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# Christ and Culture: William Bradford, John Winthrop, Cotton Mather, and Jonathan Edwards in Theological Perspective

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## I. Introduction

From its inception the American Puritan theocracy was probably destined for eventual demolition. Many reasons can be given for the destruction of the grand and seemingly futile attempt to create a genuine "city of God." Undoubtedly, the early economic success of the plantations brought material comfort which drew people away from their God and weakened the foundation of belief. Also, as more speculators from old England arrived, the percentage of "visible saints" dwindled. Third, the dissenters—Anne Hutchinson, Roger Williams, and the Quakers—quickly made oppressors out of those who had left England in search of religious freedom.

There may be many more reasons, of course, the greatest of them, perhaps, the almost inevitable demise of all utopian visions, no matter where they have engendered peculiar societies.

My thesis seeks to add to the reasons already given by examining four representative Puritans from three distinct generations: William Bradford (1589-1657), Governor of Plymouth for many years; John Winthrop (1588-1649), political leader of Massachusetts Bay and its first governor; Cotton Mather (1663-1728), perhaps the leading clergyman of the third generation; and Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), a fifth generation preacher, almost a convert to the Puritan vision, possessor of one of the great minds of early American intellectual history.

All four may be compared and classified together theologically, since they would undoubtedly have agreed on two basic theological tenets: that God is sovereign in his rule over this world; and that man is by nature depraved, a condition bequeathed him by the fall of Adam.

We need to go further than systematic theology to distinguish between these four representatives of three generations of Puritan thought. We need to observe the manner by which they projected those shared assumptions into the world in which they found themselves. Theological structures are bodies of assumptions which fit together logically. But how one uses theology in the culture of the day may differ drastically among adherents of the same basic body of beliefs.

In order to illustrate the differences which exist among Winthrop, Bradford, Mather, and Edwards, we shall consider the distinctions offered by H. Reinhold Niebuhr in *Christ and Culture*.<sup>1</sup> Niebuhr distinguishes five different approaches taken by Christians historically, approaches which bring Christ into cultural perspective, systematic doctrine into life itself.

1—*Radical*. To the *radical* Christian, love for God demands a corollary negation: hate for the world. The *radical* is, therefore, characterized by his desire to flee from culture, personally convinced by his belief that the world is not a home for the Christian.

2—*The Cultural Protestant*. nearly the direct opposite of the *radical*, the *cultural Protestant* seeks at all costs to accommodate the demands of Christ to the demands of culture, often by subordinating revelation to reason.

3—*The Synthesist*. Like the *cultural Protestant*, the *synthesist* embraces reason, but like the *radical* Christian he embraces faith as well. In the *synthesist* view, culture is to be used for higher spiritual reality. The *synthesist* believes that man is capable of double happiness, one in the world, one in the next. There are two worlds to the *synthesist*, two separate worlds: the world of

culture and the world of grace or religion. Man uses the former to achieve the latter.

4—*The Dualist*. The *dualist* might be called the existential Christian, because his central conflict is his own redemption; he personalizes the conflict of Christ and culture, seeing his own redemptive concerns in the world around him.

5—*The Conversionist*. Like the *dualist*, the *conversionist* sees the world as fallen. Unlike the *dualist*, the *conversionist* sees hope for the world's redemption and becomes involved in culture to reform it from its fallen state.

These five distinctions lay the groundwork for a discussion of the differences between Bradford, Winthrop, Mather, and Edwards. What I wish to do is to explain how the views of these four men differ on the relationship between Christ and culture, and then to conclude with an inference which will offer another reason why the Puritan dream failed. What must be made clear is that no Puritan thinker, not any Christian mind, for that matter, will fit precisely into any one of the categories which Niebuhr constructs. We will find, however, that the representative Puritans will differ to such a degree that placing them within the given categories will demonstrate useful distinction.

## II. William Bradford

The Puritan theory of history was not shallowly conceived; they inherited their noble view through centuries of biblical history from ancestral scribes whose faith and vision became models of Puritan virtue. When David laments his forsakenness in the Psalms, he often retreats to the legacy of his believing forefathers and finds comfort in the history of their belief, his own spiritual birthright. Like David, the Puritans viewed history as the revelation of God, in the sense that the narrative line was the record of God's dealing with His people. Thus, the scriptures present both illustration and paradigm. William Bradford, like David

before, records events to teach subsequent generations how to live, because the Puritans understood their own history to be a series of continuing illustrations of God's revelations to man.

