Divinity movement, to critiquing the institution of slavery. Haynes, perhaps surprisingly, spoke less on the issue of slavery than some at the time, and certainly less than figures like Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington would later on. Yet, when Haynes did speak on the subject, he did so in the pastoral spirit of unsparing moral and theological criticism. The ideological framework of the American Revolution offered Haynes fodder from which to draw his audience into the case against slavery.


Liberty Further
Extended: Or
Free thoughts on the
illegality of Slave-Keeping
Wherein those arguments that
are used in its vindication
are plainly confuted.
Together with an humble
Address to such as are
concerned in the practise.
Public Domain

Portion of Haynes' *Liberty Further Extended* manuscript

Perhaps his most famous work, 1776's *Liberty Further Extended: Or Free Thoughts on the Illegality of Slave-Keeping*, is a direct response to the Declaration of Independence. His work is awash with references not only to America's ongoing revolutionary struggle but also to his clear conviction that the arguments made against British tyranny applied just as much, if not more, to the plight of enslaved Americans. *Liberty* begins by quoting from the Declaration and attempting to persuade Haynes' largely white audience of his familiarity with and sympathy for the American cause of liberty. "I query whether Liberty is so contracted a principle as to be confined to any nation under Heaven," Haynes argues. "I think it not hyperbolical to affirm that even an African has equally as good a right to his Liberty in common with Englishmen."

Like Frederick Douglass, Haynes managed to turn key rhetorical advantages often employed by slaveholders into devastating points against the institution of slavery. If Douglass used his personal education and charisma to disprove slaveholders' portrayals of Africans as subhuman, it was a tactic Haynes had begun decades earlier. His theological knowledge allowed him an incisive view into the hollowness of much of the pro-slavery argumentation that Christians at the time found convincing. One such example was the "curse of Ham," then termed "Canaan's curse." An argument among professedly Christian slaveholders held that, since Africans were the biological descendants of Noah's son Ham, cursed for his sins in Genesis chapter 9, the slave

trade was the natural development of this curse, lending chattel slavery a veneer of scriptural legitimacy. And so Haynes offered an expressly biblical and theological argument in response: if all people could be redeemed from the far greater curse of sin through Christ's atonement, that *had* to include Africans. To reject such an argument would be to reject the all-sufficiency of the gospel itself. It was an internally consistent argument—and one Christian slave owners couldn't dismiss easily.

Another argument used by those on the pro-slavery side was that slaves taken to the New World encountered Christianity through exposure to their captors, making the slave trade a twisted form of evangelism. Haynes once again dissented, perhaps buoyed by his own countervailing lived experience of having encountered Christianity in the home of Deacon Rose as a younger man. Slaveholders rarely offered slaves education of any kind, particularly religious instruction; in Haynes' view, the blind faith on offer was no evangelism at all but merely the weaponizing of context-free Scripture to both assuage the conscience of the slaveholder and ensure passivity from the slave. To Haynes, the growing American view of the human person, as one deserving to be free from the unaccountable tyranny of a king half a world away, didn't go nearly far enough. A truly moral and upright outlook required a biblical view of every human person as of equal moral value and standing, deserving to be free from all oppression, no matter what color or nationality one might be.

Haynes never stopped poking at the sore spot of hypocrisy when it came to the cause of liberty: it was too important and soul-rending of a double standard to allow his fellow Americans and Christians to brush it aside. "It is pleasing to behold that patriotic zeal which fires your breast," he concluded in *Liberty Further Extended*. "But it is strange that you should [lack] further expressions of so noble a spirit. Some…have determined to contend in a consistent manner. They have let the oppressed go free."

So was Lemuel Haynes preaching a proto social gospel? Viewed through a certain lens, it might seem so. There was no question that his passion for the gospel led him to involve himself in contemporary issues that were roiling society, even a society that struggled to fully accept and integrate him. The burden of integration lay on Haynes' shoulders his whole life. His own interracial marriage, to a white schoolteacher named Elizabeth Babbit, with whom he had 10 children, was one he undertook only after serious consideration and counsel from fellow clergy—due to social custom, she even had to ask *him* to marry *her*. Haynes was a man deeply aware of the rot and prejudicial traditions within the society that surrounded him, and no doubt this awareness encouraged him in his own vocation as a minister.

But it would be a mistake, or at the least simplistic, to claim that Haynes merely preached a "social gospel." Haynes by all accounts disdained politics in the pulpit proper, maintaining a lifelong belief that God, and God alone, was the driver of the heart change necessary for any political and social renewal: "None but He who, by one word's speaking, spake all nature into existence, can triumph over the opposition of the heart." Perhaps few during America's infancy understood the interplay between a free and virtuous society better than the black preacher from Connecticut—and perhaps few were more galled by Americans who decried tyranny abroad while practicing slavery at home.

While his condemnation of American slave owners could be intense, Haynes never supported expatriation (also termed colonization) of slaves back to Africa. The idea drew favor in certain circles, with some believing that America's racial divide was too great for white and black Americans ever to coexist. Haynes rejected this, putting himself squarely at odds with figures like Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe. Having grown up in a white household, and having served alongside white brothers-at-arms in the Revolutionary War, he believed that the two races were capable of living together—*if both were truly free*. A staunch Calvinist, Haynes seemed to see America as predestined for racial coexistence, even if it took years for the young nation to get there, a vision that would come to fruition in the civil rights movement almost 150 years after his death.

As Saillant notes in "Lemuel Haynes and the Revolutionary Origins of Black Theology, 1776–1801":

> Scholars who have encountered Haynes have universally considered him an anomaly—a black Puritan uninterested in Afro-American affairs. But a more penetrating encounter with Haynes reveals his links to the ideology and events of his nation's formative years as well as to a crucial dimension of Afro-American history—a black theology prizing both liberty and community.

Civil Rights March on Washington, D.C., in 1963

Liberty and community truly formed the foundation of Haynes' life and work: as a young man, he found liberty from his tragic life's beginnings through education, and found community through military service, investing his own life in the service of the nation he believed in every bit as much as he criticized it. As a public figure, he defended liberty by speaking what he believed to be the biblical truth regarding American slavery and defended community through his unceasing work as a small-town pastor on the frontier of civilization. It would be a mistake to view Lemuel Haynes as merely a black pastor or black thinker. He certainly never seemed to view himself that way. His days likely contained more anti-black prejudice than what many commentators who make their living opining on social prejudice and racial bigotry experience today. Yet Haynes' job, as he saw it, was to preach Christ and Him crucified to a nation and congregation that desperately needed to hear it. His political work was a complement and a furtherance of his pastoral vocation—neither a substitute, as in the social gospel, nor an impediment, as in a purely "spirituality of the church" approach.

Haynes' humility is perhaps best epitomized by his gravestone, a simple slab erected after the preacher's death in 1833 at the age of 80. The limestone marker reads: "Here lies the dust of a poor hell-deserving sinner, who ventured into eternity trusting wholly on the merits of Christ for salvation. In the full belief of the great doctrines he preached here on earth, he invites his children and all who read this, to trust their eternal interest on the same foundation."

Haynes' story reveals an inspiring portrait of a man who viewed his *obligations* as far more animating and compelling than his *obstacles*. He had the wisdom to understand that his life story alone couldn't carry the full weight of the arguments about freedom and virtue he was making. Perhaps more significantly, he possessed the increasingly uncommon humility to reach outside himself to craft arguments and narratives that everyone from black slaves to white slave owners could find morally irrefutable.

Lemuel Haynes was an anomaly—a pious, old-fashioned man, born into truly extraordinary times, who played a largely forgotten role in the story of the American Revolution while fulfilling his vocation in preaching the kingdom of heaven. Yet without people like Haynes, people of strident character, unsparing moral insight, and uncommon humility, the American experiment that followed him would not, could not, have succeeded. RL

Isaac Willour *is an award-winning journalist focusing on race, culture, and American conservatism, as well as a corporate relations analyst at Bowyer Research. His work has been featured at outlets including* National Review, USA Today, C-SPAN, *and the* Daily Wire. *Follow him on X: @IsaacWillour.*

IN THE LIBERAL TRADITION

William Pynchon: Banned in Boston

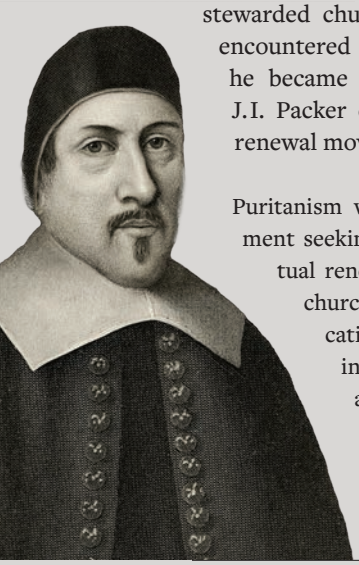
by DAN HUGGER

NO PURITANS YET WALK among us. That religious movement has long since dissipated into the hoary annals of the past. Wordsmiths will occasionally attempt a resurrection with the usual purpose of disparagement. Practitioners of theological *ressourcement*, academics and churchmen, are more careful. They know that with the 1662 Act of Uniformity, Puritans either slowly receded into the mushy *via media* of the Church of England or helped seed the then-emerging nonconformist tradition of English Protestantism. The association of terms like "Puritan" with "nonconformist" might cause students of their popular usage, rather than history, to stand agog. They are elegantly reconciled in the person of William Pynchon.

William Pynchon was born in 1590 in Springfield, Essex, England. His family was prominent and respectable; he himself was a large landholder and served as a churchwarden in his local parish, a volunteer position that represented laypeople and stewarded church property. As a young man, he encountered the Puritan movement with which he became involved. The Anglican theologian J.I. Packer describes this religious reform and renewal movement well:

> Puritanism was an evangelical holiness movement seeking to implement its vision of spiritual renewal, national and personal, in the church, the state, and the home; in education, evangelism, and economics; in individual discipleship and devotion, and in pastoral care and competence.

Such a comprehensive spiritual vision is difficult to realize with enemies as ubiquitous as the world, the flesh, and the devil (Eph. 2:2–3a). Many Puritans argued that the temptations of the world might be mitigated by abandoning the Old World of Europe for the New World of the Americas. Colonies established by those seeking spiritual renewal and holiness could prove transformative if blessed by divine providence.



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William Pynchon himself participated in just such an experiment, founding with other settlers Roxbury, Massachusetts, in 1630. Roxbury, absorbed by the city of Boston in 1868, retains a motto descriptive of both its geography and founding vision: *Saxetum Dextris Deoque Confidens* ("In this rocky borough, by God's right, we are confident"). Yet Pynchon was not at all confident in the agricultural prospects of such a rocky landscape. He scouted the Connecticut River Valley in 1635, seeking a more fecund location for the establishment of a farm. The next year, along with a few other Puritan settlers, he established the Plantation of Agawam in that valley. It would grow to become the city of Springfield, Massachusetts.

Springfield was ideally suited for both agricultural production and trade. It was equidistant between the European settlements of Boston and Albany and close to populations of native peoples such as the Pocomtuc with whom Pynchon conducted a profitable fur trade. The Pequot War, fought between the Pequot and European settlers of several colonies between 1636 and 1638, threatened this trade. Pynchon found the behavior of the Connecticut colony toward native peoples so unconscionable and commercially ruinous that he disaffiliated Springfield from it and had it annexed by the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1638.

The southwest border of the Massachusetts Bay Colony was commercially and politically dominated

by the city of Springfield. William Pynchon made a fortune exporting beaver pelts by the thousands and establishing the first commercial meatpacking plant in the new world.

Politically, however, Pynchon resisted efforts by the colonial government of Massachusetts Bay to enforce a narrow orthodoxy curtailing religious liberty to a greater extent than did the English parliament, which had left open the question of the particulars of church government, for example.

