

The Sword or the Scroll: The Power of Rhetoric in Colonial New England

Deborah L. Madsen

The “America” in “American Studies” is an increasingly controversial object of study. At a time when minority group claims to serious intellectual consideration are becoming more urgent and are producing real change in academic curricula, it is imperative that teachers of American culture decide precisely what view of the world it is that they are promoting and why. Blurring the difference between “America” and the “United States” is only the most obvious of the hegemonic claims made by American Studies on behalf of the Anglo-American tradition in the New World. Among the most pervasive of these claims is the importance accorded the founding fathers of Massachusetts Bay Colony and the characteristic style of their rhetoric. The argument of this essay is that the typological rhetoric of the orthodox New England clergy was used for hegemonic purposes in order to claim, if not to preserve, a share of political power in the evolving colonial government.

Typology, the reading of history as a pattern of promises and fulfillments, assumes a guiding intelligence of transcendent authority who touches and empowers the typological interpreter. It is the human decoding of significant repetitions that places the typological pattern within a specific historical context: typological signs are the “parts” that hint at but do not fully reveal the “whole” of God’s redemptive scheme. The interpreter must speak what God cannot. Typology thus confers a quasi-divine legitimacy upon human political decisions

because the rhetorical framework within which decisions are made assumes such a legitimacy. The Massachusetts elite exploited the power of rhetoric to promote a peculiar view of the nature of the colonized New World, a view that depended crucially upon the role of the clergy within colonial government. That the ideal church-state never became a political reality only enhanced the appeal of a rhetorical style that asserted the authority of the clergy to speak both for God and for community.

Recent work by Harry S. Stout and Ann Kibbey explores this coercive aspect of Congregational sermons by centering upon the issue of how the New World was to be characterized. Stout shows that typology was used in two quite distinct ways in colonial sermons. In regular sermons typology revealed a pattern of prophetic biblical meanings that were abstract and spiritual in import. It was in public sermons, presented on occasions such as fast days or election days, that a more literal, expressly political form of typology voiced what Stout calls "the corporate experience of God's 'American Israel.'"¹

The federal covenant link between individual and community (the corporate commitment to an American Canaan) that attempted to bind personal and national ambitions was not a necessary part of typology, yet this connection became crucial to the public rhetoric of the Congregational clergy. Ann Kibbey, discussing John Cotton's deployment of rhetoric, describes the "referential imperative" designed to command belief, which was simultaneously cast in personal, psychological terms and in public, political terms. The sermon that induced conversion actually converted the believer to the "language of Canaan," and the preacher, whose social being was temporarily obscured, appeared in this process as more purely the agent of God's presence.² Kibbey attributes such transformations to the rhetorical "turn," which she describes as characteristic of Cotton's sermon style. The turn from literal to figurative references unsettled the listener and created a semantic ambiguity that could be exploited by a gifted orator. Clarity of meaning was purchased at the expense of belief. It was a metaphoric mechanism by which this "turn" was achieved, in Kibbey's account. Yet in the instances she gives, the crucial shift was in fact a typologically directed move from "part" to "whole." With great skill Cotton slotted the individual experiences of his audience into a transcendent scheme of national salvation that gave those experiences direction and significance.

This compounding of personal and cultural identity forms the basis of Sacvan Bercovitch's own skillful investigations into the "Puritan origins of the American self." Remarkable similarities exist between the specific definition of "America" the Massachusetts Bay theocracy used to assert its authority and establish its legitimate claim to a political voice, and the vision of America modern interpretations of colonial rhetoric assume in claiming "originary" or founding authority for these same Puritans. This prescriptive concept of America is at the very heart of American Studies as it has been practiced in the wake of influential work by Sacvan Bercovitch and, earlier, Perry Miller.³

Since Miller's pioneering work on Puritan thought and culture, a mythology of the "errand into the wilderness" and the creation of an exemplary "city upon a hill" has emerged that provides the basis for theories about American exceptionalism, but which assumes exceptionalism itself. Bercovitch, in asking why the power of consensus should be so robust in America, finds that the myth of America's typological destiny protects the national consensus. He does not ask whether the myth is itself a product of cultural consensus. The answer to such a question must be a resounding No! Even among first generation migrants the notion of American exceptionalism was being questioned by a powerful rhetorical style that sought to describe America rather than to prescribe the spiritual identity of New England.

The myth of American exceptionalism silences the voices of dissent—including most notably Separatists Robert Cushman, Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson—who have expressed an alternative definition of America: a definition still based upon biblical authority but resistant to the theological impulse that motivates typology. Recent work by Philip Gura on dissenting sects in New England from 1620 to 1660 points to the formative influence exerted by the dissenting voices in that they obliged the orthodox clergy to argue against them. In Congregationalism's "unyielding effort to neutralize the influence of those who argued for a more radical [democratic] organization of society," counter-arguments became indistinct from conservative ideological positions.⁴ Against the image of American consensus promoted by Miller, Bercovitch and Larzer Ziff, Philip Gura proposes a vision of early America as rent by ideological divisions. Within this context, the great achievement of American Puritanism was the channeling of radical energies into the American national mythology. Even studies devoted to these marginalized colonial voices turn eventually to the question of the dominance of the "New England Way," which ensures that the image of Congregational hegemony retains its power. But these repressed and marginalized energies have never been completely sublimated, despite the remarkable longevity of the American myth. The ideological maneuvers that shaped American cultural history are clearly revealed through the analysis of those rhetorical styles that enshrined opposed cultural visions.