The view of history as moral lessons for posterity was derived in large part from a view of scripture as God's living, revealed will. History is, then, a source for meaning when parallels between scripture's record and the present could be identified and interpreted. The bridge for this type of transfer of meaning is, of course, the incarnation, "the word made flesh." Puritan theology, following Paul and Calvin, assumed the Old Testament to be an episodic prefiguration of what they considered to be the central fact of history, the virgin birth of the Son of God. In the same way that Old Testament characters became types of Christ, the Puritans, merely the latest in the long line of believing saints, saw themselves as types. All Puritans practiced such "typology" frequently.

A great deal of comfort can be had from such associations. Locating biblical parallels to one's life is a means of securing the assurance of pardon and grace, certainly; and seeing the events of one's lifetime within a larger scheme allows a certain fulfilling kind of objectivity in every-day affairs.

When that objectivity evolves into a sense of personal superiority or self-righteousness, however, typology severely limits vision, turning comfort into spiritual pride by painting opposition forces in the garb of Satan while sanctifying kindred spirits.

What I wish to prove here is that William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* shows him to be sensitive to the thin line between the comfort and the spiritual pride which are both potential results of the typological vision he could not escape. Bradford seems unwilling to make the typological equations and parallels that other Puritans (like Cotton Mather) make so happily and skillfully. Bradford's reluctance to fish for Biblical metaphor illustrates that he is less committed to writing history as a means of grace, and more conscious of history as a record of

events than are other Puritan remembrancers. Once proved, this view of Bradford helps us in differentiating Bradford's view of Christ and culture within the classifications offered by Niebuhr.

Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christ Americana* is the history of the church. Mather himself, of course, was a preacher; it is understandable that Mather would undertake a history of the institution of society with which he was most familiar. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note Mather's insistence that church history is the most significant branch of historical studies: "But of all History it must be confessed, that the Palm is to be given unto the Church History; wherein the Dignity, the Savity, and the Utility of the Subject is transcendent."<sup>2</sup>

For Mather, the church was not only the important societal institution, but the central focus of God's concern, around which everything else paled.

Bradford's stated objectives for his history are less restricted:

. . . first of the occasion and inducements thereunto; the which, that I may truly unfold, I must begin at the very root and rise of the same. The which I shall endeavour to manifest in the plain style, with singular regard unto the simple truth in all things at least as near as my slender judgement can attain the same.<sup>3</sup>

Bradford's task, as he sees it, is simply to tell the truth in all things in the clearest manner his abilities will afford him. He sees himself primarily as recorder, not as preacher.

It would be foolish to assume that Mather and Bradford stood diametrically opposed on the purpose of the historian, however. At the end of Chapter VI, Bradford explains his deliberate and extensive record of the early days of the Separatists in Holland, contending that subsequent generations had to know the facts. He, too, is one of God's remembrancers.

I have been the larger in these things, and so shall crave leave in some like passages following (though in other things I shall labor to be more contract) that their children may see with what difficulties their fathers wrestled in going through these things in their first beginning; and how God brought them along, notwithstanding all their weaknesses and infirmities. As also that some use might be made hereof in other times by others in such like weighty employments. (p. 48)

But Bradford elsewhere states that not all of the history is being recorded for a similar purpose. While certain aspects seem to be rather didactically aimed, other events are remembered for other reasons. The short paragraph which introduces Book II offers a less specific purpose:

The rest of this history (if God give me life and opportunity) I shall, for brevity's sake handle by way of annals, noting only the heads of principal things, and passages as they fell in order to time, and may seem to be profitable to know or to make use of. And this may be the Second book. (p. 81)

The aim here ("to be profitable to know or make use of") is somewhat different from the more pointed use of history for direction or reproof of the younger generation. The events, he says, are useful to remember for their own value.

Bradford and Mather's different views of the purpose of history demonstrate that Mather's concern with other-worldly matters (the church being served by the world) and his moralistic motivation differ from Bradford's more complex designs. To Bradford, some facts of history can be redemptive, but some facts are valuable on their own merit, not specifically as proof or illustration of the divine plan.

The recitation of Christmas Day

shenanigans by certain of the "new company" in Chapter XII of Book II exemplifies Bradford's other motivations. Begging leave from work on Christmas day, certain non-Separatists claimed their devotion to the incarnation was so deep that work on that day for them would be a sin against their consciences. When the Governor excuses them, then later finds them "pitching the bar, and some at stool-ball and such like sports," he makes them hold to their confessions and go home to practice the piety they espoused. Bradford introduces this passage as "rather of mirth than of weight." He does not take the time to sermonize on the hypocrisy or shallowness of these "outsiders." He includes the story, oddly enough, because it is simply of interest.