While Pynchon established a commercial empire and wielded considerable political influence, his theological ambitions in the New World would meet with a markedly different fate.

In 1650, Pynchon published in England a slim theological book: *The Meritorious Price of Our Redemption*. It's full title, abiding by the conventions of such books at the time, is considerably longer and spells out the scope of its argument:

> The meritorious price of our redemption, iustification, &c. Cleering it from some common errors; and proving, Part I. 1. That Christ did not suffer for us those unutterable torments of Gods wrath, that commonly are called hell-torments, to redeem our soules from them. 2. That Christ did not bear our sins by Gods imputation, and therefore he did not bear the curse of the law for them. Part II. 3. That Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law (not by suffering the said curse for us, but) by a satisfactory price of attonement; viz. by paying or performing unto his father that invaluable precious thing of his mediatoriall obedience, wherof his mediatoriall sacrifice of attonement was the master-piece. 4. A sinners righteousnesse or justification is explained, and cleered from some common errors.

The argument in *The Meritorious Price of Our Redemption* is on the nature of the atonement, the saving work of Christ that reconciles the world to God. About the necessity, scope, nature, and meaning of this saving work there is no end of theological dispute between (and even within) the theological traditions, denominations, and sects of Christendom. Some 300 years after the publication of Pynchon's work, C.S. Lewis, in his brief treatment in *Mere Christianity* of this doctrine and the perennial controversy that surrounds it, wryly observed, "The thing itself is infinitely more important than any explanations that theologians have produced." Pynchon's contemporaries were possessed of a considerably less generous spirit.

The book's claim that the price of our redemption was paid by the obedience of Christ rather than his suffering for us God's wrath proved scandalous to much of the Puritan clergy of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Only four copies of William Pynchon's book survived the ensuing flames. *The Meritorious Price of Our Redemption* was the first book to bear the designation "Banned in Boston"—in fact, it was the first book banned in the New World. Pynchon was accused of heresy but escaped prosecution by returning to England in 1652. Before doing so, he was able to secure his family's legacy in the New World by transferring his property held there to his son John. He lived the last decade of his life peaceably in the Old World in the light of his conscience.

Does this theological controversy make William Pynchon an antagonist to Puritanism rather than a Puritan himself? In their encyclopedic *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*, Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones observe that Puritanism was more diverse than the narrower bounds of Reformed orthodoxy. The unclassifiable Richard Baxter, the Arminian John Goodwin, possibly Arian John Milton, Baptist John Bunyan, and Antinomian John Eaton all bear the name "Puritan." Pynchon's case for the price of our redemption being the active obedience of Jesus Christ rather than his passive suffering for us God's wrath was out of step with the Puritan movement, this is true, but the manner of his argumentation was in line with its distinctive character for, as Beeke and Jones explain:

> The distinctive character of Puritanism was its quest for a life reformed by the Word of God. The Puritans were committed to search the scriptures, organize and analyze their findings, and then apply them to all areas of life. RL

Fun fact: William Pynchon is the earliest American ancestor of novelist Thomas Pynchon (*V.*, *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Inherent Vice*), a genealogical fact said to play some role in the latter's fictional family histories.

Dan Hugger *is librarian and research associate for the Acton Institute.*

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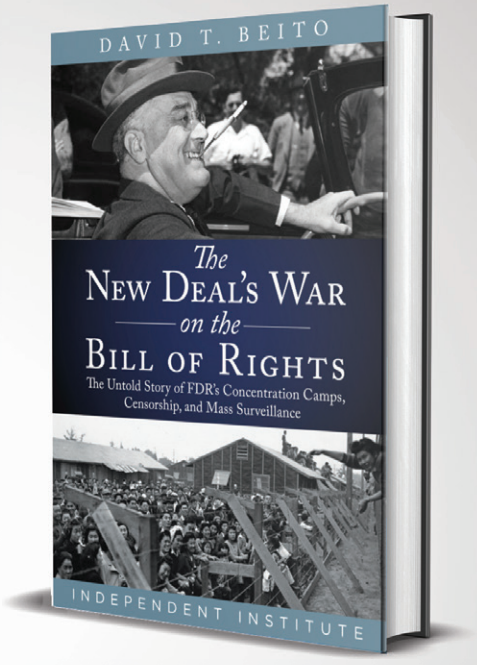

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer on a retreat weekend with confirmands of Zion's Church congregation (1932). Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-R0211-316 / CC-BY-SA 3.0 / Wikimedia Commons.

On Calling and Conversation

What did the German Lutheran Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose work continues to engage us decades after his execution, have in common with the Dutch neo-Calvinists? Enough to make for some great ecumenical discussions today.

by **DYLAN PAHMAN**

ON APRIL 9, 1945, at Flossenbürg concentration camp, the Nazis executed the talented pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer by hanging, on suspicion of his involvement with the Abwehr conspiracy to assassinate Adolf Hitler. He was 39 years old. Two weeks later, the U.S. Army liberated Flossenbürg. Hitler took his own life on April 30, just three weeks after Bonhoeffer's unjust and so untimely death.

Perhaps any Christian with the courage of Bonhoeffer would inspire even Protestants to saintly veneration. But Bonhoeffer left a body of intellectual work that academics would have engaged even if he had fled to Switzerland to teach theology in peace and protest the Nazis in safety through the Second World War. Indeed, if his life hadn't been cut short, he would likely have written far more and at least finished his *Ethics*. Instead, scholars must extrapolate trajectories of theological development from books, articles, letters, and fragments that remain.

Such scholars have not been limited to Bonhoeffer's German Lutheran tradition. Christians of all churches have engaged his works, and his call to authentic and costly Christian discipleship rings all the truer due to the life he lived and the death he died. Among this ecumenical scholarly interest, we now have a handy reference book for a single tradition: *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Neo-Calvinism in Dialogue*, edited by George Harinck and Brant M. Himes.

In their introduction, Harinck and Himes suggest that such ecumenical scholarship "is a valuable resource for both Bonhoeffer and Neo-Calvinist scholars to discover more about their respective

David Meisel / CC BY-SA 4.0 / Wikimedia Commons

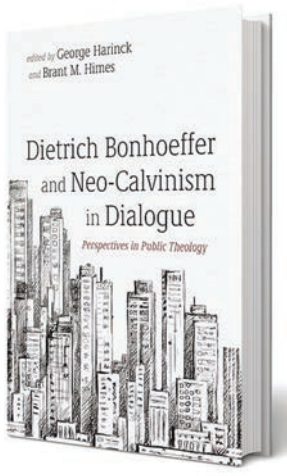
Bonhoeffer memorial at St. Peter's Church in Hamburg

traditions." Furthermore, they note, "While the essays do not directly engage with each other, we do see generative themes emerging around questions of historical and theological application."

Harinck begins the book with a chapter on the Dutch reception of Bonhoeffer's works, showing that only after WWII did interest in Bonhoeffer exceed a few scattered reviews and references. The German Bonhoeffer, despite international travels, for his part does not reference Abraham Kuyper or Herman Bavinck, the two principle neo-Calvinist theologians he might have known in his time. Herman Paul does rightly—and refreshingly—note in his chapter that both Kuyper and Bonhoeffer had a common influence in German idealism. But still, the lack of direct influence helps better frame the other contributors' chapters. Berend Kamphuis even pushes back against Georg Huntemann's thesis that Bonhoeffer has become an evangelical "church father." "I would be glad to call Bonhoeffer a neo-Calvinist church father if it meant that the church today would be eager to learn from this theological giant in the kingdom of God," writes Kamphuis. "Yet Bonhoeffer was no evangelical, no Calvinist, no neo-Calvinist." Thus, *Bonhoeffer and Neo-Calvinism* truly is a conversation, one between different theological perspectives with common Reformational and philosophical roots, not a work of charting historical influence of one upon the other.

That said, I would categorize the other chapters in terms of three "generative themes": (1) common grace and orders of preservation; (2) discipleship; and (3) ecclesiology—the doctrine of the church. The book contains a mix of international perspectives as well, with roughly half the contributors being Dutch and the other half American. While each of the chapters makes a strong contribution to this interconfessional conversation, the book could reach a wider audience with only a few small revisions. Nevertheless, *Bonhoeffer and Neo-Calvinism* achieves its stated goal, and in that spirit I'll conclude with a question of my own to spur continued dialogue.

Despite readings of Bonhoeffer in the line of his older contemporary Karl Barth, who rejected natural law, Jordan J. Ballor argues that "both Kuyper and Bonhoeffer are natural-law thinkers." Even though both emphasize the fallenness of the natural world due to human sin, both still believe that God ordained an order and trajectory for creation that he upholds despite our



Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Neo-Calvinism in Dialogue: Perspectives in Public Theology

Edited by
George Harinck and
Brant M. Himes

(Pickwick Publications, 2023)

sinfulness. For Kuyper, these orders were the spheres of common grace—God's continual work, beyond Providence, to prevent the full effects on creation of humanity's fall into sin. Bonhoeffer, similarly, recast the Lutheran creation orders of family, state, and church (to which he added work or culture) as "orders of preservation," mandates from God, rather than estates to be honored no matter their current trajectory.

Given Bonhoeffer's context as a pastor and theologian of the German Confessing Church, which refused to compromise with the Nazis, we can see why this development mattered. The state church, a union of the Reformed and Lutheran traditions, had used the idea that the state was ordained by God to justify capitulation to National Socialism. As Matthew Kaemingk notes in his chapter, "Under the call of responsibility, during a crisis such as the Nazi terror, a follower of Christ must take on the spiritual and political burden of actually ignoring Christ's mandated boundaries between church, state, culture, and family in an effort to restore them to Christ's command." Not only do the orders of society have God-given natures, but each of those natures has its own God-oriented *telos* or purpose, either honoring God or rebelling against him. And Christians, whatever their vocation, have a calling to help orient all these spheres toward the glory of God.

The call of Christ, of course, is the call to discipleship. Himes focuses on the role of confession in discipleship in both Kuyper's and Bonhoeffer's thought and practice in his chapter. Kuyper offended his onetime collaborator Alexander F. de Savornin Lohman when they differed on the issue of expanding the franchise to working-class heads of households. (Kuyper supported it.) Kuyper sought forgiveness, but because he reasserted his position while apologizing, and the bill to expand the right to vote ultimately passed, Lohman never reconciled with him. Bonhoeffer, for his part, mentored the seminarians he taught for the Confessing Church, emphasizing the importance of confession and forgiveness when they fell into youthful temptation. "Kuyper advocated for a political and social program from the Sermon [on the Mount]," writes Himes, "while Bonhoeffer emphasized the necessity to follow Jesus 'in simple obedience' in whatever the circumstance. In this sense, Kuyper and Bonhoeffer were committed to pursuing the reconciliation with the world that they traced as a central vision of the Sermon."

Gerard den Hertog, meanwhile, focuses on discipleship's implications for a Christian ethical approach to war in Bavinck and Bonhoeffer. I already had some familiarity with Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*, but being more familiar with Kuyper than Bavinck among the neo-Calvinists, this side of Bavinck was new to me, fulfilling the promise in the introduction of informing even those already familiar with either neo-Calvinism or Bonhoeffer. "For both Bavinck and Bonhoeffer, the radical change that occurs in a person when he or she meets Jesus Christ is crucial and fundamental," says den Hertog, "but whereas the change in Bavinck is hidden in regeneration, Bonhoeffer works out that it takes place in the call of Jesus and in a disciple's obedience and following." Applied to war, both insisted discipleship meant membership in the catholic—i.e., universal—Church. They agreed God can use what men intend for evil for good, but both theologians generally opposed war, especially between Christians, whose citizenship belongs first to the kingdom of heaven that transcends national allegiances.