By amplifying the forgotten voices of the early Separatists, by asking how and why their mode of rhetoric was so violently condemned by the orthodox New England clergy, this essay contributes to contemporary questioning of the ways in which the "America" in American Studies has been constructed and deconstructed.

II

Typology was the rhetorical style favored by the Puritan colonists of New England precisely because of its characteristic linkage of the personal and the cultural. In an important account of typology, A. C. Charity discusses the mode's central concern with locating an absolute existential norm within the apparent chaos of human history.⁵ This "norm" is a central event to which all other

historical events are causally related. Typology seeks to reveal the pattern of connection by interpreting the signs of God's participation in human affairs as He guides events to their preordained place in redemptive history. At the same time, the normative pressure exerted by the typological pattern is registered by the interpreter who is confronted with the critical question: what is the relevance of God's historical intervention for you? In this way, typology makes demands upon the personal and cultural allegiances of the individual whose experiences it explains. How one reads should not be unrelated to how one acts in society. So typology provides a kind of exegetical binding that relates social action to personal belief. Typology legislates normative practices for the individual, for society, and for history by determining the shared spiritual essence of diverse material phenomena.

The integrative power of typology found application in the image of the Great Migration as a flight, literal and spiritual, from sin to redemption. The notion of a typological repetition of the Israelites' escape from Egyptian bondage into the promised land of Canaan provided legitimation for the colonial enterprise. The typological parallel appears in historical interpretations of the colonies, such as those written by William Bradford, John Winthrop and the Mathers, which sought to define an emergent nation. But as Stephen Fender has argued so convincingly, typology in these historical writings was used most frequently to provide a divine justification for migration precisely at those times when history seemed to be contradicting all expectations: "It was in moments of disappointment and frustration, particularly, when justifications had to be found to satisfy metropolitan doubts, and the justifications were arrived at, more often than not, by incorporating the apparent reverses into a larger providential plan, in which the new world became that 'home' for the spirit which England was not."⁶ As a divine justification for America, typology exerted great rhetorical power.

John Cotton, preaching the typological parallel in a sermon delivered at Salem in June 1636, saw the actions of the emigrants as divinely guided, like those of God's previously chosen people; the single, continuous providential history that these peoples shared made the comparison closer. As the events recorded in the Old Testament were foreshadowings of Christ's life, so the colonial Puritans saw their New World history as fulfilling the promise shadowed forth by Christ. God's redemptive purpose and the covenant that sealed this purpose united events. The New England theocracy laid claim to a perfected covenant of grace that answered and completed the Old Testament covenant of works. Not all colonists, notably dissenters like Robert Cushman and Roger Williams, shared this view, of course, but the orthodox clergy used the integrative power of typology to extend its influence into as many areas of cultural life as possible.

All of the visible churches were joined through the federal covenant, and the invisible church of the elect was joined to them through the covenant of grace. So the individual was spiritually bound to the church, to a community-based gathering of the faithful, to a divinely instituted form of government, and to the providential history of which the individual soul was part. Cultural, social and

spiritual desires were conflated by the biblical reference of typology: all three became aspects of a significant repetition of divine events; all were aspects of the divine will. For seventeenth-century American Puritans, in Larzer Ziff's words, "Congregationalism . . . satisfied and molded their political and social aspirations as well as their spiritual longings."⁷ Subsequently, the perceived shape of spiritual history molded the direction of political and social change. The inseparability of the spiritual and the material worlds proposed by typology facilitated a relatively smooth process of change. Typology provided the means by which new cultural practices were adapted to, and legitimized by, ancient models. So long as the divinely ordained continuum of history was not ruptured, localized changes could be interpreted as aspects of the status quo. Within the context of typology, material change could be at once humanly guided and divinely authorized.

It is hardly surprising, then, that typology was the favored rhetorical mode of New England's elite nor that typological interpretation formed a part of the theocracy's bid for a share of political power. The claim to authority of both typology and Congregational theology was based upon the recognition of historical continuity. In the case of typology this was a continuity between biblical Testaments and the events they revealed; Congregationalism claimed to identify a continuity between individual and corporate covenants. Thus, the choice of typology by the Congregational clergy was a self-serving gesture, one that reinforced the theocracy's claim to power and prestige. A circular relationship existed between church and rhetoric: each assumed and asserted the authority of the other.

Consider now the attacks Separatists such as Robert Cushman and Roger Williams made on typological rhetoric and the Congregational ideology that it supported. If the Congregational view saw America as the prime site of contemporary divine activity and Congregationalists as the privileged witnesses of this divine intervention, what then was the Separatist view of the New World?