Another motivation for including things "profitable to know" is for psychological insight. The most obvious example is the famous chapter of Book II, "Wickedness Breaks Forth." Before listing the museum of aberrations for the year 1642, Bradford attempts an explanation. The first reason is purely theological and typological, in effect: "one reason may be that the Devil may carry a greater spite against the churches of Christ and the gospel here, by how much more they endeavor to preserve holiness and purity amongst them" (p. 351).

The second reason he lists is purely sociological: "So wickedness being here more stopped by strict laws, and the same more nearly looked into so as it cannot run in a common road of liberty as it would and is inclined, it searches everywhere and at last breaks out where it gets vent" (p. 352). The absence of theological baggage is notable here.

A third reason for sinfulness breaking out is not without some demonic impulses, but it is essentially a problem of demographics:

. . . here the people are but few in comparison of other places which are full and populous and lie hid, as it were, in a wood or thicket and many horrible evils by that means are never

seen nor known. (p. 352)

What I wish to point out is that the causes for sin are too complex to be attributed simply to the Prince of Darkness's hate for the chosen. Sin, in this case, is a result of factors of the environment, not simply the tribulations of Satan.

Third, Bradford includes some events in his history because of his own inclination to delve into human psychology. When the complexity of human events shocks him, these events and issues are recorded.

The first line of the chapter on Wickedness begins in a fashion that illustrates Bradford's regard for complexity: "Marvelous it may be to see and consider how some kind of wickedness did grow and breath forth here. . . ." The word *marvelous* reveals Bradford's response; he marvelled that such depravity could emerge from Plymouth. He marvels, he is amazed, he is awed by the unlikely wickedness in his own folk.

Finally, Bradford's simple concern for telling the truth is visible in many passages. When he demurs from carrying on concerning a series of skirmishes with the Pequots, he does so because he claims he does not have complete control of the facts. "I do but touch these things, because I make no question they will be more fully and distinctly handled by themselves who had more exact knowledge of them and whom they did more properly concern."

Thus, it seems clear that another motivation for including facts is a simple desire to record the truth without imputing a tangle of typological speculation. The actions do not become metaphor, either in Bradford's mind or in the reader's, but remain the plain and simple truth, as Bradford tells it.

Two more significant aspects of Bradford's history will reinforce the contrast I wish to draw between Bradford and other Puritan historians: his use of scripture and his understanding and use of the doctrine of providence.

It is important to consider that the Puritan typological caricature is of a people who im-

bue themselves with all the characteristics of God's chosen people, Israel, especially in conjunction with their removal from Egypt and the sojourn in the wilderness. Typology, exactly accomplished, it is thought, allowed the Puritans to draw quick conclusions concerning the forces of right and wrong as they met them in the culture, based on their identification of themselves as God's special project.

The most frequently quoted example of typology in *Of Plymouth Plantation* occurs in the highly lyrical passage in Chapter IX, at the end of Book I. Here, Bradford is, in a sense, eulogizing the efforts of the first generation and at the same time attempting to chorus praise for their efforts from the younger generations:

What could now sustain them but the Spirit of God and His grace? May not and ought not the children of these fathers rightly say: "Our fathers were Englishmen which came over this great ocean, and were ready to perish in this wilderness; but they cried unto the Lord, and He heard their voice and looked on their adversity." (p. 71)

Bradford himself notes that the language he has chosen is from Deuteronomy 26, which clearly relates the passage to the Israelites and their wanderings.

A few comments concerning this passage are worth making. First, this typological use of scripture appears at a point in the narrative when Bradford calls upon all of his lyrical powers to praise the faith and fortitude of the original settlers. The tribute amounts to a kind of poetic blazon, an exaggeration for effect, most lofty and euphoric. In short, it seems to operate as much metaphorically as typologically.

Second, the passage is included not for its own merit but in an attempt to elicit the admiration of subsequent generations whom Bradford sees, and foresees, as neglecting the gifts of heritage. The comparison is therefore

as much rhetorical as literal—an attempt to push those who forget into remembering.

Finally, the passage is perhaps the only instance of Bradford using scripture typologically in the entire history.

How does Bradford use the Bible? There are several ways in which scripture is called upon in the history: 1) the language of scripture is used without specific reference (Editor Morrison has noted these usages); 2) the Bible is directly quoted in the text; 3) Biblical reference is noted; 4) others' uses of scripture are recorded as a part of the record of the event.

The only two of the above which we need concern ourselves with are the second and

purpose a few pages later (p. 356). All of these references are made to fortify an opinion, using the Bible to order legal mandate.