Indeed, the role of the church is the last "generative theme" I gleaned from these chapters. Garcia demonstrates the important role of preaching, both in theory and practice, for Bavinck and Bonhoeffer. Both agree that the church has a ministry of Word and Sacrament, and thus her preaching, one of the primary tools of discipleship, ought to be central. For Bonhoeffer, furthermore, preaching is one way in which the church *is* Christ and in which the Christian encounters Christ in the Church.

Last, Dekker and Harinck trace the common emphasis on the church as institute, rather than just the organism of all church members, for social

witness. It is as institute, nevertheless, that the church administers the Word and Sacraments, and in this role it is "of essential importance to the world, because it…offers an impulse towards Christian life and aims for the preservation of this world and humanity." Both Kuyper and Bonhoeffer warn against the politicization of the church, on the one hand, and the clericalization of life, on the other.

While the quality of the chapters remains consistent throughout the book, and I would recommend it to any scholars working on interdisciplinary studies between neo-Calvinism and Bonhoeffer, the book does have a few regrettable flaws. In particular, the chapters by authors for whom English is not their first language needed a native English speaker to copyedit them. Misuse of prepositions especially—one of the trickiest differences between languages—makes reading some of these chapters harder than it should be. As an academic press, Pickwick leaves the copyediting to editors and authors, so unfortunately this criticism must fall upon the contributors.

Furthermore, for some unknown reason Dekker and Harinck's chapter—the English of which is comparably good on the whole—quotes Huntemann twice in German, despite Kamphuis consistently quoting him in English in his own chapter. Their chapter also seems to rely on original—and again, quite good—English translations of most sources, even though many works of Kuyper and Bonhoeffer they quote have suitable English translations available. While readability does not suffer in this regard, Anglophone scholars—presumably the target audience of this English-language book—cannot easily look up any of these quotes in context in the editions they might have on their own shelves.

Sure, scholars will—and should—still cite *Bonhoeffer and Neo-Calvinism* despite these flaws. But with a little extra care, this might have been a book for more than scholars. It is a slim volume (about 200 pages), consisting of 10 chapters and an introduction. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is fairly well known and popular. And it successfully and compellingly puts him in dialogue with another Christian tradition, neo-Calvinism, that has a growing influence outside traditionally Calvinist circles today. Some better copyediting, some reorganizing of the chapters around a few "generative themes" (as I have done in this review), and perhaps discussion questions after each chapter, might have made this book a go-to resource for courses on ecumenical theology, Christian ethics, neo-Calvinism, and/or Bonhoeffer.

The point is that perhaps this book is *better* than the editors realized. Yes, that is a criticism, but it's also a compliment. Indeed, it inspired me to reflect on my own questions I would pose: Where does the Lutheran doctrine of vocation fit into neo-Calvinism and Bonhoeffer's theology? Certainly there is some connection to the spheres, orders, or mandates of social life, but how does the Christian, whose principal vocation is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, faithfully live out that calling in the many different vocations they occupy in this life? How does one discern such specific vocations? How does knowing them help us embody the duties and boundaries of our life together? This book may not have answered those questions, but it helped me raise them, which is all it proposed to do. On that score, and despite my criticisms, I recommend *Bonhoeffer and Neo-Calvinism*. And I hope that next time I see those contributors whom I know, we'll continue the conversation they so effectively began. RL

BONHOEFFER LEFT A BODY OF INTELLECTUAL WORK THAT ACADEMICS WOULD HAVE ENGAGED EVEN IF HE HAD FLED TO SWITZERLAND TO TEACH THEOLOGY IN PEACE AND PROTEST THE NAZIS IN SAFETY.

Dylan Pahman *is a research fellow at the Acton Institute, where he serves as executive editor of the* Journal of Markets & Morality.

Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755) by Pierre-Michel Alix. Album / Alamy Stock Photo.

Recovering Liberty's Philosopher

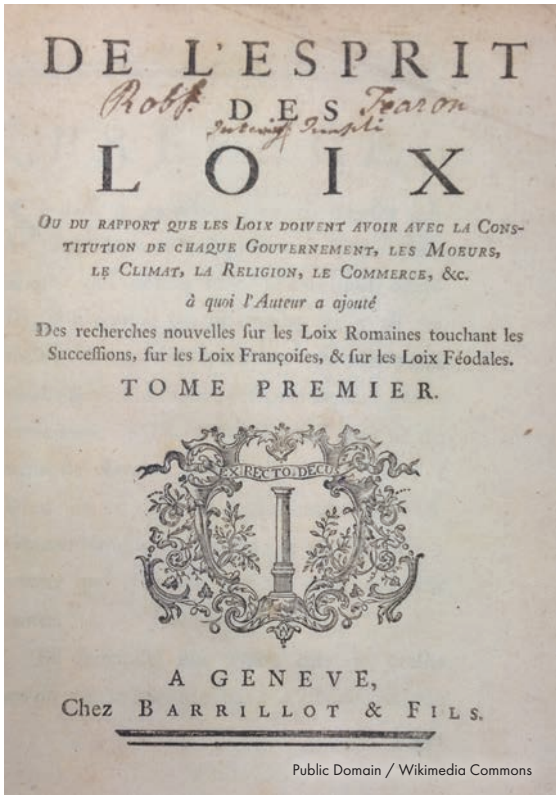
A new critical edition of *The Spirit of the Laws* could not have come at a better time, when America is a battleground, and our leaders, even our neighbors, are enemies.

by **TITUS TECHERA**

AMERICAN LIFE IS now riven by an unprecedented kind of political conflict that we experience everywhere, not just in elections but also in ordinary life. This political conflict is partisan, but it goes beyond political parties and reaches into the realm of ideas. It is also comprehensive in that it swallows up history. Everything we might call America seems therefore to be a battleground. In this sense, we must call our situation a crisis. The word is overused because we are given to superlatives and exaggeration, partially out of self-importance but also because individuality counts so much among us.

In the interest of reasonableness, we must try to define this conflict by comparison with the previous major events of American life. We hear cries of "civil war!" these days, but there is no armed conflict and such is even hard to imagine, even though we do have increasingly opposed regions. The Civil War was arguably the defining *moral* event in American history, and there is not now any attempt to reenact it or replace it by another, even though its meaning remains contested. The defining event in American history, however, remains the Revolution, the founding. This, too, is now in discussion, but we are not now looking for a new Constitution, even if we agree that the parties in that War of Independence disagreed about fundamental political arrangements.

We are all Americans, and we are somehow committed to democratic equality and individual liberty, yet we do not seem able to tolerate each other or have a reasonably functional government. Ideas and speech are at the core of our crisis, in the sense of both political discourse and institutional design. Legitimacy and competence are in question. We can


DE L'ESPRIT
DES
LOIX
OU DU RAPPORT QUE LES LOIX DOIVENT AVOIR AVEC LA CONSTITUTION DE CHAQUE GOUVERNEMENT, LES MOEURS, LE CLIMAT, LA RELIGION, LE COMMERCE, &c.
à quoi l'Auteur a ajouté
Des recherches nouvelles sur les Loix Romaines touchant les Successions, sur les Loix Françoises, & sur les Loix Féodales.
TOME PREMIER.
A GENEVE,
Chez BARRILLOT & FILS.
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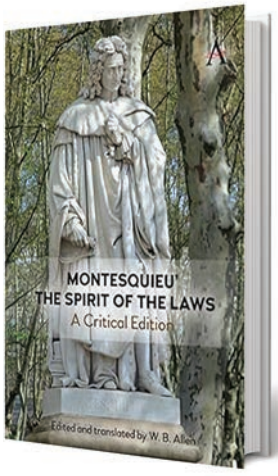
Original title page of *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748)

neither let go of our way of life, nor accept it. In intellectual terms, we might call our predicament postmodern. We carry on our political conflict speaking of laws and rights, that is, on the basis of our political inheritance, the most impressive modern revolution, one that comes with a teaching about politics and an explicit establishment of politics in a written constitution. Yet we attempt to go beyond modernity, since we cannot accept the manner in which, and the limits within which, these political arrangements made sense.

Our crisis is therefore civilizational, being both political and intellectual. We could even say that there is something like philosophy in our conflicts, because we are debating at the top of our voices who gets to be a citizen and also what constitutes a human being. Self-understanding and nature are urgent ideological and legal questions. In this predicament, turning to the teachings of the political philosophers who spoke most persuasively and influentially about liberty and rights seems urgent, and among this small number of writers, "the celebrated Montesquieu," as the *Federalist Papers* style him, has a unique place of respect.



Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws:* A Critical Edition

Edited by W. B. Allen

(Anthem Press, 2024)

Professor William Allen has thus earned our gratitude for his public spirit as much as for his learning by bringing out a new translation of Montesquieu's longest, most important work—*The Spirit of the Laws*. He has done scholars and students a great service. It's rare to offer American students a bilingual edition, with the two texts facing each other. It should prove a spur to learning to read Montesquieu in the original French, which would allow the best access to the other great language of modern liberalism and the study of Montesquieu's other works as well as those of his famous heirs, Rousseau and Tocqueville. At 80, Allen is at the end of a half-century career of teaching, and his very long study of Montesquieu's political teaching (about 150 pages of the 1,000-page volume), which follows the translation, seems a fitting summation of his scholarship.

Montesquieu was the most famous philosopher of his time and is now the least studied among the great philosophers of liberty. This requires explaining because it is connected to our difficulty accessing his thought: He is the gentleman among modern philosophers. As a man, his primary concern is political. Unlike the more famous Hobbes and Locke, he does not write what we would call a political theory. He is far less abstract, sticking to political life in a way citizens understand it, insisting on the laws under which various peoples live or have lived. To read the *Spirit of the Laws* is therefore to undertake to learn a great deal of history and to mix together accounts of political events with philosophical reflections on politics as such. The politician who wants to make use of Montesquieu in order to legislate would have first to

> **MONTESQUIEU WAS THE MOST FAMOUS PHILOSOPHER OF HIS TIME AND IS NOW THE LEAST STUDIED.**

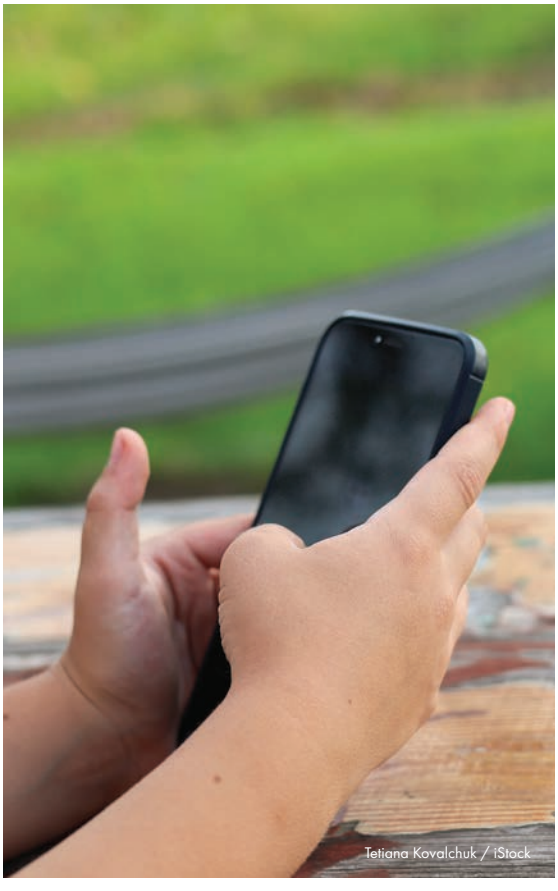
educate himself—as, famously, Adams and Madison and Hamilton did.