Robert Cushman's "Reasons and considerations touching the lawfulness of removing out of England into the parts of America" (1621) is strikingly different in both tone and substance to the typological experience of migration Massachusetts Bay colonists described. The notion of fulfilling a role prescribed by the Bible is absent; instead Cushman argued that all of the promises encoded in the Old Testament had already been fulfilled by Christ and chronicled in the New Testament. Any figurative expressions remaining in the Bible therefore had to refer literally to spiritual realities; emphatically they did *not* refer to prophesied future events. In response to the spiritual advances made by humankind, Cushman's argument went, God no longer needed to communicate in enigmatic, symbolic terms: where "our fathers" had been summoned to God by "predictions, dreams, visions, and certain illuminations," now the ordinary examples of Scripture "rightly understood and applied" directed the actions of the present generation.⁸ Divine rhetoric was no longer mysterious, it was mystical.

The sacred significance of Scripture, in Cushman's view, had already been realized—but in heaven, not on earth. Canaan, the land of rest secured for the Jews, referred literally to the eternal rest awaiting in heaven. Cushman was emphatic that in his time there was no land so sanctified as was Canaan; there was no land "given of God to any nation, as was Canaan, which they and their seed must dwell in, till God sendeth upon them sword or captivity" (241). The faithful Christian of that time had been left to wander in the wilderness of this earth until Christ should return to transform earthly reality into a heavenly state. What this heavenly state might be was recorded precisely in the Gospels. Heaven and earth remained discrete realms in Cushman's Separatist view.

If the Pilgrims' settlement of Plymouth was not divinely ordained, it does not follow that the colony was without justification. Cushman argued that the colonists' reasons for "removal" were, and necessarily should have been, different from those of the ancient Israelites. It was in Cushman's own interests to argue so, for in his pamphlet he was attempting to persuade potential migrants to leave their homes in England and journey to an uncertain future. Consequently, he was more concerned to convince his audience that England did not possess "typical" status and would not be the scene of millennial glory than to promote the image of a new redeemer nation. He was concerned to discredit the entire linkage between geographical location and spiritual events. Cushman therefore presented not providential coercion, but rather natural, civil and religious reasons for migration. The Plymouth settlers could live where they would do good for themselves and others, where they might use land that would otherwise lie idle, where they might convert the heathen. "But, above all," Cushman exhorted the colonists, "it shall go well with your souls, when that God of peace and unity shall come to visit you with death, [that] . . . you being found of him, not in murmurings, discontent, and jars, but in brotherly love and peace, may be translated from this wandering wilderness unto that joyful and heavenly Canaan."⁹ Each individual had to seek his or her own salvation in the moral wilderness of this world until, in the last days, the reality of spiritual truths was realized.

Cushman's explicit commitment was to the cause of worldly government: his appropriate sphere of interest. This separation of the material from the spiritual, anathema to Congregationalists, had as its rhetorical counterpart the use of metaphor. Metaphor assumes no prior or necessary linkage between the elements it compares; typology, which assumes a part-for-whole relationship between elements of analogy, is torn apart by the ontological division that metaphor simply accepts. In Cushman's view, earthly signs referred to, but did not participate in, atemporal spiritual states. Metaphor could compare one with the other but it did not thereby integrate them: each retained its own identity. Cushman took the same view of typology: ever since Old Testament types were completed by Christ, all types had been confined to a purely abstract and spiritual sphere of reference. A similarly metaphoric style of rhetoric marks the writings of Roger Williams as he also directed his attack towards the typological interpretation of the New World promoted by the Bay colonists.

III

Turning specifically to the Cotton/Williams debate, we find that Roger Williams attacked the Congregational vision of the Great Migration as a divinely ordained errand from God. Williams objected to the argument that the emigrants were compelled to flee from the sin of the Old World and were directed to a divinely appointed place where the renewal of the church could be perfected. What he particularly objected to was the interdependence assumed between materiality and spirituality. He rejected the remaining bonds between the New and Old World churches; he rejected the notion that an entire people could be covenanted to God in the same way as an individual; he rejected the idea that the invisible church of the elect could be identified with a single national group. In the course of their famous controversy, Williams repeatedly criticized John Cotton for his narrow attribution of spiritual significance to specific national identities:

For that locall and typicall separation from Babylon, Isa.52. I could not well have beleevved that Mr. Cotton or any would make that comming forth of Babel in the antitype, Rev.18.4. to be locall and materiall also. What civill State, Nation or Countrey in the world, in the antitype, must now be called Babel? certainly, if any, then Babel it selfe properly so called: but there we find (as before) a true Church of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet.5.¹⁰

Williams made the typological imperative that nations possess only one spiritual identity appear absurd by pointing to the multiple, Babel-like significances that real, literal nations did, in fact, have. Were all the inhabitants of Britain to be condemned as Babylonian apostates, he asked, simply because the New England emigrants came out of Britain?

John Cotton, in response, attacked what he saw to be the antisocial individualism of Williams' views. Congregationalism was able to rationalize its own antisocial aspects, such as the exclusion of the unregenerate from civic power, by claiming to act on behalf of the entire community. The part-for-whole logic of typology enabled the elite to legislate for the group. Those of the elect "called" by God to positions of power held a sacred duty to protect not only the property and persons of their subjects but to guard their consciences as well. This presumption, this usurpation of divine prerogative, Williams condemned as he denied the right of the civic magistrates to punish spiritual infringements of the Commandments. His insistence on the clear separation of church from state, religion from politics, undermined the very mythology to which the colony owed its ideological existence; not surprisingly, attacks such as his alienated Williams' Congregational brethren.

