

# *Puritanism as the Basis for American Conservatism*

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## I

THOUGH AMERICANS like to think of themselves as the proprietors of a young nation, the truth is that America is a modern expression of an old civilization with its roots deep in the Christian, feudal, medieval West. In the late sixteenth century one English offshoot from this tradition became known as Puritanism. This Puritanism would eventually affect the development of American life in a number of significant ways.<sup>1</sup>

When the first Elizabeth became Queen of England in 1558 she restored the Protestant religion according to the practice of the Prayer Book of Edward VI as the official church of the realm. But this practical settlement did not bring complete religious peace to her happy land. Many Protestant divines, returning from Europe where they had lived in exile from Catholic Queen Mary's England, brought with them Calvinist ideas which they had picked up on the continent. As Elizabeth's reign progressed some of these churchmen found it increasingly difficult to live in good conscience according to the views of the established English church. Some of these dissenters, while continuing to recognize Elizabeth's church as a true church, but wishing

to purify it from its remaining corruptions, gradually became known as Puritans. These first Puritans did not agree with each other on all questions, but as the bishops prohibited them from reforming the church according to their own lights, the disagreements within the fellowship of Puritans did not come to much for there were few opportunities to completely debate the conflicting points. The Puritans gathered together in small groups around some leading Puritan divine for the purpose of worship and reflection. When they looked out at their beloved England they found much to cause alarm: unsettling social conditions, the disruption of traditional ways of life as the English economy expanded to exploit new commercial opportunities, hordes of vagrant poor, personal and official sloth and corruption, social disarray—and errors in religion.<sup>2</sup>

Elizabeth, though a powerful sovereign, was judicious in the use of power and, for the most part, she was able to maintain a *modus vivendi* with the Puritan dissenters. But after Elizabeth's death in 1603, her successors James I and Charles I, lacking her skill and tact in governing, were determined to insist on religious orthodoxy. In search of this end, Charles came to rely on Bishop, later Archbishop, William Laud

who in pursuit of orthodoxy was willing to silence dissenters and to harry the most obnoxious Puritans out of the land.

When Charles decided to dismiss his unruly Parliament in 1628 and to rule without their loyal aid, some of the Puritan leaders both secular and religious decided not to wait for Laud's persecutions, but instead to take themselves to His Majesty's lands in America, there to find a home where religion could be practiced as it should and where life might be lived free from the vulgarities and corruptions of Stuart England. These men, the founders of Massachusetts Bay Colony, wished to establish an exemplary state and a perfect church which would serve eventually as a model for reform in England. But most of the Puritans stayed at home in England. There, under the pressures of civil war, dangerous times, and the rise of new militant Protestant sects, these Puritans, during the disturbances of the 1640's, turned towards republicanism and religious toleration—ideas so at odds with seventeenth century English belief that they had to be imposed on a reluctant England by the firm dictatorial hand of Oliver Cromwell. With the restoration of royal rule in 1660, Puritanism in England, while remaining a force for reform within the English church, lacked much substance as a body of organized ideas.

Meanwhile in the New World, through English indifference, royal preoccupation, and civil war, New England Puritanism had gained thirty years of splendid isolation from affairs at home. During this interim the Massachusetts Bay Puritans took steps which would turn them away from England and turn them slowly into Americans, for in America men were able to work out the social implications of Puritan theology for the first and, as it turned out, only time. When England, much to the surprise of the leaders of Massachusetts Bay, failed

during the civil wars to adopt the New England way as its own, New England Puritanism remained as a sort of cultural backwater left by English history to go its own way. From this point began the development of a unique American character and an American way of life.

## II

To TELL even briefly the story of these Puritans leads to a discussion of theology. Much of Puritanism was the common heritage of all English Protestants. But the Puritans carried some points to extremes which set them off from their fellow Englishmen and the new world allowed them to try out their ideas in unique ways, or to justify common practices from different perspectives.