This political education invariably involves many judgments and observations rather than a sustained argument. Montesquieu does talk about natural laws, but he does not offer a natural law theory, unlike his predecessors. This is his way of gentling the man, and it is obvious above all in the pleasure of reading his work. A certain grace and a certain elusive quality are typical of his writing—he seems effortlessly erudite, but he is hard to pin down. One has to develop judgment about his judgments by acquiring a taste for his attitude to politics. In the American context, we could say that it takes liberal education to understand fully Montesquieu's liberalism. The politics of liberty, moreover, itself has this character, since it involves many complex processes that cannot be forced or rushed, but instead rewards patience and diplomacy, an ability to put together many different designs that yield their results with almost mechanical precision but without outraging our moral sense. Montesquieu doesn't reduce human action to passion and violence like "the justly decried" Hobbes.

Montesquieu's insistence on a learning that cannot be separated from political life ancient and modern—his examples are primarily Greece, Rome, England, and France—is a counterpoise to the dangers of technical thought. If government can be arranged more or less like a mechanism—what a triumph of intelligence!—then it's not necessary for men to be intelligent. All parents know this worry when they wonder at their children's use of smartphones. If learning technique were enough, Montesquieu himself would become expendable. If modern life were self-sufficient, if the Enlightenment were to triumph, philosophy would be replaced by politics, which, in turn, would be replaced by technology. That would be taking things to extremes and would lead to despotism, which is what Montesquieu most wants to avoid, as much in his arguments as in his manner of presenting them.

The devices of Montesquieu's politics, above all the doctrine of the separation of powers, are intended to preserve liberty as much as to improve government. This intention is summarized well in the famous passage in *Federalist* No. 51:

> The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place. It may be a reflection on human nature, that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty



Tetiana Kovalchuk / iStock

lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.

This would constitute progress in political life, indeed, Enlightenment, since it insists on knowledge as the great achievement, but it is a limited progress, since it is not possible to make men so wise or so good as to remove conflict.

Liberty, therefore, has two aspects for Montesquieu, political and civil, the former dealing with our citizenship, the other with our safety from political oppression. Each one of us, without this latter liberty, would be, to paraphrase a celebrated preacher of Montesquieu's era, sinners in the hands of an angry Leviathan. This was his anticipation of our current conflict, which involves the fear that, however much we vote for representatives in elections, every aspect of our private lives is nevertheless vulnerable to a judgment, a scrutiny, a punishment we can neither escape nor bear. No matter how many politicians we elect, the administrators of the state can threaten our property, children, and our opinions. Inasmuch as we recognize Montesquieu as prophetic, we can turn to learn from him how we might be more political *and* have more liberty.

It's to this end that Allen dedicates his long interpretation: Montesquieu as apostle of liberty. Moreover, Allen writes a dignified prose reminiscent of the high Victorian age rather than our own crass times, when speech is so rarely free of professional jargon or the spontaneity of ignorance, which seldom differs from aping popular or fashionable phrases. An example that sums up his exposition:

> What we propose in these premises is particularly to highlight the exegeses of the critical portions of the text that establish Montesquieu's claim to have written comprehensively about the conditions of human sociality and the prospects for reconciling those conditions to cardinal human goods [virtue, liberty, justice, and constitutionalism]. We do this by focusing, first, on Book 26 as a guide to the reading of *Spirit of the Laws*, then on Book 11 as a guide to the priority of libertarian individualism for navigating social contingencies conformably to reason, then Book 18 as a guide for triangulating the origins of social and political life in relation to the contingent developments that justify deliberate political architecture, and, finally, the central books of the text [Books 15–17, dealing with slavery] that bring the concept of justice to the fore as a guide to orient the endeavors of reason in designing political forms.

"HOWEVER MUCH WE VOTE FOR REPRESENTATIVES IN ELECTIONS, EVERY ASPECT OF OUR PRIVATE LIVES IS NEVERTHELESS VULNERABLE TO A JUDGMENT, A SCRUTINY, A PUNISHMENT WE CAN NEITHER ESCAPE NOR BEAR."

This is also Allen's interpretation of Montesquieu's remarkable statement on modern life after Machiavelli, whom he calls "a great man," that every day we cure ourselves a little of Machiavellianism. The police power of the state replaces the violent will of princes or their quarrels, due process of law replaces duels, capital punishment becomes rare and is no longer public.

In sum, we have much to learn from Montesquieu about our modern condition, anxiety, uncertainty concerning the future in relation to other people, and the civilized ways of managing it in a commercial society. With Allen's guidance, we can undertake that education and learn, first of all, that philosophers can be of help to us. RL

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What the Olives Tell Us: The Search for Peace in Israel

Finding simple human kindness across cultures amid the chaos of history makes for more than a great story. It generates hope.

by **NADYA WILLIAMS**

WHEN I WAS in elementary school, more decades ago than I care to admit, my family lived for two years in Tel Aviv. We were new immigrants from the former Soviet Union, part of the mass exodus that managed to make it out right before that shaky behemoth's collapse. Eager to explore our new home, every Saturday morning the four of us went for a long family walk from our rented apartment in the part of town immediately adjacent to Suk Carmel (eerily quiet and empty on the Sabbath) to the much older and historic part of the city—Jaffa.

It was there that, millennia earlier, the rogue prophet Jonah boarded a boat to run away from God. But modern Jaffa for me is associated, first and foremost, with the best fresh-baked pita bread I've ever tasted in my life, courtesy of the legendary Abouelafia Bakery—a locally (and beyond) renowned institution that for nearly a century and a half (it opened in 1879!) has been bringing together Arabs, Jews, and Christians over such delicious goodness as baked pitas with toppings of all kinds, baklava, countless types of cookies appropriate for every weekday and season and holiday, and those massive soft bagels that one eats dipped in olive oil and loads of za'atar. Adjusting well to modernity's demands, Abouelafia is now on Instagram and Facebook—offering snapshots of people stuffing their faces with cheesy goodness (oh, how I wish I were them!), and promising in

Hebrew to deliver "the taste of the garden of Eden." This may sound a bit over the top, but I promise you, they're not lying.

Abouelafia, in retrospect, had another thing going for it, beyond its delicious goods. Put simply, we stopped by there every Saturday not just because it was delicious and reasonably priced but because it was open. In a country where, at least during my childhood, grocery stores and most eateries were closed from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday, an Arab-run bakery had the Sabbath market cornered. But its accepted—and much-loved—existence right next door to trendy, modern Tel Aviv also reminds of the presence of Arab Israelis in the country, living and working peacefully and joyfully side by side with their Jewish neighbors. Pretty boring stuff—nothing that would ever make the news.

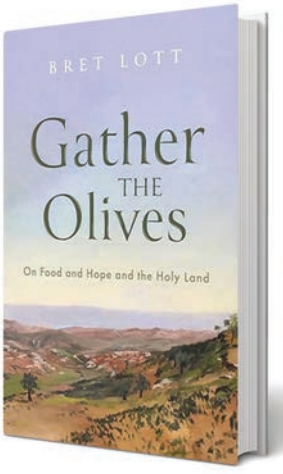
Abouelafia never comes up in Bret Lott's beautiful new memoir of experiencing Israel, *Gather the Olives: On Food and Hope and the Holy Land*. But stories of many places and businesses that reminded me of Abouelafia populate this book, which one should not read on an empty stomach. Lott's experiences around different food and drink serve as the gateway into exploring Israel, a country so dear to the author because of his Christian faith. Israel seems familiar to him, as its many place names conjure recognizable biblical connections to his mind—and yet so strange and foreign at the same time, as he realizes once actually on the ground.

Jonah's Jaffa is long gone; only the name remains. And an American-style baseball diamond now stands in Beit Shemesh, not far from where the ark of God came back to Israel in 1 Samuel 6. Nazareth, Jesus's hometown, is a modern city crowded with apartment buildings. The new in Israel seems to squeeze out the old on the visible surface, but never fully. As a result, Lott repeatedly finds himself dwelling simultaneously in multiple worlds and places, a reality perhaps unavoidable in Israel, with its remarkably lengthy history. Cars in Jerusalem drive over streets better acquainted with horse-drawn carts. Places with a history harking back to the days of Jesus—streets on which Jesus walked—have modern kiosks selling sparkling water, newspapers, and tourist souvenirs.

But the food is a link—so many of the staples are still just the same as in the time of Jesus. The ubiquitous different sorts of fresh-baked breads, the wondrous cheeses, chickpeas in all forms, and then, of course, the olives. They are grown on trees in the

The Abouelafia Bakery in Jaffa

Eyal Nahmias / Alamy Stock Photo



Gather the Olives: On Food and Hope and the Holy Land

By Bret Lott

(Slant Books, 2024)

countryside or in the middle of the city, then brined for eating whole or crushed to make oil for cooking or for seasoning salads or dipping bread. Olives are the taste of the Mediterranean par excellence. More than a basic food staple, they are a symbol of the one good that has been elusive for Israel in all its history—peace.

Gather the Olives is a collection of vignettes, each essay using a particular food as a jumping-off point for telling a larger story that goes in unexpected directions; Lott's reflections are never facile. Three interludes interspersed throughout consider "What to Drink." While the narrative ranges all over Israel, tracing Lott's travels over various trips over the years, there is a special preference for Jerusalem, the city where Lott has lived for months at a time while teaching and writing—and, on one occasion, looking to satisfy a craving for bacon, even while living in the land of kashrut. No worries; he found a supplier. It's quite a story.

But then, perhaps none of this should surprise us. Every food, no matter how ordinary, has a story, Lott is convinced. You just must know how to tell it. And the key to telling each of these food stories lies in people—the ones who lovingly grow the food, prepare it, serve it, and teach unfamiliar visitors how to take delight in it, if they have never experienced it before. To live in community with other people, to see them fully, to get to know them as they really are—the sharing of food is integral for all this today, just as it was for Jesus' ministry and throughout the history of Christianity.

Feasts are made for sharing, not for enjoying all alone, although in the opening essay of the book, "First Morning," Lott tells about his breakfast at a hotel buffet alone. His overnight flight landed in the middle of the night, so here he is, awake and ready for breakfast before anyone else, except a kind quiet waiter. The spread of food for this breakfast overwhelms Lott—so much goodness and beauty, and all for him? A welcome unlike any other.

The concept of firsts is, of course, significant theologically. We think of creation: the first morning that God made, and the successive mornings of creation, day by day. After creating day and night, God made plants, then fish and fowl, then animals, and finally, the culmination of all creation—people, God's own image bearers.

But seeing people, especially people one doesn't know and from a different culture—and in a country where one doesn't speak the language—is not easy. This is the point that Lott gets to in a chapter about his favorite coffee that he discovered in Israel: café hafuch, the upside-down cappuccino (the steamed milk goes in first and the espresso added later, instead of the other way around). He tells a story of being in a coffee shop, a nice café hafuch next to him at the table, working on a novel (a year overdue), and finding himself increasingly more annoyed with a loud-talking couple at the next table. How inconsiderate of them to choose the table right next to his own!

The mise-en-scène readily recalls Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*, the angry 1968 manifesto against reproduction and all loud and inconvenient people. Visiting India, Ehrlich was appalled by seeing so many people everywhere, he felt crowded by their presence, bothered by their noise. His response was to write a book against the very idea of people, offering his very modern longing for the undoing of God's creation.

Of course, this is not where Lott ends up because of his own experience with loud neighbors in a coffee shop. Instead, an unexpected event leads Lott to see the people around him that morning in a new light. While he is seething inside over his inability to work, he is humbled when the loud woman from the table next to his own sees something he missed: a little girl whose stuffie got trapped in the coffee shop's door without her mother noticing. Jumping up from her table, the woman helps the child. This deviation from the expected routine shakes Lott out of his annoyance and forces him to focus on people. It is easy to love one's friends. And Jesus teaches us to love our enemies. But what about just these ordinary multitudes, neither friends nor enemies, but just people whose paths cross ours every day?

And so, in this story, the delicious coffee—and the coffee shop—quickly takes a backseat to the story of people, flesh and blood, going about their day, annoying each other, but also learning to see Christ in others in small ways. There is so much sorrow in the world, we say. But, story after story, Lott shows that there is so much kindness, too.