Williams directed the full force of his Separatist arguments against the weakest point of the Bay orthodoxy in attacking the typological assumptions that lent authority to its cultural practice:

There is a Civil sword, called the Sword of Civill justice; which, being of a materiall civill nature, . . . cannot according to its utmost reach and capacitie (now under Christ, when all Nations are merely civill, without any such typicall, holy respect upon them, as was upon Israel, a Nationall Church), I say, cannot extend to spiritual and Soul-causes, Spiritual and Soul punishment, which belongs to that Spiritual sword with two edges, the soule-piercing (in soule-saving or soule-killing), the Word of God.¹¹

Williams used a metaphoric style of rhetoric to express his sense of a profound disjunction between the spiritual and the material realms. The image of the sword of spiritual justice acted as a sign that presented to limited human understanding a concept that would otherwise be unimaginable. He resisted as far as possible in his own writings the conflation of the earthly with the mystical. Williams dismissed the typological concept of a single identity shared by this world and the next as an illusion. The sacred could not be known by means of any earthly sign and only metaphor could function, though inadequately, to make religious realities apprehensible. The divine could not be known fully; in earthly terms, only analogies that were acknowledged to be partial could approach the divine.

This epistemological scepticism, when extended to his thinking on freedom of conscience, led to Williams' most lively assault on non-Separatist rhetoric. Because fallen humanity could not with any degree of certainty know the divine will, every individual had to labor under an individual burden to discover salvation. And salvation, once found, could not be fully described on temporal terms. In "The Bloody Tenent of Persecution," Williams used the image of the Church militant in his struggle to sustain a clear distinction between secular and sacred values even while discussing sacred realities. Deploying an explicitly metaphoric style of rhetoric, he likened the invisible church of the elect to the soldiers of Christ who bear spiritual armour and weapons; their victories were the inverse of those of this world since when they were slain their victory was the willingness to die for Christ, and their reward was everlasting life; they liberated souls as they "carry into captivity the very thoughts of man, subjecting them to Christ Jesus: they are spiritual conquerors . . ." (363). He sharply contrasted the transcendent power of Christ with the limited authority of the civil magistracy that acted only for the secular community. The magistracy received its power from the human community; civil authority was definitely not deputed by Christ. Paramount among all sins, and most likely to cause divine displeasure, in Williams' view, was the confusion of these two sources of power, the civil and the sacred.

The want of discerning this true parallel, between Israel in the type then, and Israel the antitype now, is that rock whereon (through the Lord's righteous jealousy, punishing the World and chastising his people) thousands dash and make woful Shipwrack. . . . O that it may please the Father of Lights to discover this to all that fear his name! then would they not sin to save a Kingdom, nor run into the lamentable breach of civill peace and order in the world, nor be guilty of forcing thousands to Hypocrisie, in a State worship, nor of prophaning the holy name of God and Christ, by putting their Names and Ordinances upon uncleane and unholy persons: nor of shedding the blood of such Heretics, & whom Christ would have enjoyed longer patience and permission until the Harvest; nor of the blood of the Lord Jesus himselfe, in his faithfull Witnesses of Truth: nor lastly, of the blood of so many hundred thousands slaughtered men, women, and children, by such uncivill and unchristian wars and combustions about the christian faith and Religion (416-17).

This lengthy passage sets out Williams' primary objections to the typology practiced by the Massachusetts Bay clergy. The typological assertion of identity between private and public values, between sacred and secular powers, in Williams' terms constituted the usurpation of divine salvation by institutionalized doctrine: "state worship." The integrative power of typology—the source of its value for Congregational rhetoric—was undercut by Williams' conviction that religion could bear no direct relevance to secular politics. His emphatic separation of the categories merged by typology, as Edmund Morgan has argued, was motivated largely by the perception that typology simply polluted both the sacred and the secular: civil government suffered through the restriction of the franchise to church members; the elect had to suffer the involvement of hypocrites in their churches; and the image of the theocracy suffered through instances of false coercion.¹²

Williams saw the fallibility of human conscience as an argument against typological interpretation and for religious toleration. The orthodoxy argued the fallibility of the congregation's consciences required enforced clerical guidance within the community. (Financially, the clergy required contributions toward maintaining the means of worship even if the Congregational form of worship was opposed by an individual's conscience.) Roger Williams refused to grant immunity from error to clerical consciences; rather he charged ministers with the same fallibility as their congregations. Still, if the clergy was not an infallible guide to truth the Bible was. But Williams did not assume that the Bible would reveal all of its sacred truths to those holding political office—or even those (church members) for whom political power was reserved. Williams described the Bible's action on individual souls as a gradual and progressive process of