For an understanding of the Puritan theology one must turn to that thorniest of all problems of the Christian faith, original sin. All Christians believed in original sin. God had intended for man to live a godly life and God had implanted in Adam a knowledge of the law which had made it possible for man to obey Him. But because of his sin Adam had been cast out of the Garden of Eden, and Adam's heirs and successors carried the burden of his sin down through history. The chief duty of sinful man was to regain the godly state that Adam had lost, but because of man's corrupted nature he was unable to do so. Eventually, God, out of love for his people, promised that Christ would take on the burden of sin, if men in return would have faith in Him. Since God was omnipotent and omniscient, He knew as He made this promise which of His children would accept this offer of aid, which would reject it. Did this not mean that it was foreordained before time began who was to be a sinner, who a saint? Was not free will only a comfortable figment of the sinful imagina-

tion of sinful man? In the seventeenth century the Roman Catholic answer, and increasingly the answer of the established English church was, no. God did have foreknowledge, but as men did not know what God's knowledge in individual cases was, man still had the freedom to choose salvation or reject it. Furthermore it was within a man's capacity to organize his life and to conduct his affairs so that he could come to know God through his own ability and the action of his own will. More frankly perhaps the pure Calvinist Protestant answered the problem of original sin differently. Since because of sin lowly man could not really choose Christ without God's help and since God knew in advance who he would help, the fate of each individual was a predestined event. The Puritans, however, tried to find a middle way between these two positions which would leave a place for reason, free will, and ability in the life of man without detracting from the omnipotent sovereignty of God. They devised a solution to this dilemma in the theology of the Covenant of Grace.

The idea of covenant or contract was deeply rooted in the medieval consciousness of Christian Europe. The Covenant of Grace was not unknown to other Christians. But because the Puritans felt apart from their Anglican brothers, a chosen people covenanted together in congregations to worship God and to work to purify the English church from corruption, covenant thinking fitted particularly nicely into the Puritan world-view. American Puritans would stretch the possibilities of the covenant to new limits.<sup>3</sup>

According to the covenant theology God had caused the world to work according to certain laws—the laws of nature they might be called—at least partially comprehensible (because of a gift of God) by human reason. Although He need not have done so, God promised that these laws were fixed

and dependable and even He would not choose to violate them. One of these laws was that God normally chose to save those from hell who used their God-given will to obtain an intellectual perception of the truth of God's word and to prepare themselves for the infusion of God's saving grace.

In other words, man worked to acquire historical faith, God then followed with saving faith—not because of any merit in the man (historical faith was in no sense a cause of salvation), but because He promised he would act that way. God established this particular law of nature in an historical agreement with Abraham as recounted in Genesis: 17. This agreement was itself the Covenant of Grace. Under this arrangement the Puritans understood preparation for salvation (the obtaining of historical faith) as an elaborate process of study, attending the word of God, soul-searching, doubts, hopes, and fears—all progressing in an orderly, observable manner according to known rules of procedure.<sup>4</sup> God still did the saving; His omnipotence was thus preserved. But man could be active in preparing for this glorious event.

This doctrine of the Covenant of Grace was a hopeful one; “a comfortable thing when rightly considered,” said one Puritan divine. God was bound by his own agreement to help those who helped themselves. Such a God might still be awesome and terrible, but he was also less mysterious to man than the God of an earlier era.

As the Puritans in New England went about building a new society they argued that certain conditions were necessary to carry out efficiently their task of obtaining historical faith. The first requirement for efficient preparation was education.<sup>5</sup> Education honed one's reason and put it more in harmony with the rational order of the universe. Then through the study of the Bible men could obtain the information about sal-

vation and preparation which was necessary for the completion of God's plan. The searching Christian would then be able to better understand the explication of the Bible by an educated ministry who were professionally concerned with the individual's salvation.