Indeed, the kindness that Lott, an American and a Christian, got to experience may be of a sort that Israelis do not see in full. When I lived in Israel, my family never went to Ramallah or Bethlehem—we had no reason to, and it wasn't considered safe. Nor did we ever make it to the legendary site of Petra, "ha-sela ha-adom" (the red rock), in modern-day Jordan, once the stunning capital of the ancient Nabatean kingdom. Of this ancient city, my middle school history teacher spoke in a longing whisper when she told us of the escapades by Israelis over the years, who crossed the desert border by night, evading border security and risking life and limb, all to see this stunning site. It was, to these adventurers, worth it, as a wistful popular song insists.

But to all these places Lott was able to go without any serious complications. While he reports feelings of stress and occasional concerns over his safety, they proved vain in the end. Instead, in every place, kind people—Israelis and Arabs—make his safety a top priority and feed him delicious food time and time again. On both sides, ordinary people crave relationships, friendships, peace.

That is why in an essay about a road trip that included a brief stop picking cherries at the Golan Heights, best known in Israel for the regular shelling they receive from Lebanon and Syria—these mountains are just close enough for anyone to hit from across the border—an unexpected story comes up, instead, about a hospital in Tzfat, which found itself faced with a different mission. When in 2013, during a civil war in Syria, an Israeli border patrol came across seven critically wounded Syrian soldiers just across the wire border fence, they brought them in, first to an army triage station and then to this ordinary Israeli hospital. "From then on Syrian soldiers began trickling in to the hospital, left at the border—at that wire—one, and another, and more. Then Syrian citizens began to appear in the night, injured—a girl and her mother with shrapnel wounds, a boy nearly dead for a bomb explosion—and seeking to be taken care of by Israelis. So far, on this day we are visiting, 470 Syrians have been treated. All but five survived and have been returned to their country." Why do we hear stories of hatred, Lott wonders as he listens to a doctor tell of his work with these patients, while stories of love and care remain hidden?

"THE KINDNESS THAT LOTT, AN AMERICAN AND A CHRISTIAN, GOT TO EXPERIENCE MAY BE OF A SORT ISRAELIS DO NOT SEE IN FULL."

Through stories like these, Lott repeatedly finds human kindness dominate on the ground among ordinary people living next to each other, whether separated by a border or a language or both. Yet they know they live under a heavy cloud. A longing for peace haunts this book.

It was an olive branch that the dove brought to Noah at the conclusion of the Flood, a symbol of God's peace with mankind restored. Yet that peace didn't last. But this book is haunted by a peace most recently disrupted, the shadow of October 7, 2023, falling thickly on these stories that Lott completed months before that date.

The reader cannot avoid this haunting. Yet perhaps this is also what makes the book so needed, not just in some abstract moment, but right now. To read it now—to have published it after October 7—feels unavoidably political, both Slant Books and Lott himself have remarked, as they briefly discussed the possibility, initially, of simply canceling the book's publication. I'm glad they didn't. RL

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The Transfiguration by Carl Bloch (c. 1865). Public Domain / Wikimedia Commons.

How the Transfiguration Transforms Us

A rarely investigated episode in the life and mission of Jesus gets a fresh look intended to shed light on a glorious invitation.

by MICHAEL F. BIRD

BOOKS ON JESUS' ASCENSION are rare; books on the Transfiguration of Jesus are rarer still. Accordingly, Patrick Schreiner's volume *The Transfiguration of Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Reading* is much needed for a much-neglected topic—and the author does not disappoint.

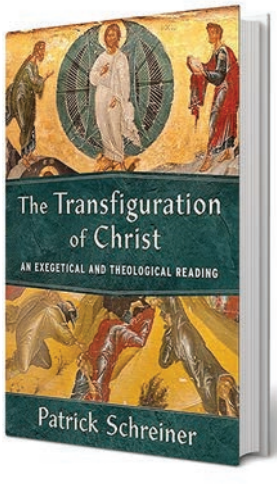
Schreiner maps the Transfiguration in relationship to Jesus' career, biblical themes, and other Christian doctrines. His purpose is to show through a theological reading that Jesus' Transfiguration—a mountain-top milestone event in which Jesus' appearance is transformed, with OT prophets Moses and Elijah and disciples Peter, James, and John in attendance—is an unveiling of his pre-existent glory and presages the progressive conformity of the Christian to the glory of God, where we can behold "God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor. 4:6) and "see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

Schreiner contends that the Transfiguration conveys Jesus' double sonship, revealing "both the future glory of the earthly and suffering messianic Son and the preexistent glory of the heavenly and eternally begotten Son." The luminous spectacularity of the Transfiguration is proof that Jesus is from God as "light from light." This perspective, somewhat controversially, is a resource for the early church to articulate Jesus' ontology (being) because "the future glory of the messianic Son is grounded in his eternally

begotten nature." The logic is that the Transfiguration reveals God's work *ad intra* (in himself) as well as *ad extra* (outside himself), that ontology and mission are interconnected, as the Son's identity is premised on his prior heavenly existence as well as his final glorification seated at the right hand of the Father. This is a bold claim, one that will not please anti-theological exegetes or comparative historians, but it is fully coherent as a theological account of the Transfiguration.

The Transfiguration is not only a revelation and transformation of Jesus; it is also transformative for the disciples. Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah, Son of the living God, is confirmed; it offers divine affirmation of Jesus' passion predictions about a glory after suffering; and the Transfiguration points to God's eternal love poured out on humanity by giving them hope of a transfigured creation.

Schreiner surveys reasons why the Transfiguration is often neglected in theology and preaching, such as its minor role in Scripture and creeds, disinterest by Protestants in the beatific vision, the event itself being bafflingly mysterious, and too many Christians too earthly minded and suspicious of anything that hints of *theosis* or "deification." Instead, Schreiner counsels that readers of Scripture should attend to the Transfiguration because it combines scriptural narrative and dogmatics; it unites the means (cross) and goal of salvation (beholding God); it pairs mystery (who is Jesus?) with revelation (he is the divine Son!); and it marries heaven to earth while foreshadowing "eschatological naturalism," where heaven and earth are fit to be united together.



The Transfiguration of Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Reading

By Patrick Schreiner

(Baker, 2024)

In regard to the setting of the Transfiguration, Schreiner exposits it through the traditional fourfold method of theological exploration, with attention to literal (historical), spiritual (typological), tropological (moral), and anagogical (eschatological) categories. He accordingly finds in the various details of the setting of the Transfiguration—six/eight days, high mountain, and three disciples—a double meaning as to Jesus' messianic and eternal sonship.

Schreiner examines Jesus' shining face and white clothes, the bright cloud, and the appearance of Moses and Elijah. In effect, Mosaic echoes underscore Jesus' role as a mediator, but also his identity as a glorious heavenly being. The scene is said to be theophanic in a fully triune sense. The prophets attending the transfigured Jesus, Moses and Elijah, are old covenant representatives who prepare for the messiah, and (interestingly for me) their presence is said to be there to fulfill their desire to see the glory of God.

As to the verbal exchanges at the Transfiguration, Schreiner regards Peter's offer to build three tents as due to the disciple's inability to grasp both that Jesus' glory must travel through the veil of suffering and Jesus' supremacy over Moses and Elijah. The heavenly voice that declares, "This is my beloved Son," an obvious echo of Psalm 2:7, stresses Jesus' Davidic and eternally begotten sonships. The command "Listen to him" underscores Jesus as a new prophet and lawgiver while emphasizing that Jesus' words convey divine authority.

Schreiner also situates the Transfiguration in relation to other doctrines and biblical events: creation, incarnation, Jesus' baptism, as well as previewing Gethsemane and foreshadowing the cross, resurrection, ascent, and return. It also provides glimpses of the new creation. Schreiner is eminently quotable at one point: "The cross and Transfiguration are not two competing visions but two complementary pictures of the Messiah. If the rulers of this age had understood who Jesus was, they would not have crucified the *Lord of glory* (1 Cor. 2:8)."

Schreiner's book is a great effort to reinvigorate interest in the Transfiguration. It is not merely a misplaced resurrection story (as Rudolf Bultmann taught) but "a great hinge of Jesus' life and ministry" and the paradigmatic revelation of Jesus' double sonship (Son of God and Son of David), as the event is both an epiphany (because Jesus is God) and an apotheosis (because Jesus is man).

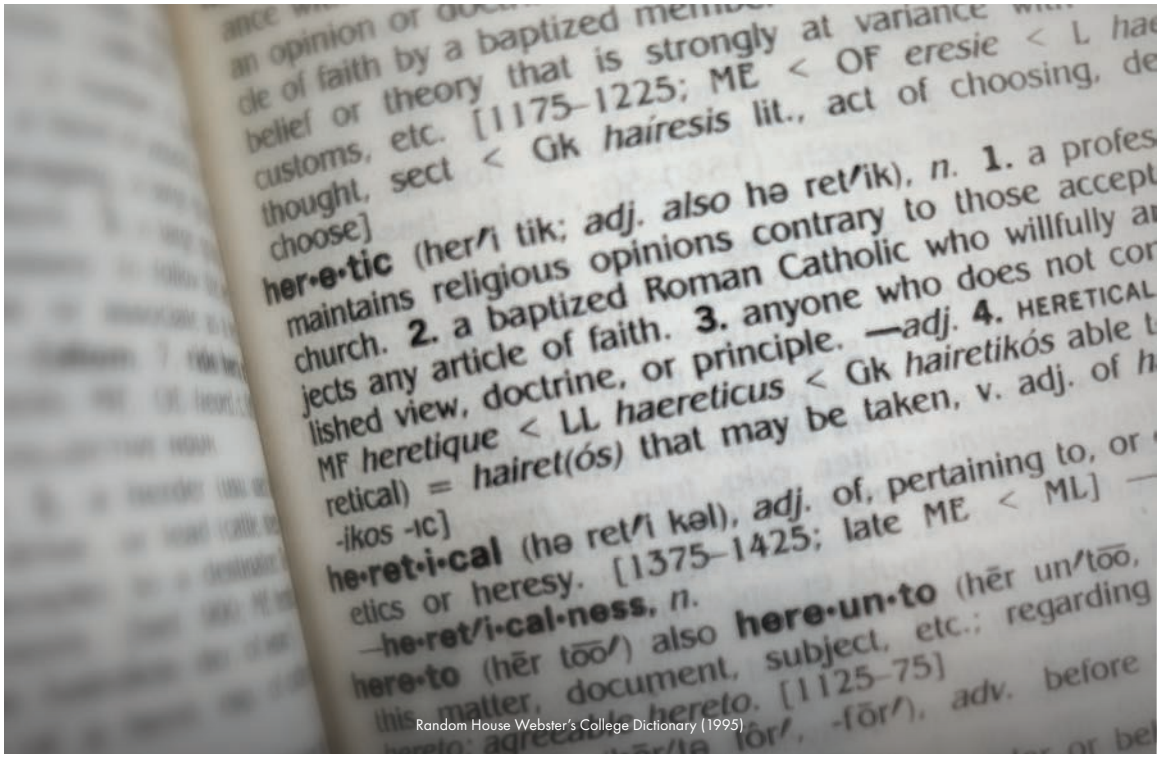
> **READERS OF SCRIPTURE SHOULD ATTEND TO THE TRANSFIGURATION BECAUSE IT UNITES THE MEANS (CROSS) AND GOAL OF SALVATION (BEHOLDING GOD).**

Readers should beware that Schreiner is something of a theological maximalist when it comes to reading the Transfiguration story and constructing its meanings in light of wider doctrines. Sometimes that is compelling, such as when the Transfiguration previews how Jesus is "light from light," but other times the analogies and allegories are somewhat labored. For instance, while I am optimistic about detecting intertextual echoes of Daniel 7 in the Gospels, even I had to squint and scratch my head at Schreiner's attempt to find a preview of Jesus as the enthroned Son of Man in the Transfiguration amid some of the details he explores. Or when he claims that on the mountain Jesus is not only "the new Moses but the object of what Moses saw on the mountain—Yahweh himself." Of that I am unsure, as the emphasis is on the divinely sent Son who should be obeyed, not his identification as/with/is Yahweh.