enlightenment: a process that was independent of enforced religious belief. By enforcing religion governments contradicted the Gospel accounts of Jesus' toleration and so discounted the authority of Scripture. By persecuting "heretics" governments betrayed their secular duty to protect the property and persons of all their subjects and defeated the professed spiritual aim of advancing God's earthly kingdom. Imposed worship obscured the only human access to God: the freely willed reformation of the mind and heart of an individual who had been persuaded to accept God by the workings of Scripture. Williams promoted a vision of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon a limited human understanding and rejected absolutely the idea of an institutionally mediated relationship between God and the individual soul. Consequently, he also rejected the rhetorical mode that expressed a mediated relationship between God and soul. Instead, he preferred a metaphorical style of rhetoric that sustained a division between the sacred and the secular even as it established a provisional relationship between them. Through his attacks on the preferred rhetorical style of the Bay colony, Roger Williams exposed as non-authoritative the mythology of the emergent redeemer nation and, more specifically, delivered a significant blow to the claims to cultural relevance of the Boston clergy.

That Williams' criticism had hit a Congregational nerve is suggested by the ambivalent response of John Cotton. "The Bloody Tenent Washed and Made White in the Blood of the Lamb" (1647) revealed a central contradiction. Promoting now the glory of God, now the need to preserve the security of the civil state, Cotton assumed yet remained unwilling to admit that the two purposes were interrelated, indeed inseparable, when expressed typologically. But it was precisely the full import of typology that Cotton wished to obscure. He defined typology in such a way as to deny Williams' accusation that the Bay colony set out to repeat literally the historical experiences described in the Old Testament. Instead, Cotton presented a kind of typology that was informed by millennial assumptions: he argued for the creation of an earthly New Jerusalem in Massachusetts "not by making Christ a temporal king, but by making temporal kingdoms nursing fathers to his church."¹³ In this way, Cotton managed to evade the accusation that he and the orthodox clergy were attempting to force the hand of providence by fulfilling all of the literal preconditions for the Second Coming set out typologically in Scripture.

Whilst Cotton did not concede Williams' point that Christ was a purely abstract and spiritual being, he did emphasize the spiritual context from which the literal events of the Bible derived their typographical significance. Cotton defended the interdependence of material and spiritual realms by invoking the image of Christ as a divine mediator. Significantly, as he did this Cotton implicitly drew a parallel with the mediating role of the New England clergy. Cotton did not let pass the opportunity to reassert the clergy's claim to a greater share of cultural power and prestige. Christ's power was revealed not only in heaven but also in the earthly churches, Cotton argued, and as a consequence the churches shared Christ's transcendent power and authority.

In the days of Christ's flesh it was incompatible to his ministry to make him a king (as they went about to do, John 6:15). Christ hath enjoyed (even as mediator) an everlasting kingdom, not only in the church, but in the government of all the kingdoms of the earth, by his glorious power and righteousness. But the kingdoms of the earth are then said to be the kingdoms of our Lord, when they submit their laws to the laws of his word. But that neither maketh him a temporal king, nor his kingdom in the church to be a kingdom of this world. The church and commonwealth are still distinct kingdoms, the one of this world, the other of heaven, and yet both of them from Christ; unto whom the father hath committed all judgment (Job 5:22) (204).

The image presented here of heaven and earth as separate yet bound together by Christ was a reformulation of the classic typological structure where the part stands for the whole. Like part to whole, civil law was only one part or representation of the transcendent law of heaven. Cotton's reformulation differs from classic typology where he emphasized the punitive aspect of this relationship. Because the fate of the civil state and the state of religion were interdependent, Cotton went on to argue, religious failures (such as the failure to destroy heresy) were liable to be punished by calamities visited upon the whole community.

The paternalistic attitude that Cotton expressed toward the congregation seems to have been based upon this punitive application of typology. God was seen to express His concern for His subjects through providentially administered rewards and punishments; similarly, the clergy expressed its pastoral concern through correction and punishment. Cotton denied the charge that he, with the rest of the Bay clergy, persecuted dissenting consciences by redefining the notion of persecution: he denied the legitimacy of dissenting voices. Persistence in heretical belief, even after instruction in the truth, revealed to Cotton only obstinacy. A refusal to recant after such instruction simply could not represent spiritual or moral integrity in Cotton's terms: persistence in heresy could only signify a sin against both the individual and the corporate soul, never respect for the dictates of conscience. Persecution, if and when it did occur, Cotton conceded, was punishment for sinning *against*, rather than because of, conscience. But conscience, in Cotton's view, was not only a matter for individual concern: as the entire community was subject to the consequences of dissent, so the body politic was entitled to both spiritual and civil means of protection against heresy. The conflation of earthly with heavenly authority in Cotton's account outraged Williams' conviction that spiritual errors were to be judged and punished by God alone. As Cotton attempted to extend the influence of the church, Williams as rigorously denied any such expansion of ecclesiastical power.