Second, because attending a church under the guidance of an educated minister was one of the steps of preparation, society needed a church in which the minister could work and in which the faithful could be gathered for mutual aid and comfort. This church had to be a particular sort of church—a pure, true, and uncorrupted church, for a church organized according to the wrong rules would lead men to the devil, not to God. According to the leaders of Massachusetts Bay, this church could be only a church of the pure in heart, the already saved. Only the saved could be trusted to fully participate in the church sacraments and the governance of the church, for only the saved would know how to conduct themselves according to God's laws. Since according to the Covenant of Grace the process of preparation and subsequent salvation proceeded according to observable laws, men could detect with a fair degree of accuracy who the pure in heart (the visible saints they called them) actually were. The Puritans thought that by using such a technique a pure church could actually be gathered in the new world. A group of neighbors who knew each other well enough to detect probable salvation where it existed within the group could form a church, elect a minister, decide on church policy and doctrines, participate in the sacrament of communion, and admit new members who could demonstrate the probability of their own salvation. A congregational church which was the true biblical church of Christ and the apostles was then also the only possible church of visible saints. Because each mem-

ber of a New England congregation was himself saved, he participated in church governance. Because constant care and attention on the part of the saints was necessary to keep the church pure, the Puritans limited the size of the church to a group which could conveniently meet together weekly in one room.

The third requirement of preparation was self-examination and self-discipline. Each individual seeking to be a good Christian needed to study his own life and habits, his strengths and weaknesses, his desires and temptations, in order to better be able to go about his own affairs in a godly way. Then he would be a credit, not a burden, to society and a contributor to the well-being of those around him. God made self-examination the duty of all men. Proper education and attendance at a good church would help a man in this task. But a truly righted life, while in and of itself not meritorious, probably belonged only to those who had assurance of salvation. A good Christian life was then both a result and a condition of preparation.

A fourth need was the fulfilling of one's calling. By working to glorify God and to care for His earth, men contributed to the unfolding of God's plans. Also a prosperous, settled, orderly society freed man from the harsh realities of mere physical existence and provided man with a better opportunity to come to know God. Better schools, sounder churches, and happier families were themselves signs of successful self-discipline. A well-filled calling provided further evidence of the presence of historical faith. A man had many callings which served to define his role in society. As a farmer he worked hard at tilling the soil. As a parent he tried to provide for his own family. As a neighbor he lent aid and comfort to the extent his means permitted. As a citizen he tried to be virtuous. As a ruler he tried to be fair and just with the people.

In each of these tasks he strove to please God and not himself.

In the free soil of America many a Puritan by working hard at his calling did well indeed. But he did not squander his hard-earned riches, for he knew that,

A man was but the steward of the possessions he accumulated. If he indulged himself in luxurious living, he would have that much less with which to support church and society. If he needlessly consumed his substance, either from carelessness or from sensuality, he failed to honor the God who furnished him with it.<sup>6</sup>

As the Puritan grew more prosperous he grew more worried, for though prosperity was good it was also to be feared, for it led to temptation and vice. So the Puritan worked harder to convince himself that he was not a hypocrite, deceiving himself about his righteousness. But the harder he worked, the richer and, therefore, the more worried he grew so he worked harder and prayed that wonderfully enigmatic of Puritan prayers:

Therefore you have need pray for the repentance of your repentance; and to beg the pardon of all your prayers.

Eventually the Puritans developed an entire preaching style to deal with this distressing situation that the harder they worked the worse off they became. These sermons, labelled Jeremiads by Perry Miller, called attention to prevalent sins, spoke of past glories, and urged men on to further self-improvement. But as Miller remarks:

The sins paraded in the sermons were not so much of the notoriously scandalous but such as were bound to increase among good men. They thus had to be all the more vigorously condemned because they were incurable. . . .<sup>7</sup>

Puritan thinking on sovereignty developed from implications of these third and fourth points. Drawing on medieval thinking on the contractual nature of government as well as on their theology, the Puritans came to realize that no king, magistrate, or even popular assembly should exercise sovereign secular power. Government, they thought, needed to be confined to the proper calling of the magistrate if that freedom which was necessary for the individual to pursue his own calling and obtain historical faith was to be pursued. Sovereignty belonged only to God. The temporal power of one man over another was to be strictly kept within bounds.