Those reservations aside, Schreiner has written the most detailed and robust book on the Transfiguration in living memory, a book that is theologically rich, with an elegant vision of Jesus as the Lord of Glory. In effect, the book is a glorious invitation, "Come, let us go up the mountain to behold the glorious Son!" and an honest prayer, "May the light of the Son flow through us." RL

Michael F. Bird *is deputy principal, director of research, and lecturer in New Testament at Ridley College in Melbourne, Australia. He can be followed @mbird12 on X and on his blog, michaelfbird.substack.com.*

Ancient olive trees of Gethsemane



Random House Webster's College Dictionary (1995)

Was America Founded by Heretics?

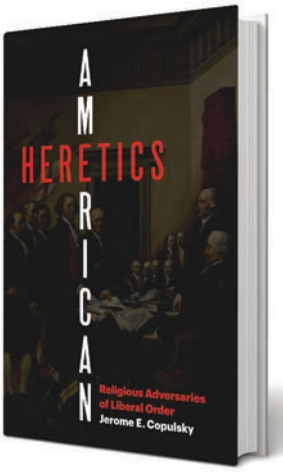
Is American history one long fight against would-be theocrats, ever-present threats to "religious neutrality"? If so, is it possible to preserve such a neutrality without squelching the rights of the very groups the Constitution is supposed to protect?

by **CASEY CHALK**

IF YOU ARE a federal employee who has moral objections to referring to coworkers by their preferred pronouns, I would argue that you have two options (besides, of course, compromising on those objections). You could offer a lowest-common-denominator argument in the hopes of appealing to the premises of a secular audience, leveraging biology and reason as you cite the immutability of chromosomes and the teleology of human gametes. Or you could argue that your religious beliefs prohibit you from using alternative pronouns. Those religious beliefs could possess a respected pedigree and be consistent with human logic or they could be more fantastic, such as, say, claiming that Zeus or Thor had appeared to you that very morning and declared to you that if you used alternative pronouns, you'd be struck dead by thunderbolts.

Which of those options, do you think, would have a better chance of enjoying the protection of current American civil liberty law? As someone who has been in federal service, I can tell you which option I'd choose if I hoped to increase my chances of keeping my job: thunderbolts all the way, baby. Religious belief, defined as a protected category by the 1964 Civil Rights Act, means that it is a far surer bet to claim that faith, whether reasonably defensible or patently absurd, is the motivation for one's objection to attempts at coercing American citizens into consuming the fruits of the sexual revolution.

Given this, it's obvious that, even in an increasingly secular, post-Christian society such as the United States, religious belief and practice enjoy a very obvious preferential treatment. Why is that? Might it be



American Heretics: Religious Adversaries of Liberal Order

By Jerome E. Copulsky

(Yale, 2024)

because the framers of the U.S. Constitution, and their successors in both elected positions and the courts, have been guided by a deference, and even a preference, for religion, so much so that they were willing to give latitude to citizens' beliefs not only when those beliefs transcend reason but even when they seem to be in blatant, even risible contradiction to it?

Jerome E. Copulsky, a research fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, & World Affairs at Georgetown University, offers an alternative perspective in *American Heretics: Religious Adversaries of Liberal Order*. In Copulsky's telling, American history is one defined by attempts by religious zealots on the right to overturn the secular, disestablished constitutional regime of the founders, a regime that had no real preference for religious belief. Though a fascinating historical study undoubtedly unfamiliar to many readers, *American Heretics* fails to interpret properly the framers' conception of religion and, in its attempt to present a coherent narrative from the revolution to 2024, ham-fistedly collapses into a single whole a diverse group of religious conservatives who often share little more than superficial commonalities.

***AMERICAN HERETICS* IS** strongest in recounting a largely unknown history of religiously motivated resistance to the nation's disestablished founding. "From the outset," writes Copulsky in the introduction, "the American project was contested by religious voices who believed that democratic values were not an expression of Christian teaching but were rather false and dangerous; that religion should not be separated from the state but ought to guide political life; and that the protection, indeed celebration, of religious liberty was a violation of divine dictates." Such persons sought to find a way to wed institutionalized Christian religion to the state.

The earliest examples of these "constitutional antagonists" were Loyalist churchmen, primarily of the Church of England, who voiced their opposition to the American Revolution as an Enlightenment-inspired novelty that would turn the world upside down, as Cornwallis' British Army band allegedly played following their surrender at Yorktown. Anglican priest Myles Cooper railed against "those licentious Principles of the Times, which in their natural Tendency are subversive of Government," while fellow clergyman Jonathan Boucher censured "the degeneracy of modern times." Both Tories (who would during the war escape to Britain) based their Loyalist antipathies to the revolution on fears that Lockean social contract theory and its prioritization of liberty effectively repudiated classic Christian conceptions of polity that would in time promote sin and societal decay.

The Founding Fathers, it should be noted, were concerned with this as well. The 1777 New York State Constitution asserted that liberty of conscience "shall not be so construed, as to excuse acts of licentiousness." George Washington's 1783 "Circular Letter to the States" warned that "arbitrary power is most easily established on the ruins of liberty abused to licentiousness." John Jay and James Monroe in public written statements in 1788 both expressed their concern with the negative effects of licentiousness.

> "THE 1777 NEW YORK STATE CONSTITUTION ASSERTED THAT LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE 'SHALL NOT BE SO CONSTRUED, AS TO EXCUSE ACTS OF LICENTIOUSNESS.'"

The leading figures of the founding, far from seeing liberty as the means by which men could free themselves from religious obligation, were cognizant of, and sought to counter, concerns that their nascent republic's neutrality toward a single established church would encourage an areligious libertinism.

Yet Copulsky repeats tired claims of the framers "wisely erect[ing] a wall between church and state, protecting the institutions of civil government and the citizens' sacred rights of conscience from fanatical or unscrupulous ecclesiastics." That language, however, comes not from the Declaration (with its reference to "nature and nature's God"), nor from the Bill of Rights (whose protection of religious liberty in the First Amendment is suggestive), but from personal correspondence between Jefferson and the Danbury Baptist Association in Connecticut, when he was president in 1802. Copulsky asserts that the Constitution "envisioned a federal government that was neutral, though not hostile, with respect to religion and that would govern a religious—and religiously diverse—people," though even his own version of history undermines that claim.

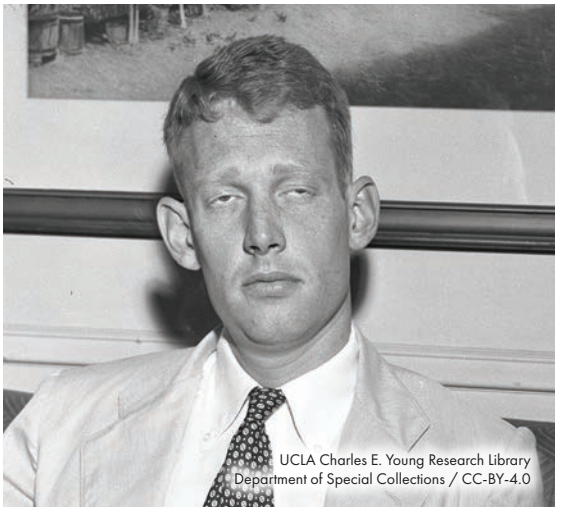
"COPULSKY ATTACKS MANY PROMINENT RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES OF THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES, BUT PERHAPS HIS MOST INSIGHTFUL CRITIQUE IS OF THE NATIONAL CONSERVATISM MOVEMENT."

During the Civil War and Reconstruction eras, for example, various Christian groups called for a "Christian Amendment" to the Constitution and for revising the Preamble to include explicitly Christian language. They ultimately failed in these efforts because a diversity of groups (among them Catholics, Jews, Unitarians, Seventh-Day Adventists, and atheists) opposed them. One of these, Unitarian minister Francis Ellingwood Abbot, called for the elimination of preferential treatment for religious persons and organizations. Abbot's measures included, in Copulsky's words:

> The elimination of tax exemptions for churches and ecclesiastical property; employment of chaplains in Congress, legislatures, the military services, and public institutions; appropriation of public funds for "sectarian educational and charitable institutions"; religious services and Bible readings in public schools; proclamation of public religious festivals or fast days; judicial oaths; Sabbath laws; and "all laws looking to the enforcement of 'Christian' morality."

Yet what does it say that all the above practices—many enshrined since well before the American founding—explicitly affirmed a Christian character to American life? Moreover, as Copulsky himself acknowledges, it took 50 years after the founding for the last state to disestablish fully. Indeed, many states retained religious tests for civic offices and prohibitions on ministers holding civic office into the 19th century, a political reality that existed until they were declared unconstitutional in *Torcaso v. Watkins* (1961) and *McDaniel v. Paty* (1978).

Although he never goes beyond a cursory discussion of the topic, Copulsky seems to appreciate that the founders were deeply influenced by natural law. That conception of natural law was rooted in Aristotelian, Scholastic, and post-Reformation sources, which articulated a moral framework underscored by an affirmation of the sovereignty of the divine. If anything, Lincoln's emphasis on the equality principle—a natural law concept whose origin can be traced at least as far back as Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* I–II, Q. 94—effectively rebuked the thinking of pro-slavery theologians such as James Henley Thornwell and Frederick A. Ross, who, like their Southern political counterpart John C. Calhoun, rejected the natural equality of man.



L. Brent Bozell Jr. in 1954

Yoram Hazony in 2018

Copulsky attacks many prominent religious conservatives of the 20th and 21st centuries—such as L. Brent Bozell Jr., R.J. Rushdoony, and Patrick Deneen—but perhaps his most insightful critique is of the National Conservatism movement promoted by political theorist Yoram Hazony. Many of the tenets of this movement, I would argue, are aligned with the vision of the founders, not only regarding the relationship of church and state but on immigration and foreign policy. But Copulsky is right to observe that Hazony's "conception of religion and political theology is fundamentally Hebraic." Presenting Israel as the "paradigmatic national state" enables Hazony to justify Israel's treatment of its Arab minority population, which is complicated to say the least. Moreover, in his criticism of the principles of the Declaration as being too influenced by Lockean philosophy (i.e., natural law), Hazony's movement has placed itself in the awkward position of affirming Hindu nationalism while, as far as I can tell, presenting either opposition to or silence on Arab nationalism, given the latter's obvious tensions with Israel.

Natural law could be a help in navigating what constitutes legitimate and illegitimate nationalism (and, more to the theme of this book, state relations with religion), though Copulsky seems incapable of moving beyond a bland celebration of secular liberalism as the best means of ensuring a neutral, dispassionate state that will protect, but not favor, various religious traditions. Such a thesis is obviously superficial and naive, as my first example indicates: Many politicians and pundits have argued that America should end its history of preferential treatment for religion (and, specifically, Judeo-Christian or biblical religion), both to ensure legal protections for other perceived marginalized groups (women, gays, transgenders) and to exact a price on those who resist the effects of the sexual revolution.

Although the left claims that our secular regime will always be a good-faith arbiter, it's obvious it has no qualms targeting religious persons who dissent from the establishment's opinions regarding abortion and sexuality. The Democratic Party's current candidate for president publicly attacked three different judicial nominees over their affiliation with the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal organization that donated almost $200 million to charities and offered 49 million hours of volunteer services in 2023. "If it is to endure, America's liberal democracy will have to be sustained in the absence of a moral consensus or clear-cut spiritual foundation," claims Copulsky. That opinion, in light of increasing pressure on religious organizations by a supposedly neutral and disinterested establishment, seems both delusional and dangerous. RL

Casey Chalk *is a senior contributor at* The Federalist *and an editor and columnist at the* New Oxford Review. *He has a bachelor's in history and a master's in teaching from the University of Virginia and a master's in theology from Christendom College. He is also the author of* The Persecuted: True Stories of Courageous Christians Living Their Faith in Muslim Lands.