The most frequent use of the Bible in the history is, as allusion. Nearly half of the references amount to comparisons between what Bradford reports occurring and a line or vignette from scripture roughly comparable. The first such allusion illustrates this kind of usage and establishes the limits of the comparison. Bradford describes the manner in which some Separatists remained in England when others left to go to Holland: "But though they loved their persons, approved their cause and honored their sufferings, yet they left them as it were

**Bradford's intent is to draw obvious lessons from the experience here; it is a clear example of using scripture to make experience carry meaning.**

third, the occasional references when Bradford himself points us toward the scripture. When we look specifically at those references, a number of interesting conclusions can be drawn. I count only 37 such references in a history of close to 400 pages.

The references he does use can, with the exception of the typological usage already noted, be classified into three groups—as legal precept, as allusion, and as proverb.

For a man who served as governor of the colony for so many years, Bradford uses scripture as legal reinforcement very infrequently. Only four times does he bring the Bible in to explain jurisdiction: once, when he defends the church against Lyford's accusation that "the Lord hath not appointed any ordinary minister for the conversion of those without" (p. 180); again, to explain why ministers were consulted for their view on a "point of conscience" (p. 298); again, for justification of the punishment meted out to murderers (p. 354); and finally, for a similar

weeping, as Orpah did her mother-in-law, Naomi (p. 24).

The allusion is to the story of Ruth, of course, and the manner in which the allusion is drawn is important to understanding how Bradford uses the Bible. Orpah, Ruth's sister-in-law, leaves their mother-in-law's side when Naomi suggests that both of them would be happier in their own land, rather than accompanying her back to her land. Ruth does not leave, and the rest of the story belongs to her. In light of Ruth's refusal to leave her mother's side, Orpah's albeit reluctant return is not altogether heroic, even if it is understandable. If the use of the allusion was typological, much more should be made of the courage of the Separatists who left; after all, the biblical account shows Ruth becoming part of the line of David and, of course, of Christ himself. Orpah fades into biblical history with her own gods in her own land. That is the narrative Bradford draws on, but the details of the comparison

are not meant to be fleshed out. Bradford is not intending to demean those who wouldn't move to Holland; a few lines later he relates that some of them suffered greatly in England, locked behind bars because of their faith. Those who stayed, of course, were not Orpahs, and it is not Bradford's desire to paint them as somehow less committed than the migrant Separatists. Bradford alludes to scripture only for comparison—the *tearful* separation of the Separatists. It is the moment of leave-taking that Bradford wants envisioned, not the spiritual legacy of the story or its parabolic quality.

Similar uses of the Bible are frequent. The old men of the first generation could reflect on their lives in the same manner that Paul did in II Corinthians (p. 365). Lyford's accusations are compared to Jacob and Laban (p. 179). Most of Bradford's use of scripture can be designated as allusion; but most importantly, the allusion he normally wishes to draw is one of moment, not of fable. While this kind of usage may be seen as typological, it does not draw the lines to such an extent that God's favor is an explicit or implicit feature of the comparison.

The third type of scriptural use is as proverb. While he employs Biblical passages less often in this fashion than as allusion, he quotes frequently in a proverbial or even moralistic mode, using both the Old and New Testaments for this purpose. When he extols the virtuous life of William Brewster, he alludes to I Peter 4:14, and Proverbs 10:7, to show how virtue and suffering are to be rewarded in heaven (p. 365).

One interesting example of a proverbial use of scripture occurs when Bradford relates the foibles of Thomas Weston and the havoc his greed created on the plantation. Weston failed to provide the necessities of existence when the Plymouth colony stood in extreme need. Bradford, almost sarcastically, narrates the result:

All of this was but cold comfort to fill their hungry bellies; and a slender performance of his [Weston's] former

late promise. . . . And well might it make them remember what the Psalmist saith, . . . Psalm cxlvi, "Put not your trust in princes," (much less in merchants) "nor in the son of man for there is no help in them." (p. 112)

Bradford's intent is to draw obvious lessons from the experience here; it is a clear example of using scripture to make experience carry meaning. What is interesting is his own interpolation. Seen from the twentieth century, the doctored quotation appears almost lightly sarcastic, drawn with comic intent.

Bradford appears to use scripture in the history in a fashion that seems removed from the caricature of Puritan typography.