The Puritans reached this conclusion from another perspective too: the sinful, limited nature of man made men incapable of knowing the intimate needs of others well enough to rule over them. Man's defective nature made trusting men with too much power a dangerous practice as well, for he was bound to abuse the trust. This did not mean that Massachusetts was a democratic society—though the colony had a wider franchise than the England of that day—nor did it mean that the Massachusetts Puritans ran a *laissez-faire*, libertarian government. Indeed, the Massachusetts government was obtrusive, busy, and ever present—but it was a popular government, close to the people, which reflected very closely (in the early years at least) the near unanimous sentiments of a homogenous covenanted people. In later years as the colony developed a more diverse outlook, the Puritans reduced the role of the central government in the lives of the people.<sup>8</sup>

A fifth condition for preparation was good government. Since men, even saved men, were sinners as well as saints, men needed government to protect the church from its enemies; to punish evil-doers; to discipline moral transgressors who upset

that civil peace normally necessary to free man to pursue his calling and his God; and to encourage the practice of religion.<sup>9</sup> In Massachusetts after 1631 all male church members were eligible to vote in the annual elections for the governor and the general court (or assembly) of the colony. Before the century was out men with a 40 shilling freehold also were potential voters in the elections for the civil magistrates who were so important for the preservation and progress of religion. In order to encourage a true sense of community Massachusetts permitted settlements only by organized towns.<sup>10</sup> In these towns, paralleling the local nature of the church, developed the most important body of government in colonial New England, the town meeting. Though historians are still arguing the extent of the town franchise,<sup>11</sup> it is clear that after 1647 all adult male inhabitants of the town could attend and participate in town meeting debates and many of those still unable to vote for the deputies to the general court could, nevertheless, vote in town elections. Despite the close relation of church and state, the popularly based Massachusetts government was not a theocracy. The civil authority reinforced the authority of the church; the church supported the right of the magistrate to rule. But church and state remained separate powers. Clergy did not hold civil office and often did not even vote. For it to have been otherwise would have been to violate the lines of calling and to put the temptation of excessive power at the hands of sinful man.

### III

THIS OUTLINE of Puritan theology and the social polity derived from that theology suggests how the Puritans in quest of their faith worked out the familiar New England pattern of church, schools, town meeting, and family—of self-reliance, industrious-

ness, and virtuous living. One must not claim too much for New England Puritanism. Much the Puritans brought with them to America was common to medieval, peasant, Christian Europe. But the extent of Puritan development of the covenant theology; their strong feeling that time was running out if God's way was ever to be established on earth; their extreme dedication to the old, virtuous English ways that seemed to be under attack in Stuart England; their self-conscious separation from corruption; and their isolation from the mainstream of English life after the outbreak of Civil War in England in 1641 made New England Puritanism a development *sui generis*.<sup>12</sup>

Because of their religious enthusiasm and their opposition to what they conceived to be Stuart innovations, the Puritans often seem radical to the modern mind. But they were truly conservative; "Children of Tradition" as Darrett Rutman calls them.<sup>13</sup> They were conservative because they were believers in the social unity and harmony of the medieval closed-corporate peasant community.<sup>14</sup> They were conservative because they were believers in a hierarchical ordering of church and state, based to be sure, on voluntary contractual arrangements. Hierarchy and social distinctions testified to the greater glory of God, taught men to love one another through an appreciation of their differences and thus their individual uniqueness, aided society in the proper fulfilling of the many callings God demanded of men, and established the criteria which men should respect in choosing their temporal rulers.<sup>15</sup> They were conservative because they were defenders of England's traditional theology and traditional way of life. They were conservative in their defense of the private ownership of property. The stewardship associated with private property contributed the necessary economic framework for personal in-

dependence and became a sign of salvation itself. They were conservative because they were skeptical, though not despairing of the abilities of man. They were conservative because this skepticism led them to be mistrustful of the acquisition of too much temporal power over others.<sup>16</sup>

But these men were conservatives with a difference. Their theory of communal organization and social good was based on one of the most highly individualistic theologies then known to man. Their churches and governments were organized as tiny, semi-independent units. The social harmony they prized was to be built on a myriad of individual and small group choices, individual choices which, since grounded in true faith, should reach similar conclusions about the conduct of life and faith and the organization of society.<sup>17</sup> In America the opposing, though not contradictory values of consolidation and separation, of community good and individual rights, would exist in a restless, tenuous balance over the centuries as the Puritan influence spread across the land.<sup>18</sup> Because this balance would so exist, ordered liberty would remain possible in America.