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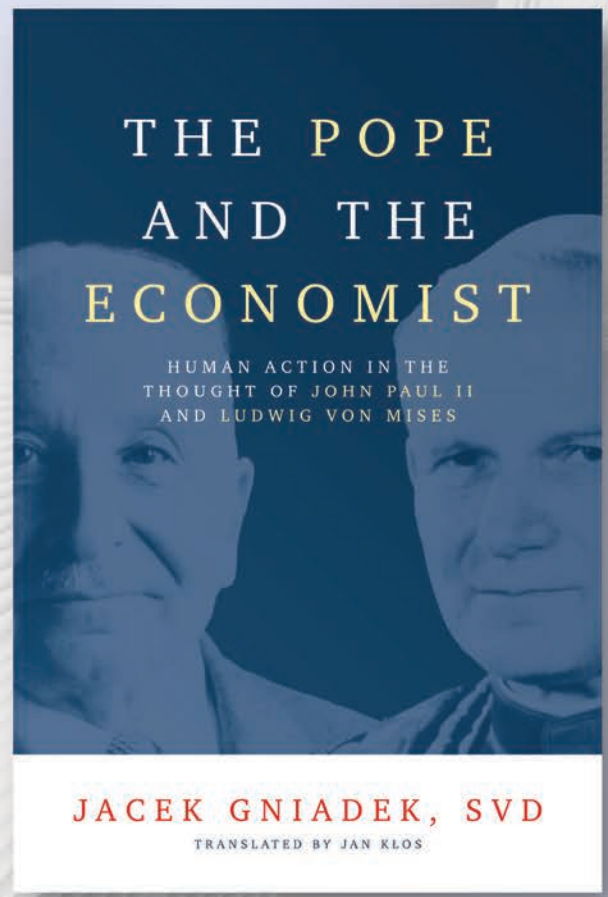

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Levitation of San Giuseppe da Copertino at the Basilica of Loreto by Ludovico Mazzanti (1767). The Picture Art Collection / Alamy Stock Photo.

Flight of the Saints

Hagiographies often convey extraordinary stories and legendary accretions, intended to leave devotees in awe. And then there are those tales of saints who flew.

by **DAVID WEINBERGER**

C.S. LEWIS ONCE observed that the world is full of stories of people who say they have experienced miracles. What, though, are we to make of them? Can they be true? Are miracles even possible?

Answering these questions cannot be determined by experience alone, for experience requires interpretation, and the experience of a miracle can always be interpreted as an "illusion," a "hallucination," or a "quirk of nature." Consider, for example, this story from Lewis himself:

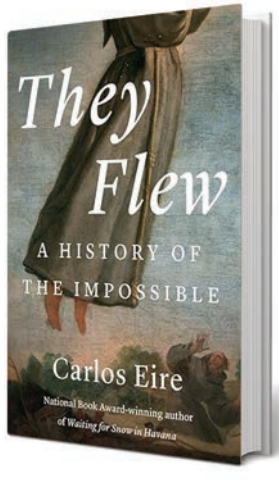
> In all my life I have met only one person who claims to have seen a ghost. And the interesting thing about the story is that that person disbelieved in the immortal soul before she saw the ghost and still disbelieves after seeing it. She says that what she saw must have been an illusion or a trick of the nerves. And obviously she may be right. Seeing is not believing.

Simply put, then, whether one accepts something as a "miracle" depends first and foremost on whether one thinks miracles are possible. If, for example, one is open to the idea that there might be higher dimensions to reality that can interact—however infrequently—with the space-time dimension we inhabit, then miracles become a distinct possibility, and reports of such events can be examined on a case-by-case basis according to reason and evidence. If, on the other hand, one thinks that the space-time continuum is all there is to reality, then by definition nothing independent of that continuum exists to interact with

it, and therefore no miracles are possible. Now, while either view is up for grabs, it is worth noting that the latter view is the more dogmatic of the two. For it says that miracles do not occur *regardless* of the evidence. The former view, however, keeps an open mind. While it is not foreclosed to the possibility of miracles, it is not forced to accept any given miracle claim. It is free to follow the evidence wherever it leads.

Whichever view one takes, though, there are reports of events that are so out of the ordinary, so beyond the pale of expectation, that even those most open to the possibility of miracles have a hard time knowing what to make of them. In a new book, *They Flew: A History of the Impossible*, Yale historian Carlos Eire examines the history of these impossible-to-believe events—events like levitation and bilocation (the act of being in two places simultaneously)—including famous accounts from the 16th and 17th centuries. How, he asks, should we understand them, and what might they teach us about both the past and ourselves?

Eire begins by cautioning us to resist making snap judgments. Although readers may justifiably wonder whether the anomalous reports he presents may be the result of illusions, hallucinations, deceptions, or the otherwise credulous superstitions of a prescientific people, Eire reminds us that if we wish to understand the past according to the people who lived it, we must strive to see the world through their eyes. Only then will we be able to interpret it properly. "The history of the impossible," he says, "is all about questioning, about being evenhandedly skeptical—that is, being as skeptical about strictly materialist interpretations of seemingly impossible events as about the actual occurrence of the event itself.... Dealing with the impossible requires one to end up with more questions than answers."



They Flew: A History of the Impossible

By Carlos Eire

(Yale University Press, 2024)

From here, Eire turns to examine the historical record. The first major case he introduces is that of 16th-century mystic and reformer Teresa of Avila, who was famously reported to have levitated on multiple occasions. Not only did people close to her record this phenomenon, but she documented it herself. Here, for example, is how she describes one such experience:

> I must confess that it [levitation] produced an exceedingly great fear in me at first—a terrible fear, in fact—because one sees one's body being lifted up from the ground; and although the spirit draws it up after itself, and it does so very gently if no resistance is offered, one does not lose consciousness and one is able to realize that one is being lifted up. At least, this is what has happened to me.

Furthermore, as Eire recounts, close confidants of Teresa, including the theologian and confessor Francisco de Ribera, wrote about these episodes, too. "'One day, upon entering the kitchen,' he notes, 'the nuns found her [Teresa] totally elevated and transfixed, her face beautifully aglow, with the frying pan in her hand, suspended above the flames, and she was gripping the frying pan so tightly that it couldn't be wrested from her hand.'"

Another famous case Eire documents involves Joseph of Cupertino, who enjoyed a 35-year period during which an unusually large number of people—including several leading authority figures—witnessed his levitations. "One of the most remarkable characteristics of his unique levitations," Eire observes, "is the consistency of the eyewitness testimonies, all of which report the same array of astounding phenomena despite the fact that these witnesses were from disparate locations and different points in time and despite the more puzzling fact that many of these phenomena were unprecedented." Moreover, these witnesses include "Pope Urban VIII, Prince Casimir of Poland, Duke Johann Friedrich of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, the Admiral of Castile and many others, including cardinals, bishops, and authority figures in his own order."

These are not the only puzzling phenomena readers will discover here. Eire also covers, for example, reports of bilocation, including that of the famous 20th century friar Padre Pio. Pio's "frequent levitations and bilocations," Eire shares, "were acknowledged by many eyewitnesses, along with many other

charisms associated with mystical ecstasy, including the stigmata." Pope John Paul II, in fact, "was one of his devotees," who witnessed Pio "curing a friend's cancer in 1962."

Perplexing as it all is, the obvious question is why anyone ever believed that the events these reports describe *actually occurred*. To begin to answer that, Eire stresses that we first must grasp the metaphysical framework—i.e., the framework for understanding what is real—that people took for granted back then, which assumed several things.

First, that human beings are both physical and spiritual, meaning that we inhabit two realms—the material and the immaterial—simultaneously. Second, that neither element on its own could account for the human person. Human beings, in other words, are neither souls alone nor bodies alone but the union of the two. Third, that through intense mystical experiences—often through fervent devotion to meditation, prayer, asceticism, and love—one could achieve a close encounter with the divine. As such, miracles like levitation were seen as the result of the most profound mystical experiences of the soul's upward journey to God—controlled ultimately, of course, by God himself—while the physical body was dragged along with it. In the words of Joseph of Cupertino: "The elevation of the body …follows the flight of the soul to God." Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that not all levitations were understood as divine encounters. Sometimes, for example, levitation was thought to be the result of the demonic. Even in Teresa's case, as Eire records, "her confessors suspected the worst and warned her that her experiences were demonic in origin."

Very well, but what is the upshot here? According to Eire, what we consider real generally depends on what we consider possible, and what we consider possible tends to be shaped by the historical, cultural, and philosophical framework through which we are conditioned to see the world.

Moreover, as he sees it, this worldview changed in the early modern period. Beginning with the Reformation, the idea that mystical experiences could bring one closer to God was increasingly denied. Not only did Protestant reformers like John Calvin maintain that miracles ended after the apostolic era, but the idea that one could draw close to God through mystical practice seemed to flirt with the notion of "works righteousness," or the belief that a person can achieve acceptance by God through his or her own efforts. Furthermore, a multitude of other developments—including scientific, economic, cultural, and metaphysical—also impacted people's perceptions of reality. Ergo, what was formerly considered possible began to be viewed as impossible under the new materialist paradigm that emerged.

Teresa of Avila by Peter Paul Rubens (1576)

Even so, Eire points out, accounts of seemingly impossible events have never completely disappeared:

> Reports of supernatural levitations and bilocations gradually shrank in numbers in the Western world after 1787 but have never ceased surfacing altogether. Nearly a century ago, Olivier Leroy identified nineteen levitators in the period between 1700 and 1800 and the same number between 1800 and 1912. Since Leroy was the only researcher to have ever compiled lists of levitators—and he admitted his lists were far from complete—we have no reliable statistics on modern or postmodern cases of supernatural levitations.

In fact, as difficult as it may be to believe, there are even reports of levitation today. Consider, for example, a 2014 news report that appeared in the *Indianapolis Star* in which (among other seemingly impossible events) a 12-year-old girl was said to have levitated above her bed, and that resulted in an official 800-page report involving both the local police and the Department of Child Services (DCS), as well as medical and social service personnel. Strange? Yes. Bewildering, even. But is it true?

Well, it depends on what we accept as possible. And if the history here is any guide, reality may be far stranger than it seems. RL

David Weinberger *is a freelance writer and book reviewer on topics related to philosophy, culture, history, and economics.*

Thomas Manton

A PURITAN FOR ALL SEASONS

BORN IN SOMERSET, ENGLAND, 1620. Educated at Hart Hall, Oxford. Ordained deacon at age 19. Called to the parish of Stoke Newington in Middlesex in 1644–45. Embarked on a career as a popular defender of the Reformed faith. Member of the Westminster Assembly.

Argued against the execution of King Charles I, despite being a Presbyterian and chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, who would become Lord Protector of a new republican commonwealth. Called for the restoration of Charles II in 1660. Offered the Deanery of Rochester by the new monarch but refused as a matter of conscience owing to the Act of Uniformity that forced all clergy to reintroduce the Book of Common Prayer and its rites into their churches. Lost his pulpit in 1662 during the Great Ejection of dissenters.

Imprisoned for six months in 1670 for refusing to cooperate with the new regime. Preached to prisoners and jailers alike; gained the trust of authorities such that he was entrusted with the keys to the cells in the jailer's absence. Upon his release appeared before the king to plead for religious liberty. Granted a license to preach at his home and occasionally lectured at Pinner's Hall in 1672. Died in his bed five years later, aged 57.