Finally, Bradford's understanding of providence and his use of the word and related phrases illustrate that he is more awestruck by God's hand than ready to use unexplained phenomena to clothe his sense mission in sanctity. When others speak of God's hand in the world, Bradford, especially late in the history, demurs; he records the views of the others, but often seems unwilling to apply unexpected or unexplained occurrences to God's particular favor or disfavor. One example of that reluctance occurs when Massachusetts Bay claims they have squatter's rights to some unimproved acreage that belonged by law to Plymouth. The correspondence indicates that the Bay Colony found biblical warrant for their usurpation, and Bradford chides them for misusing providence:

But whereas you say God in His Providence cast you, etc., we told you before, and upon this occasion must now tell you still, that our mind is otherwise. And that you cast a rather covetous eye, upon that which is your neighbors [sic] and not yours; and in doing, your way could not be fair unto it. Look that you abuse not God's providence in such allegations. (p. 316)



Bradford's warning erupts from his anger over the greed of the Bay Colony, but it illustrates that he was concerned about misusing the term *providence* to sanctify oneself and one's actions.

An even clearer example of his reluctance to push providence occurs a bit later in the history. When ships go down—ships that had been heavily relied upon—Bradford remembers public comment concerning that tragedy:

Such crosses they met with in their beginnings, which some imputed as correction from God for their intrusion, to the wrong of others, into that place. But I dare not be bold with God's judgements in this kind. (p. 325)

Again, fearful of intruding into God's own knowledge, he demurs from claiming supernatural intent for unlikely occurrences.

It seems clear that Bradford was much more interested in recording history than interpreting it. According to the narrative, providence is the plan of God, not a series of acts given to us in order to allow us to locate ourselves in the grand scheme of things. To Bradford, making himself God, the greatest of sins, was an omnipresent danger for one who interpreted events.

In conclusion, Bradford's methods of history are superior to those employed by other Puritan historians. Like all of God's remembrancers, Bradford fully acknowledges that one reason for his history was to build the faith of the subsequent Puritan generations. In decades to follow, he wanted the new reformers to reflect on the legacy of faith that was there in the history, as David has remembered in the Psalms—the gift of faith from believing parents who had suffered to establish a Christian life in a New England wilderness.

But Bradford's sole aim is not to relate the plan of redemption as it is illustrated in early Puritan history. Bradford wishes to narrate

that history, allowing divine schemes to emerge when they rise unmistakably from the story. This attitude is illustrated by Bradford's own ambiguous statement of purpose, by his fascination for complexity, and by his interest in psychological cause and effect. Furthermore, his use of biblical allusion demonstrates his reluctance to use the Bible typologically, that is, as a mirror of his own ambitions and sense of redemption. And finally, Bradford's hesitation to validate God's providential stamp of approval proves that he was not carrying an agenda into the task of writing history.

What does *Of Plymouth Plantation* tell us of Bradford's vision of Christ and culture? Certainly he cannot be labeled a *radical* or a *synthesist*. Bradford's sense of calling held him in his job as governor even when he himself desired to resign. Bradford never shunned the world as evil, and the history shows his interest lies with the recording of the facts of history, something he would not have considered important if he had no interest in culture.

And certainly Bradford was no *dualist*. If *Of Plymouth Plantation* shows us anything, it shows us Bradford's unwillingness to project his own redemption story upon the facts of the colony.

It would be difficult to draw him as a *cultural Protestant*, since he remained so devout throughout his life, and likely would have considered making concessions with his faith an even more heinous crime than treason.

There does not seem to be a significant amount of *conversionist* sentiment in the history, however; he does not talk specifically about institutional sin or redeeming the culture. Implicit in some of the narratives is a sense of the *conversionist's* talk, however. The lengthy recording of the Allerton affair, for instance, has an announced purpose of teaching subsequent generations some moral lessons in business responsibilities.

Exact placement is not possible with Bradford. What is most important to

remember as we proceed, however, is that he is no *dualist*.

### III. John Winthrop

On the basis of the early entries in his personal diaries, John Winthrop, Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony and foremost judicial authority in early New England, might appear to be a *radical* Christian. Meditations such as the following appear frequently:

Still I finde by continuall experience that the usuallest thing that turnes me out of my course & breakes off my peace with God is the imbracings the love of earthly things, & seeking a kind of secure & commodious settinge in these things; which as it greatly delights the wanton fleshe, so it as fast quenche the all delight & appetite to heavenly things.<sup>4</sup>

Winthrop would seemingly abandon the world to seek spiritual concerns; the world seems vile and corrupt, the love of God a haven from the sin-blackened existence here below.

But *calling* plays a significant role in one's life, according to Winthrop, and the Christian's view of his particular calling is integral in a sanctified life. Winthrop uses the concept of calling often, and the way in which he uses the word and the concept illustrates his devotional regard for his work, its intimate connection with the faith which he professed. To Winthrop, diligence in pursuing one's calling is a measure of one's sanctification. In the same way that sin affects one's ability to pray, sin affects one's work within the culture:

I had been overtaken, & turned out of my course by entertaininge the love of pleasures, & worldly cares into my heart, which brought me out of peace with my God . . . and made me utterly unfitt for studie in

my callinge. (LL, I, 101)

According to Winthrop one's relationship to God is both illustrated in and affected by the diligence whereby one actually carries out one's calling. The concept is significant to the differences which exist between Winthrop on the one hand, and Mather and Edwards on the other. Winthrop draws a line between himself and God but intersects that line with another, a horizontal connection between himself and his world. Winthrop's vocation is holy. Calling is important to him, as important as prayer and meditation.