These Puritans were also conservatives who could be optimistic about their future and, in a sense, progressive as well. The Puritans came to America with a mission to fulfill: to establish themselves as a City Upon a Hill set before the eyes of God and of the world. As a people, collectively, they had covenanted with God to follow His way. The individual reached heaven or hell on his own; a covenanted community received its rewards and punishments immediately and in this world. As long as the Puritans fulfilled their part of the agreement God would stand by their side. Should they stray from their promised path, His wrath was sure to fall upon them. A hard-working, industrious population, good government, a peaceful society, material

prosperity—in the free air of America these were possible conditions and the presence of these conditions were the signs that God smiled on His people. The way to fulfill this national covenant was through a rigorous adherence to values handed down from the past. The American, Puritan conservative strode with confidence into the future with a more than casual glance at what went before. He was a venturesome conservative who was willing to take reasonable risks to preserve what was good and right and useful and commanded by God.

For good and for ill much that is familiar in the American character can be explained, at least in part, by our Puritan heritage. Since this heritage was a conservative one, we have been a conservative people. A description of this character would surely include the following points:<sup>19</sup>

1. Our emphasis on individualism and personal independence—with the tendency to slip into “the public be damned” individualism of the right or the moral anarchistic individualism of the “higher law” left.

2. A dedication to one’s calling, with the associated ideas of industry and frugality, and the close identification of materialistic and idealistic goals, for Americans, more than any other people, have seen that it is through hard work that one gains the resources necessary to put into practice one’s ideals—sometimes, however, this attitude encourages us to tolerate the arrogance of the robber baron or the Porsche populist both of who claim special privilege and special worth just because they are rich.

3. A highly cultivated sense of the need for personal integrity, virtue, and morality—which sometimes contains the danger of uncharitable moralizing and of forcing one’s values on others.

4. A prime interest as a religious duty in the care of one’s family and neighbors,

for they are the ones whose lives are most intimately connected with one's own, whose needs one can best know, and who one can most effectively help; a pride in the local setting and a national patriotism built on local loyalties not on a devotion to some master plan or master race—yet such local pride can become mere parochialism or, worse, the meddlesome snooping of the small town.

5. A belief in real, practical political and civil liberties—with two attendant dangers, tyranny of the majority suppressing significant divergence from the national norm and civil libertarian absolutism sacrificing all liberty in a rarefied devotion to one particular civil right.

6. The importance of law and order in the interest of civil harmony—forgetting, sometimes, that on one hand, a measure of disorder and diversity is necessary for freedom to exist and that on the other, unrestrained liberty of action destroys that tolerance which makes community possible.

7. A democratic church governance which brought congregational diversity and ultimately, unintentionally, religious tolerance—which in the twentieth century has often come to be that religious indifference which weakens the moral foundations of society.

8. Knowing that God is close at hand, the healthy self-confidence necessary to get about the business at hand—yielding to a prideful arrogance and a sense of manifest destiny based on the belief that since God has favored us we have a right to insist that other nations should submit to our will.

9. A wish to live a life of example for all mankind and to share our blessings with others—sometimes slipping into an inflated self-importance or a self-congratulatory complacency.

10. A healthy willingness to examine critically one's self and the country's institutions, the secular counterpart of Puri-

tan self-examination—often found in the reformer, who forgets that sin can only be checked and not eliminated, as a morbid, paralyzing, self-criticism and perfectionism.

11. A belief in the efficacy of education—sometimes viewing public education as a catch-all, cure-all for society's ills.