Manton's unparalleled gift was in application: exegeting a passage of Scripture and applying it to the daily struggles of his hearers. His published works comprise 22 volumes. Below are a handful of excerpts from a series of 65 sermons on Hebrews 11, which in the Banner of Truth edition runs just shy of 700 pages. These are sermons not on the Book of Hebrews, mind, but on Hebrews *Eleven*.

ON *Combating Doubt*

If there be a God, let us charge this truth then upon our hearts, that we may check those private whispers and suspicions that do arise—too often, the Lord knows—against the being and glory of God. Many times we are apt to think that God is but a fancy, that religion is but a state-curb, and the gospel a cunningly devised fable—a quaint device to please fond and foolish men; and all is but invented to hold men in awe.

There are certain seasons when we are most in danger of atheism; usually when the soul is under a passion and pet against providence, and we cavil at God and repine at his dispensations; for all grievances breed passions, and passions exceedingly cloud the soul, and then we are in danger.

When we see the holy and pure worshippers of God to be in the worst case, then we fall into a distrust of all religion; and if there be a God, that he doth neglect his duty to the world. When mischief falls upon the good, it is a shrewd temptation to atheism.

When our own prayers are not heard, when we have been solicitous at the throne of grace with much earnestness and importunity, and yet speed not, we are apt to be so partial to our own desires that we fall a questioning of God himself, as if we would take a kind of revenge upon him, because he hath not heard our prayers. Fond creatures would have grace at their own beck and command, and if we be disappointed, and God do not come in when we will, then we storm.

Therefore charge this truth upon your hearts, that you may more check and humble yourselves for such atheistical thoughts and suggestions as these are, for they should not be passed over without humiliation, they are of so foul a nature. It is irrational to think there is no God, the creatures confute us. We cannot look abroad but something offers itself to our eye to mind us: surely there is an infinite and eternal power. Oh, when thoughts rush into your minds that have a tendency towards atheism, as denying of providence, let them be abhorred and rejected.

ON *Work*

Every man must have a particular calling. Life was given us for somewhat; not merely to fill up the number of the world, or to grow in stature.

Manual labour is not required of all, because it is not a thing that is required *propter se*, as simply good and necessary, but *propter aliud*, as for maintenance and support of life, to ease the church, to supply the uses of charity.

Gentlemen are but robbers that live idly and without a calling; though they are freed from servile and handy labour, yet they are not freed from work and business. If any man might be allowed to be idle, then one member would be lost in the body politic. Man is born a member of some society, family, city, world, and is to seek the good of it.

Every man is more or less intrusted with a gift, which he is to exercise and improve for the common good, and at the day of judgment he is to give up his accounts.

Providence ruleth in everything that falleth out, even in the least matters; especially hath the Lord a great hand in callings, and in appointing to everyone his state and condition in life. God giveth the skill and appointeth the work. Your particular estate and condition of life are not come by chance, or by the bare will and pleasure of man; but the ordination of God, without which a sparrow cannot fall to the ground: Prov. xx. 24, "Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?"

For ordinary callings, then, we are called by God; when God giveth ability and inclination, and openeth a fair passage in his providence, that is to be looked upon as a call. Inclination there must be, that we may be fit for our calling, and our calling fit for us; otherwise we are like a member out of joint, out of our place and way.

The Athenians would set before their children the trowel, the shovel, a sword, and a book, that they might choose their calling.

Much of God's pleasure is seen in their inclinations, which if parents observe not, mischief follows—sometimes to the church, sometimes to the children themselves. And abilities and gifts must be observed both by the parent and by themselves when we come to maturity, and to choose our own way: Prov. xvi. 20, "He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good." And then providence is to be observed in the designment of education, and the advantages which God offereth for the choice of our course of life.

If you see God calling you to the ministry, magistracy, or any inferior course of life, therein doth he expect glory from you; and for that end did he give you gifts, an account of which you must render at the last day.

Confine your endeavors within this calling, and keep within the bounds of it. If you do anything that

is not within the compass of your calling, you can have no warrant that it pleaseth God.

Let us do our duty and leave our care upon God. Anxiousness about the success and event is a sin, because then we take God's work out of his hands. Success is God's work, labour ours.

With patience digest the inconveniences of your calling. Affliction attendeth every state and condition of life; but we may go through them cheerfully—we are in our way, and in our place. You may meet with discouragements as a minister, or as a magistrate; yet go on whatever men do, God is a good pay-master, and your work is with the Lord. You may meet with discouragements as a servant, but it is thy calling, and therein God will be glorified.

Private necessity and public good may make a man change his calling. Private necessity, as when the former calling ceaseth to be useful…Public good, as when a man may be more useful, if by mistake of the carnal affection of parents he have been diverted to another course of life.

ON *Moving*

God is not tied to places, nor we. As they laughed at his folly in Plutarch that said there was a better moon at Athens than there was at Corinth; certainly there is not a better God in one place than in another. God is the same in England, in France, in the Indies. And as God is not tied, so we are not tied.

As long as we acknowledge providence in asking his leave, seeking his blessing, observing the way that he openeth to us, and as long as we do not invade property and disturb the first occupants, we may remove.

ON *Living as Pilgrims in This World*

A stranger is one that is absent from his country, and from his father's house. So are we; heaven is our country; God is there. Christ is there.

Strangers are liable to inconveniences; so are godly men in the world.

A stranger is thankful for the least favour; so must we be thankfully contented with the things God hath bestowed on us. Anything in a strange country is much.…A stranger buyeth not such things he cannot carry with him.

Use the world as if you used it not. You do not stay but lodge here, therefore use the things of the world as passengers do things in an inn; they use them as being willing and ready to leave them the next morning.

Follow your callings, and be content with God's allowance—it is enough to make your journey comfortable—and let not these things take up your heart as if here were your rest; use them as an instrument of piety and charity, as a help to a better life; delight in them only as a help to the journey.

ON *Seeking God's Comfort*

Usually we lie upon the bed of ease and expect God should drop comfort into us out of the clouds.

Comfort is the recompense of industry and the encouragement of faith and obedience.

Look into the sphere of nature or sphere of grace, all excellent things are obtained with difficulty, and they will cost us much labour and sweat; so will all ravishing sweet comforts cost us much pains in the duties of religion.

It is good to listen to the softer whispers and suggestions of the Holy Ghost. Still be looking for God's answer and God's return.…Ah! Hearken and wait still, when God will drop out a word of peace and comfort, that you may be able to know the purposes of his grace.

If in prayer or deep meditation God giveth in strong consolation, never suspect it.

In the End…

A Christian doth not altogether look how he may more gratify his own concernments, but how he may be more useful, and serve the great end for which he was sent into the world. RL

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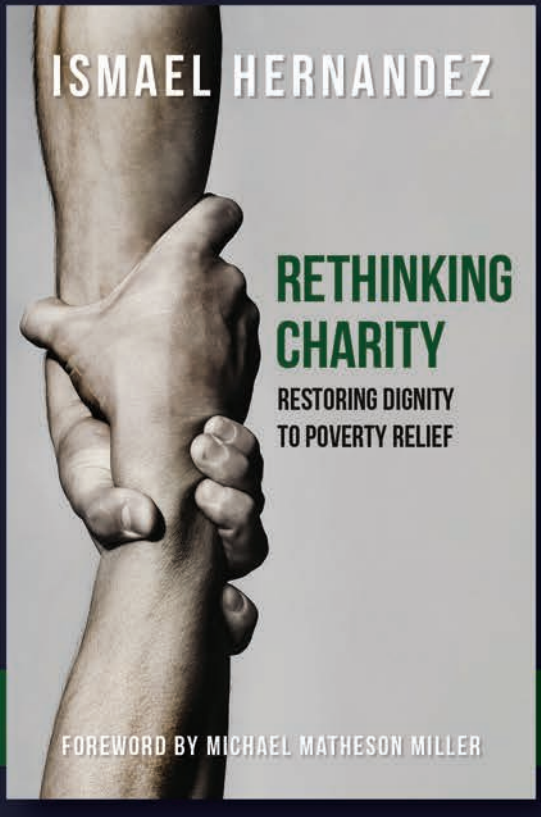

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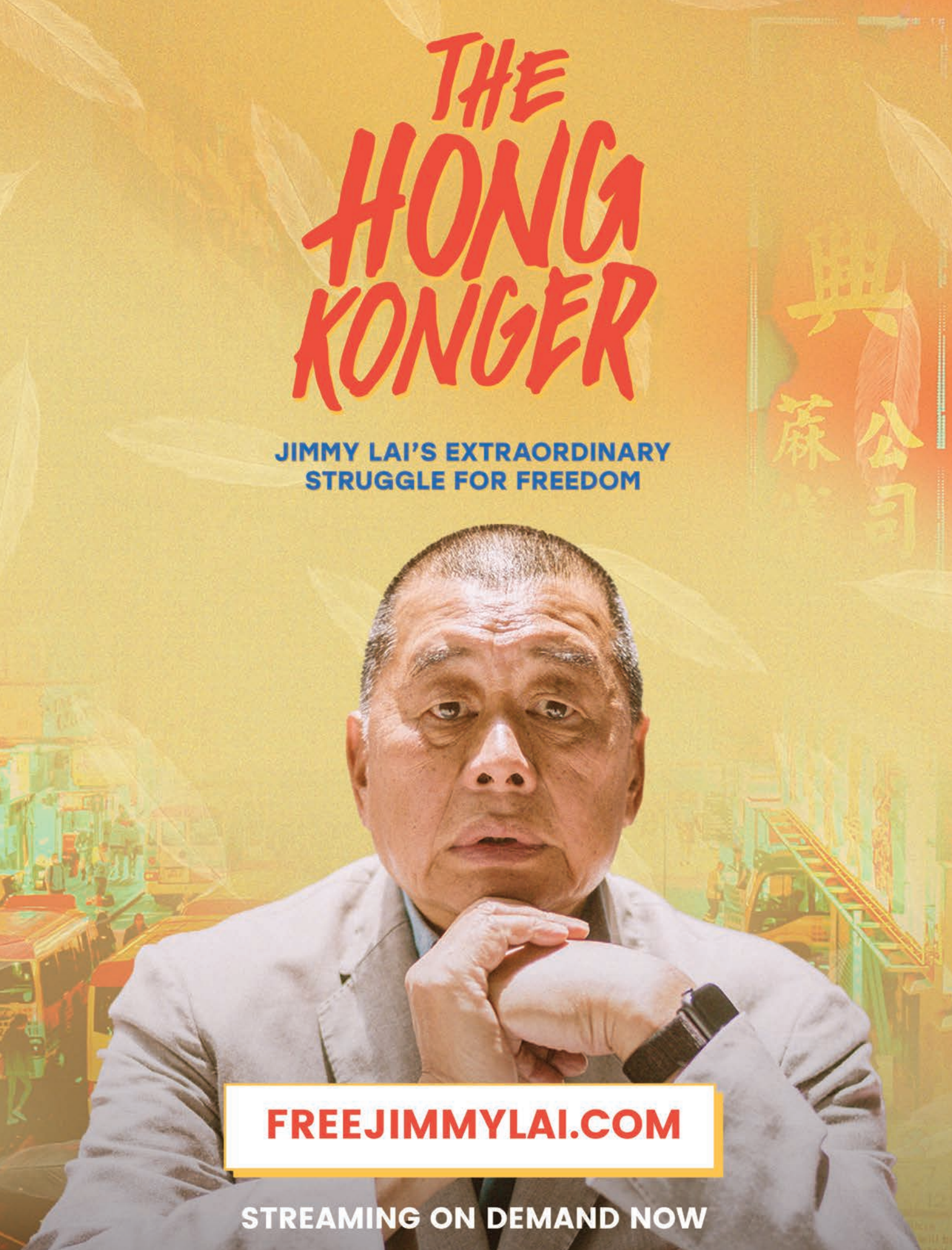
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