It is in relation to the issue of toleration that their opposed conceptions of rhetoric engaged in an explicit confrontation. Cotton refused to modify his integrative vision of typology and Williams steadfastly repeated his condemnation of orthodox typology as illusory and dangerous. In response to Williams' insistence upon the absolute difference between the spiritual and the earthly, Cotton invoked (typologically, of course) biblical authority for the inseparability of theological and civil government. At the same time, he attacked Williams' willful neglect of his own spiritual duties: duties that God had assigned to him through typology. Interpreting Deuteronomy 13, Cotton pointed out that the civil sword was appointed by the angel of God, a type of Christ that remained unanswered and incomplete in the New Testament. The magistrate fulfilled the type and stood in a position parallel to that of the minister of God who was charged with the duty of executing God's vengeance on evil doers. Only a carnal, "ungodly imagination" would confine the responsibility of magistrates to the bodies and not the souls of citizens. The entire set of relationships and responsibilities that regulated social life had been instituted by God and as such were respected by the faithful, Cotton argued. The social hierarchy was to be preserved by the responsibility of parents for their children, of masters for their servants, captains for their soldiers, the magistracy and the clergy for their subjects. Church and civil governors were similarly placed: where the one promoted the health and prosperity of the soul (and, by extension, material well-being), the other provided for the health of the body and material estate (and so contributed to spiritual prosperity). The entire chain of authority was bound by the transcendent authority of God.

The typological rhetoric of Cotton's interpretation defined all human governors as representatives of the divine will. But Cotton extended this representative to all members of the Congregational church. In "A Sermon Delivered at Salem," in June 1936, Cotton described paternalistic responsibility and the administering of merciful chastisement as duties shared by all church members. The difference between clergy and congregation, as Cotton explained it, lay in the superior ability of the clergy to decipher the significance of divine judgements, but all church members, by virtue of their typologically defined relationship with God (as constituent parts of the divine scheme), possessed the right to engage in the "loving chastisement" of their fellows. This was more than a right: if the soul truly belonged to Christ, Cotton argued, then it desired an ever closer relationship with Him and as a consequence the soul was moved continually to recall and renew the covenant with Christ. In order to keep itself clean, the soul was prompted to admonish and reprove its brethren if they were seen to be defiled.¹⁴

Religious intolerance became a spiritual imperative for both individual and community in Cotton's deployment of typological rhetoric. Individual church members, standing in the same relationship to the divine scheme as civil and ecclesiastical governments, shared their responsibilities and authority. Typology internalized cultural conservatism, for each citizen was charged with a sacred duty to preserve the status quo. Roger Williams argued strenuously against this

conception of earthly subjects as signs representing a transcendent divine will. In Williams' view, earthly signs could never unambiguously represent the divine will. To him the idea that material signs could be coordinated in such a way as to reveal the whole divine plan of history was impossible.

Both Cotton and Williams were pursuing a utopian vision of the possibilities the New World opened up, but they differed in their conceptions of millennial change. Williams' expectations waited upon the return of Christ before any real spiritual change could be realized; Cotton anticipated the realization of the New Jerusalem in historical time, in geographical space and thus in cultural terms.

IV

The extension of clerical authority into the realm of secular government formed a necessary part of the millennial vision that Cotton shared with his ecclesiastical brethren. The rhetoric in which this vision was cast also provided justification for the whole colonial venture as an exploration in American exceptionalism. The power of this typological rhetoric derived in large part from its capacity to define a particular kind of human subject. As we have seen in the case of Congregational church members, typology was able to empower individuals by placing them in a particular relationship to a transcendent source of authority. The exceptionalism of America and of Americans was authorized by their shared participation in the same divine history. And the full significance of this history could only be known through the typological interpretations provided by the orthodox clergy.

The mechanism by which typology creates and represents a specific kind of subjectivity has been described by Harry Stout. Stout observes that typology, as it was exploited by Puritan sermons, encouraged listeners to insert themselves and their experiences directly into a world of biblical promise. The same point is expressed rather differently by Sacvan Bercovitch, who describes conversion as a redefinition of the self as a reflection of the church. Church and converted soul shared a common submission to the same transcendental power. The locus of the conversion process was the conscience—the site of such intense debate between Cotton and Williams. Conscience became, in the process of conversion, an index of sacred values that transformed self-judgment into a reflection of God's (and the church's) assessment of the self. Conversion transformed the self into a part of the divine whole and expressed the values of the whole scheme. Social and spiritual beings were thus conflated by Congregational church practice, and this compounding of personal and community identity was fixed by the concept of national election or "federal hagiography," as Bercovitch calls it.

The representation of the church-state as an elected individual was possible only through typology that defined the colonial venture in terms of salvation. This, of course, provoked Roger Williams' objection to the anti-Separatist polemic implicit in a rhetorical strategy that established the orthodox clergy as the privileged interpreters of the New World's identity. Thomas Hooker applied Old Testament types to the anticipated history of New England in his 1640 sermon,

“The Application of Redemption.” Hooker used the scriptural account of the exodus to exhort his hearers to prepare themselves for the promised “good land which aboundeth with prosperity.” Hooker justified the use of the analogy as an example of God rewarding his favoured people: “[t]he truth of this type, the prophet Hosea explains and expresseth at large in the Lord’s dealing with his people in regard of their spiritual condition.”¹⁵ Massachusetts Bay Colony exceptionalism derived from the spiritual eminence of its citizens, and this eminence was demonstrated by obedience or conformity to the will of God as it was interpreted, typologically, by the clergy.