12. All of the above points based on a reasonable view of the universe where man's reason and God's design go hand-in-hand.

Americans have done a fair-to-middling job of building a good society on the foundations the Puritans left for us—of keeping ourselves in balance between the extremes, of keeping the eccentric tendencies under control. We have tried hard to preserve individual liberty and a free economic order in combination with a set of traditional social values. We have tried to preserve the sense of community through the internalized conscience of each individual. We have tried to be hopeful for the future without forgetting that in this world there are limits on how much improvement is possible. One thing is certain. Our Puritan forefathers if they would not always have been pleased with our accomplishments, would not have been surprised by our failures, as they were not surprised by their own.

#### IV

HISTORIANS in search of a viable American conservative tradition have often had difficulty finding one because of a superficial confusion of images. They have observed Americans speak of liberal ideals (in the nineteenth century meaning of that term) and practice conservative values. They have watched us build a new world while talking nostalgically of the old. They have perceived what they take to be changes in the nature of American conservatism itself from an eighteenth century advocacy of rule by a social aristocracy

through traditional forms of community and a strong, vigorous government, to a nineteenth century conservatism supporting rule by an aristocracy of wealth and a *laissez-faire* government, to finally in the twentieth century an often narrow carping conservatism at odds with progress itself.<sup>20</sup> This article suggests, however, that the American conservative tradition from an early age has actually united the strains of liberal individualism and social hierarchical conservatism in a belief in governmental restraint and individual social responsibility. This union of sometimes conflicting outlooks stemmed directly from the seventeenth century Puritan world-view and was transmitted to the country at large through the Protestant churches, the small towns, and public education.

The moralistic lectures of church, family,

and school taught a man to go out and remake the earth, yet, reprimanding him for living a sinful life, they suggested that whatever he accomplished would be less than what God demanded. But the more efficacious the Jeremiad the more those who took the Jeremiad seriously brought, through their diligence, unsettling changes to the country. And the less the new society resembled the old, the more the Jeremiad was needed to stimulate even further reform. But America has never forgotten the old Puritan lessons. It has never lost its faith that the Jeremiad would bring a brighter day. It has faced the future with a degree of confidence because it was convinced that there was a virtuous past that could be regained. The American has usually been a backward looking progressive and a forward looking conservative.

<sup>20</sup>Since the writings of Perry Miller in the 1930's such as *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts*, Cambridge, Mass., 1933; *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge, 1939; and *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*, Cambridge, 1953, one of the most fruitful fields of historical inquiry has been the study of Puritanism and its effects on colonial New England. This article is frankly derivative, based on extensive reading in this scholarly literature as well as a measure of work with Puritan sources, both the writings of the seventeenth century New England fathers and their latter day heirs and successors. But this article departs from this literature by suggesting that in seventeenth century Puritanism can be found the roots of a uniquely American social philosophy that was genuinely conservative.

<sup>21</sup>Wallace Notestein, *The English People on the Eve of Colonization*, New York, 1954, Carl Bridenbaugh, *Vexed and Troubled Englishmen, 1590-1642*, New York, 1968, and the opening chapter of Timothy H. Breen, *The Character of the Good Ruler, A Study of Puritan Political Ideas in New England, 1630-1730*, New Haven, 1970, deal with the general unrest in late Tudor-early Stuart England. Good introductions to the history of the gatherings of Puritan fellowships can be found in Darrett Rutman, *American Puritanism: Faith and Practice*, Philadelphia, 1970, and Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea*, Ithaca, New York, 1965.

<sup>22</sup>The best introduction to the covenant theology is "The Marrow of Puritan Divinity," in Perry Miller's *Errand Into the Wilderness*, Cambridge, Mass., 1956.

<sup>23</sup>Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 42-45, 67-71, discusses saving faith, historical faith, and preparation.

<sup>24</sup>Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion & Domestic Life in Seventeenth Century New England*, 87-108, rev. ed., New York, 1966.

<sup>25</sup>Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, January, 1967, 4-5.

<sup>26</sup>Miller, *Colony to Province*, 52.