Winthrop's stress on a Christian's place in culture is apparent in his references to studying and applying oneself in the letters he sent to his son at school. With characteristic piety, Winthrop tells his son that "if it please him [God] to give thee once a taste of sweetness of the true wisdom which is from above, it will season thy studies, and give a new temper to thy soul." The assumption here is that faith and its assurances will affect the way one sees the world around him. "Remember," he says at a later date, "what the wisest saith: 'The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' Lay this foundation, and thou shalt be wise indeed" (LL, I, 175).

Winthrop views man's purpose on earth as more than merely devotional. The world and its culture are a fundamental concern to him. In a letter to his son, he is adamant: "My true desire is that you be a good proficient in your studyes, but my most earnest prayer & wishes are, that you & your studyes may be consecrated to Christ Jesus & the service of his church" (LL, I, 184).

In a letter to his wife, Winthrop excuses his absence from her side by alluding to God's wishes for his life. He pledges his love for her in this way: "for such is my love to thee (my deare spouse) as were it not my imployment (whereto God's providence hath disposed me) did enforce me to it, I could not live comfortably from thee halfe this longe" (LL, I, 233). In this case Winthrop's belief that the Lord's hand is operative in his

calling is used to legitimize his absence.

We need not document that Winthrop is not a *cultural Protestant*. His view of life is permanently settled on the supernatural sacrifice of Jesus Christ—his belief in the incarnation and resurrection story. As any Puritan, Winthrop would be unwilling to equivocate on his fundamentals. The remaining categories—*synthesist*, *dualist*, *conversionist*—all appear, at times, to characterize John Winthrop. The *dualist* mentality, characterized by a believer's near preoccupation with his own salvation, and the projection of that internal struggle into the culture, is evident in the early Winthrop especially, in exercises similar to the one quoted at the beginning of this section of the paper. The emotional intensity of his doubt concerning his own salvation is obvious through many early self-reflections. However, such religious wrestling was commonplace, a rite of passage for Puritan boys, a fully expected ritual of adolescence.

The emphasis in Winthrop's early struggles, however, is on his reflections concerning the struggle—Winthrop resolves to learn certain things about himself and his Creator and the world around him as a result of his self-doubt. This kind of resolution we will see repeated in Mather, but Winthrop seems to be able to grow as a result of his experience; Mather does not. The point which I wish to make here is that Winthrop's early irresolution, while it seems to mark distinct *dualist* tendencies, is not only representative of committed Puritan minds at a young age, but also a practice which seems to have disappeared from Winthrop's later concerns. Late in his life, for instance, Winthrop rarely notes such struggles in the journals, the elder magistrate more obviously concerned with the affairs of the colony. Apparently for Winthrop the question of personal salvation was answered. Mather's life-long grovelling will be seen to contrast greatly with Winthrop's acceptance of grace and assurance of personal pardon from sin. Winthrop does not appear to have a *dualist* mind.

John Winthrop's exact classification in

terms of the Neibuhr definitions is not easy to determine. Obviously it lies somewhere between the *synthesist* and the *conversionist* minds. At this point it may be easier to recount some of the ways in which Winthrop fused Christ and culture throughout his life than to try to pinpoint the kind of mind which Winthrop's personal writings illustrate.

We have already established that Winthrop's interest in calling indicates his interest in and love for culture. His choice to leave England and resettle in the new world is, of course, the most significant decision of his life. Just exactly why Winthrop chose to go to America (thereby giving up land and power in England) is not clear from the personal writings. If it were, our difficulties in assessing Winthrop's mind would be lessened considerably, for if he chose to go in order to establish a Christian form of government, then he would be an obvious *conversionist*, reclaiming culture. Edward Morgan speculates in this way on the Winthrop's reasons for leaving:

[According to Winthrop] a man's duty to God was to work at his calling and improve his talents like a good and faithful servant. If he could do it better in New England than in old, that was good reason for moving. God was the overwhelming reality. Success or failure were relevant only as indications, and not always reliable ones, of his satisfaction or displeasure with a man's efforts to serve him.<sup>5</sup>

This assessment underlies the point we have been making about Winthrop; he was very much interested in the relationship between faith and life, between this world and the next. However, Morgan's belief about Winthrop's motivation for leaving England does not help us to make a distinction between a *synthesist* or a *conversionist* mind.