This convergence of the personal and the cultural in the principle of conformity was most clearly defined in the jeremiads preached by the second generation of colonial ministers. Samuel Danforth, for instance, in the jeremiad “A Brief Recognition of New England’s Errand into the Wilderness” (1670) identified the primary source of spiritual unbelief as the pursuit of private interest: “inordinate worldly cares, predominant lusts, and malignant passions and distempers stifle and choke the Word and quench our affections to the kingdom of God.”¹⁶ In sermons such as this, social criticism was cast in terms of spiritual declension: failure to meet the conditions set down for salvation—both personal and corporate—was seen as a refusal of cultural conformity. Danforth, in the same jeremiad, went on to describe how the neglect of hearts, families and churches in New England was punished by God in the form of blasting and mildew, severe droughts, tempests, floods and sweeping rain. The physical punishment of material neglect found a spiritual counterpart in the “famine of the Word,” the removal of God’s ministry that, Danforth warned, would follow the neglect of “the Lord’s house.”

Preservation of the status quo, in the interests of the entire community, was interpreted by the orthodox clergy as a prime aspect of the paternalistic responsibility with which God had charged the governing elect. Typology defined the Bay colonists as the chosen people of God, privileged to have God intervene in their history; but as a consequence only the clergy, by deciphering the signs of God’s loving chastisement in material afflictions and by uncovering evidence of His continuing concern in every cultural crisis, was able to discover causes for celebration and for despair. It was perhaps inevitable that these signs were interpreted so as to assure the hegemony of Congregationalism. For the same divine authority that validated a specific definition of New World history, of colonial subjectivity, and of rhetoric and its cultural application, also supported a specific theocratical order in colonial New England.

The limitation of the franchise to church members reserved political power for those who had experienced saving grace, who were assumed to be guided by pious values, and who had been subjectively transformed into the image of Christ. As such, the elect were trained to read Scripture in such a way as to produce a consensual opinion about the social application of biblical meaning. The spiritual elite was also a political elite: those eligible to vote were seen to constitute a new saving remnant, dedicated to the spiritual and material prosperity of the colony.

But the convergence of spiritual and social power worked in an emphatically conservative manner by displacing the desire for political power (proper only to the regenerate, anyway) into the desire to prove one's sanctification by obeying the Law. This meant, in effect, submitting to the existent power structure. Dissident voices were excluded on material, spiritual and ecclesiastical grounds and the dominant rhetorical practice of the orthodoxy cemented this exclusion.

The most effective challenge to the conservatism of the Bay theocracy culminated in 1636 in the Antinomian controversy. Anne Hutchinson challenged the typological system of mediations that provided authority for the colonial church-state on much the same grounds as Roger Williams. Like Williams, Hutchinson centered the debate upon the legitimacy of compounding the sacred and the profane. She argued that preachers who urged civil obedience and submission to the Law were "legal teachers" who, rather than preach the spirit, urged only the moral Law and so directed their congregations into hypocrisy. Unlike Williams, Hutchinson took as the target for her attack not the style of rhetoric practiced by these preachers but the specific cultural order supported by that rhetoric.

Hutchinson questioned the nature of the community itself, the theological justification, defined by the clergy, that validated the "exceptional" identity of the New World. Her conception of a direct and personal revelation as the only way to know God was radically opposed to the orthodox vision of a pious, useful life lived within an orderly society dedicated to God. Hutchinson's rejection of the church as the mediator between the soul and God was a rejection of the church's cultural definitions: definitions of what constituted piety, usefulness and social order. With her followers, Hutchinson denied the authority of the ministry to legislate forms of worship for the individual and, by undermining this spiritual prerogative, also denied the clergy's claim to cultural authority. By shifting the locus of authority from the clergy to the congregation, Hutchinson attacked the very foundations of Congregational ideology.

As a consequence of this controversy, the locus of power within the Congregational church was made explicit. Churches no longer attempted to disguise the fact that real authority was vested only in the church elders, that the power ascribed to the congregation in earlier theorizing was only nominal. The separation of church officers from the congregation became ritualized—an explicit expression of what had already been implicit—in the seating of officers apart from the congregation. John Cotton provided an unusually explicit account of the Congregational attitude toward theocratic authority and of the rhetorical style proper to the expression of that authority in "The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven" (1640). Cotton considered the difference between the power of excommunication, which belonged to the congregation, and the doctrinal powers possessed by church elders.

The like difference would appear if we had seen a government tempered of an *aristocracy* and *democracy*; in which, suppose

the people have a share, and their actual consent is necessary to all laws and sentences, whereas a few nobles that are set over them (whose concernment is less general) in whom the formal *sanction* of all should lie, in these it were *rule* and *authority*, in that multitude but *power* and *interest*; and such an authority is to be given to a presbytery of *elders* in a particular congregation, or else (as we have long since been resolved) all that is said in the New Testament about their *rule*, and of the peoples' *obedience* to them, is to be looked upon as metaphors, and to hold no proportion with any substantial reality of rule and government.¹⁷

Here, Cotton proclaimed the power of the elite and of typological rhetoric (as opposed to metaphor) that provided transcendent justification of a conflated view of the sacred and the profane. Cotton revealed the true interests served by orthodox typology. Gone is the rhetoric of exceptionalism; in its place is an explicit recognition of the clergy's political ambitions, which were served by colonial typology. As the Cotton/Williams debate shows so dramatically, the orthodox typological interpretation of scripture easily became the clerical prescription of a particular social hierarchy (rulers and obedient subjects), simply using scriptural justification to promote its own social model. The interdependence of spiritual and material expressions of power, in typology, became an important aspect of that clerical bid for a greater share of political power in which Cotton was involved. But here Cotton also expressed the irony of Puritan typology, which was employed initially for radical purposes—to justify and enable a break with the culture of the Old World—yet which eventually was transformed into a rhetorical bulwark against real cultural change.