<sup>27</sup>This last point, really the subject for another article, needs further clarification. I think that as America developed a more economically complex, socially heterogeneous society, the state, which in early colonial America was not too different from an extended family, became increasingly less important in the lives of the people and the unit of society involved in the intimate regulation of daily life became increasingly smaller. To oversimplify, this is to say that the Massachusetts Bay government was the prime governmental body in 1650, but it was the town that fulfilled this role in 1750, and the family in 1850. By the middle of the nineteenth century government had been reduced to little more than the umpire and rule-maker so admired by devotees of *laissez-faire*. But this development transpired not because of economic theory but because Puritan Americans saw that in order to keep the govern-

ment legitimate and to maintain social harmony centralized administration had to be abandoned to protect the right of individualistic, disagreeing, contentious men to pursue their separate paths toward righteousness. Some sources suggestive on this point are Tocqueville's discussion of centralized government, decentralized administration, and voluntary associations in *Democracy in America*; Page Smith, *As A City Upon a Hill: The Town in American History*, New York, 1966; Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief*, Stanford, California, 1957, especially Chapter 9 on William Leggett; and in particular, Michael Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms: The New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century*, New York, 1970. I argue this point from a different perspective in my *A Federalist Persuasion: The American Ideal of the Connecticut Federalists*, unpub. Ph.D. dissertation Yale, 1971, 290-297.

<sup>9</sup>In turn, a godly church people made the job of the civil magistrates easier. Since all society benefitted in this manner by a healthy established church, Massachusetts believed all persons should contribute support to the church—an argument based at least in part on pure “neighborhood effect” grounds.

<sup>10</sup>Kenneth A. Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years*, New York, 1970, has a nice description of the founding of one such town.

<sup>11</sup>A good description of this problem, which argues that the town franchise was narrow rather than broad is Timothy H. Breen. “Who Governs: The Town Franchise in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts,” *William & Mary Quarterly*, July 1970, 460-474.

<sup>12</sup>See Rutman, *American Puritanism*, 4-10, 34-47, for a discussion of the tendency of American historians to isolate the Puritans from the traditions of Western Europe.

<sup>13</sup>Rutman, *American Puritanism*.

<sup>14</sup>Lockridge, *New England Town*, 18. Lock-

ridge would add “Utopian” to this description as well.

<sup>15</sup>See John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity,” in *Puritan Political Ideas*, ed. Edmund S. Morgan, Indianapolis, 1965, 75-93.

<sup>16</sup>See, for example, John Cotton, in Morgan ed., *Puritan Political Ideas*, 175: “There is a straine in a mans heart that will sometime or other runne out to excesse, unless the Lord restraine it. . . . It is necessary therefore, that all power that is on earth be limited . . .”

Historians of American conservatism have often failed to grasp the rich, organic, homegrown nature of their subject and have insisted that our conservatism conform to some abstract standard. Nevertheless, this Puritan pattern of conservatism does follow closely the set of conservative principles formulated by Russell Kirk in *The Conservative Mind, From Burke to Santayana*, Chicago, 1953.

<sup>17</sup>The actual working society of the Puritans was supposed to demonstrate a theory of collective good not at all dissimilar to Adam Smith's description of the invisible hand at work in the market place or the idea of the commonwealth as developed by the English Whig opposition “country” party as described by Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*, Chapel Hill, N.C., 1969, 53-65.

<sup>18</sup>On the spread of Puritan influence see Page Smith, *City on a Hill*; Stephen H. Holbrook, *Yankee Exodus*, New York, 1950; Lois Kimball Mathews, *The Expansion of New England*, Boston, 1909; and Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans, The National Experience*, New York, 1965, especially Part One and Part Two.

<sup>19</sup>My argument here is that even many of the qualities we do not like in Americans can be explained as deviations, left and right, or perversions and exaggerations of our basic conservative character.

<sup>20</sup>This confusion is best seen in Clinton Rossiter, *Conservatism in America: The Thankless Persuasion*, 2nd ed., New York, 1962.