Neither the journal nor the letters are helpful in determining the man's primary reasons for leaving England. Robert Winthrop, in

compiling his ancestor's papers, includes a paper entitled, "Reasons to be considered for justieinge the undertakeres of the intended Plantation in New England, & for incorageinge such whose hartes God shall move to joyne with them in it," and argues that this document is authentic and unquestionably prepared by Winthrop himself (LL, I, 309). The document he includes is far too lengthy to include here, but the main points, as listed, can be summarized as follows:

1—"To carry the Gospel into those parts of the world." [To carry on the work of evangelism and combat the work of "Anti-Christ" Catholics already at work in the new world.]

2—"The land growes weary of her Inhabitants." [To lessen the effects of overpopulation and the resulting injustice to the poor in England.]

3—"This place to be a refuge." [The new world will afford Christians an opportunity to escape the "general callamity" of the church in England.]

4—"The whole earth is the Lordes." [To fulfill the cultural mandate of the Old Testament by bringing the new country under the control of God's people.]

5—"All artes & Trades are carried in that deceitful and unrighteous course." [In the corrupted old world, Christians are unable to carry on legitimate business without falling into sin.]

6—"The foundations of Learning & Religion are so corrupted." [Rearing children in the fear of the Lord has become impossible.]

7—"Forsake all this." [By forsaking prosperity, the dissenters will teach England a lesson in priorities.]

8—"To help raise and support a particular Church while it is in the Infancy." [Building a church is a blessed charge.]

9—"It appears to be a work of God." [The number of people willing to leave is so great that God's purpose in it cannot be mistaken.]

There is no outright statement of the desire to establish some kind of Christian

state here, but the inference is clear. The opportunities alluded to in the first six of the reasons have rather obvious corollaries: to escape the sinful business world in England implies the establishment of a more just system of economics, for example. It might be argued also that the mind of England was so unified concerning religion at that time, that the desire to establish a Christian society would have been assumed—no one would have expected any less from the non-conformists, or the Anglicans for that matter.

But the document is worth noting for Winthrop's clear concern for areas other than the world of the church. The fifth reason offers another example of his fusion of Christ and culture. Before leaving England, Winthrop felt that the present state of economics was somehow not conducive to living what he considered to be the Christian life. Later, Winthrop's diary reinforces his attitude; when the plantation was being established, Winthrop, then governor, had opportunity to deal with the issue of business in the new world. Not three years after his arrival, Winthrop notes the imposition of wage and price controls to inhibit sinful profiteering:

The scarcity of workmen had caused them to raise their wages to an excessive rate, so as a carpenter would have three shillings a day, a laborer two shillings and sixpence, etc.; and accordingly those who had commodities to sell advanced their prices sometime double to that they cost in England, so as it grew to a general complaint, which the court, taking knowledge of, and also of some further evils, which were springing out of the excessive rates of wages, they made an order, that carpenters, masons, etc., should take but two shillings a day, and laborers but eighteen pence, and that no commodity should be sold at above four pence in the shilling more than it cost for ready money in England.<sup>6</sup>

Winthrop's view of moral economics shows him to be anything but an advocate of free enterprise. In 1640, for example, we find him referring to an unsupervised market as evil: "This evil was very notorious among all sorts of people, it being the common rule that most men walked by in all their commerce, to buy as cheap as they could, to sell as dear" (WJ, II, 20). Winthrop later lists economic jurisdiction leveled by the courts and explains the profiteering which prompted the sanctions (WJ, II, 31). To Winthrop, economics was an institution of society which was as potentially full of sin as any man's soul. Likewise, he saw his obligation to redeem economics from its fallen state by acting responsibly out of a sense of his own beliefs. In this manner, Winthrop appears as a *conversionist*.

The famous Antinomian controversy of the 1640s presented the colony with a plethora of problems, but one difficulty seemed of singular importance to the governor. At stake in the battle was the relationship of church and state—John Cotton's power, as a leading clergyman and supporter of Anne Hutchinson, versus the power of Winthrop as head of state. Winthrop copies Cotton's side of the argument, complete with Biblical reference, in his journal:

Mr. Cotton, expounding that in II Chron. of the defection of the ten tribes from Rehoboam, and his preparations to recover them by war, and the prophet's prohibition, etc., proved that from Number 27.21, that the rulers of the people should consult the ministers of the churches upon occasion of any war to be undertaken, and any other weighty business, though the case should seem never so clear, as David in the case of Ziglag, and the Israelites in the case of Gibeah. (WJ, I, 231).