V

The dominance of Congregational typology, together with the myth of American exceptionalism it assumed, has provided the context for modern discussions of colonial dissidents like Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson. Though these dissident voices have been acknowledged, inquiry rarely focuses on the manner in which they were and have continued to be silenced. Rather, the dominant discourse of exceptionalism's marginalization of such men and women has been assumed as scholars such as Perry Miller, Sacvan Bercovitch, Ann Kibbey and Harry Stout, to name but a few of the most prominent, have been interested in the way in which the orthodoxy achieved predominance. For these critics, as for the colonial orthodoxy, typology has provided the means for rewriting history in such a way that it can assume its "predestined" shape. But typology has a more sinister aspect: that of coercion and, for those who refuse to submit, historical obliteration. What typology cannot explain, it explains as meaningless. What dissent typology cannot tolerate, it transforms into a dangerous irrelevance.

The conservative image of colonial America, and the mechanisms by which the orthodoxy transformed radical energies into a conservative ideology of New World exceptionalism, are accepted as given even in recent accounts of colonial culture. Perhaps the vision of America as the world's last and best chance is the most powerful inheritance of the colonial orthodoxy; certainly it appears to be evidence of the extraordinary longevity of the orthodox Puritan vision. But that this vision was not the product of consensus becomes obvious from those voices of dissent that have proved to be as long-lived as their orthodox opponents. By recalling and amplifying these forgotten voices we may begin to approach a more just vision of America and a clearer understanding of the aims and implications of American Studies.

Notes

1. Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York, 1987), quote, 45; Ann Kibbey, *The Interpretation of Material Shapes in Puritanism: A Study of Rhetoric, Prejudice, and Violence* (Cambridge, England, 1986). See also Teresa Toulouse, *The Art of Propheying: New England Sermons and the Shaping of Belief* (Athens, Georgia, 1987).
2. Kibbey, *ibid.*, 23-4.
3. See, particularly, Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven, 1975); *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1978); and Bercovitch, ed., *The American Puritan Imagination: Essays in Revaluation* (Cambridge, England, 1974). Of Perry Miller's most important works see *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1939); *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1953) and *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1964).
4. Philip Gura, *A Glimpse of Zion's Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620-1660* (Middletown, Connecticut, 1984), 11.
5. A. C. Charity, *Events and Their Afterlife: The Dialectics of Christian Typology in the Bible and Dante* (Cambridge, England, 1966).
6. Stephen Fender, *American Literature in Context. I: 1620-1830* (New York, 1983), 49.
7. Larzer Ziff, ed., *John Cotton on the Churches of New England* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1968), 4.
8. Robert Cushman, "Bradford and Winslow's Journal" (1621), XVI, reprinted in Alexander Young, ed., *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers in the Colony of Plymouth, 1602-1625* (1841, rpt. New York, 1971), 241.
9. Robert Cushman, "Cushman's Discourse: Of the State of the Colony, and the need of Public Spirit in the Colonists," reprinted in Young, *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, 268.
10. Roger Williams, "Mr. Cotton's Letter Lately Printed, Examined and Answered," in Perry Miller, ed., *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams* (New York, 1963), 360. Future references are given in the text.
11. Roger Williams, "The Bloody Tenent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience discussed, in A Conference between TRUTH and PEACE, who, In all tender Affection, present to the High Court of Parliament, (as the Result of their Discourse) these, (amongst other Passages) of highest consideration," in Miller, *Complete Writings*, 160-61.
12. Edmund S. Morgan, *Roger Williams: The Church and the State* (New York, 1967), 137-42.
13. John Cotton, "The Bloody Tenent Washed and Made White in the Blood of the Lamb," (1647). Reprinted in Alan Heimert & Andrew Delbanco, eds., *The Puritans in America: A Narrative Anthology* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1985), 203-204.
14. Ziff, *John Cotton on the Churches of New England*, 57, 68.
15. Thomas Hooker, "The Application of Redemption by the Effectual Work of the Word and Spirit of Christ for the Bringing Home of Lost Sinners to God," reprinted in *The New England Way*, A Library of American Puritan Writings, vol. 12 (New York, n.d.).
16. Samuel Danforth, "A Brief Recognition of New England's Errand into the Wilderness," reprinted in A. W. Plumstead, ed., *The Wall and the Garden: Selected Massachusetts Election Sermons, 1670-1775* (Minneapolis, 1968), 70.
17. John Cotton, "The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven," in Ziff, *John Cotton on the Churches of New England*, 82.