The entire discussion is of great importance to the argument here, but it is far too lengthy to quote in entirety. Winthrop deals ex-

clusively with the relationship between church and state, and includes rejoinders to Cotton's arguments. Here, Winthrop himself argues directly from scripture:

He [Winthrop] showed that, if the church had such power [to question the rulings of the court], they must have it from Christ, but Christ had disclaimed it in his practice and by rule, as Luke and Matt. and the scripture holds not out any rule or example for it. (WJ, I, 256)

Various examples from scripture are then given to illustrate the validity of Winthrop's argument.

Finally, he gives to the dissenters his reasons for banishing Anne Hutchinson from the colony:

He [Winthrop] saw, that those brethren, etc., were so divided from the rest of the country in their judgement and practice, as it could not stand with the public peace, that they should continue amongst us. So, by example of Lot in Abraham's family, and after Hagar and Ishmael, he saw they must be sent away. (WJ, I, 257)

The entire discussion of the Hutchinson affair is given here to illustrate the way in which Winthrop's mind operated. For him, the words of the Bible were applicable to his society and culture. Winthrop believed that grace extended out from the heart of the regenerate soul and into his world. As governor, he sent the Hutchinsonians on their way because their continued presence threatened the public peace. He had not bowed to the wishes of the church and thrown them out for heresy. Yet, he banished them because the Word speaks to him as governor, not only as a member of the church itself. If the church would have mandated the expulsion, then Winthrop would have been conceding that the church was the real power in the society. Although

we cannot be blind to the possibility of a political power struggle between the two most powerful men in Massachusetts Bay, we know that Winthrop felt sadness at being out of Cotton's favor, and that sadness may illustrate that the issue was more significant than mere political jousting.

If we take Winthrop at his word, then his explanation, in this case, shows him to be a *conversionist*, not a *synthesist*. To the *synthesist*, the church and its rule represent the greatest height man can achieve; to the *conversionist*, church is one of the institutions of culture, just as subject to the fall as the heart of every man.

Much more could be said to describe the mind and thought of John Winthrop. The parable-making, so characteristic of the Puritan mind and a matter of great concern as we move to an analysis of Cotton Mather, is not noticeably absent in Winthrop. The strange occurrence of a snake entering the church of Mr. Allen of Dedham leads Winthrop to speculate allegorically:

This being so remarkable, and nothing falling out but by divine providence, it is out of doubt, the Lord discovered somewhat of his mind in it. The serpent is the devil; the synod, the representative of the churches in New England. The devil had formerly and lately attempted their disturbance and dissolution; but their faith in the seed of the woman overcame him and crushed his head. (WJ, II, 348)

Such deliberate visions are much more typical of Winthrop than they are of Bradford. When we look at Cotton Mather, however, we will see a man whose allegorizing of such events tends to focus on the struggle he waged concerning assurance of his own salvation.

Finally, some mention may be made of Winthrop's disfavor among his contemporaries. Both his biographer, Morgan, and the editors of his papers and journals argue that Winthrop's occasional disfavor in the

eyes of the people resulted from what some considered\* his leniency. What effect Winthrop's leniency may have had on the differences which exist between himself and the others considered in this study is not clear, especially since we cannot tell whether his general temperament is a result of his theological orientation, or if his theological orientation is a manifestation of his less stringent temperament. Winthrop's ruling in a divorce case in 1639 includes this final line: "No man should be censured for his conscience." This kind of sentiment is not characteristic of at least the caricature of the Puritan mind; it indicates a temperament somewhat at odds with the common stereotype.

In general, what we wish to make clear about the mind of Massachusetts Bay's first governor is that he desired to view culture through Christ, not to separate Christ from culture; not to see culture as a personal revelation of his own doubt, but to build a culture based upon his own confession and God's revealed Word.

## Endnotes

\*H. Richard Neibuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1951).

<sup>2</sup>Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*. Ed. Kenneth B. Murdock (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), p. 94.

<sup>3</sup>William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*. (New York: Modern Library, 1981), p. 1. Subsequent references to this volume are noted by page number within the text. Original spellings have been retained.

<sup>4</sup>*The Life and Letters of John Winthrop*, Ed. Robert C. Winthrop, 2 vols. (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1864; rpt. New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), I, 114. Subsequent references to this volume will be noted by abbreviation within the text. Original spellings have been retained.

<sup>5</sup>Edmund Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), p. 39.

<sup>6</sup>*Winthrop's Journal: "History of New England," 1630-1649*, Ed. James Kendall Hosmer, LL.D., 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), vol. I, 112. Subsequent references to this volume will be noted by abbreviations within the text. Original spellings have been retained.