A Puritan in the Rising Age of Evangelicals: Theological and Psychological Continuity in the Journal of Israel Loring

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A veritable "dark age" in New England studies, the years between the Salem witchcraft trials and the Great Awakening remain a fecund source for novel interpretation and new understandings. As such, this study is situated within the current historiographical debate over the era, especially as it relates to Thomas Kidd's conception of "the protestant interest" and Mark Peterson's notion of "spiritual economy." Bearing these and other recent theories in mind, this project contributes a different style of small-scale investigation that asks what, if any, transformation occurred in the daily religious practice, intellectual life, and everyday thinking of a forgotten cleric and his parish. An intellectual microhistory focusing on the Rev. Israel Loring of Sudbury, Massachusetts (1682–1772), it considers historians' claims regarding a socio-religious transition from Puritan piety to evangelical revivalism. Accordingly, it seeks to contest long-standing assumptions about historical constructs, complicating general narratives concerning early eighteenth-century colonial New England.

The central questions arising from this approach to considering Loring and his era remain definitional and categorical. They focus on the psychological, relational, and ministerial concerns that followed Loring throughout his ninety-year lifetime and seventy-year vocation in Sudbury. Evaluating these localized aspects of his existence in the larger context of colonial civilization, the work aims to understand a leader who was at once thoroughly puritanical, but also avowedly evangelical in his outlook. In balancing these two impulses endemic to eighteenth-century New England, Loring appears as a figure of moderate temperament whose beliefs and value system depended simultaneously on cultural adaptation to changing circumstances, as well as conservation of enduring traditions.[1]

1. Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America* (New York: Meridian, 1977).

However, classifying Loring as a modest clergyman in an apparent age of upheaval fails to fit him adequately into a narrative structure suitable for proper scholarly engagement. For historians of early Colonial British North America and New England studies, labeling religious individuals and groups poses a significant, intractable problem. Terminological ambiguity over the precise meaning of words and definitions becomes muddled in regards to the heady era between 1690 and 1740. As a discipline, history traces change over time, but imposing categories on peoples and events in rapid flux is a tiresome, difficult process.[2] The "middle period" of colonial North America is no different, particularly as it relates to the nebulous historical constructs of "Puritanism" and "Evangelicalism."

Religious historians have long disputed the limitations and applicability of these terms to various contexts.[3] But, in the case of Loring an appreciation for both is necessary in order to formulate coherent thoughts

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2. For excellent studies in the philosophy of history and historiographical works which elaborate on this point of history as the study of "change over time" see, Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001); John Fea, *Why Study History: Reflecting on the Importance of the Past* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 1–22. This study is deeply inspired by and faithfully adheres to a theoretical framework based on the philosopher of history R. G. Collingwood's "three propositions of the field." These are that: "All history is the history of thought"; "historical knowledge is the re-enactment in the historian's mind of the thought whose history he is studying;" and "historical knowledge is the re-enactment of a past thought incapsulated in a context of present thoughts which, by contradicting it, confine it to a plane different from theirs." See, R. G. Collingwood, *My Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), 111–15.

3. On "Puritanism" see for example, Peter Lewis, *The Genius of Puritanism* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1996), 11; Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales, eds., "Introduction: The Puritan Ethos, 1650–1700," in *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700* (N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 1; Glenn Miller, "Puritanism: A Survey," in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 27 (Spring, 1972), 169–75; Kelly M. Kapic and Randall C. Gleason, eds., *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Purtian Classics* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004); D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987), 239–40. On "Evangelicalism" see, George Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1970); D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 43–45; Mark A. Noll, D. W. Bebbington, and George Rawlyk, eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700–1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2003); Douglas A. Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); Darren Dochuk, Thomas S. Kidd, and Kurt W. Peterson, eds., *American*

on him, as well as on his social setting. The early 1700s mark a time of religious transition in the American Colonies, yet the nature of this shift is indistinct, subtle, and, in certain cases, imperceptible. Virtually no scholar argues that by the 1750s Puritanism, by any useful meaning of the word, persisted as a viable intellectual or social movement.[4] However, when and in what manner it declined continues to be sharply contested. Accordingly, an overarching theme of this project is to provide insight into when and why Puritanism faded and the means by which Evangelicalism came to supplant it. To achieve this, one must first flesh out what these terms signify within a given framework.

Antecedents and Formulations

Throughout the seventeenth century, New England ministers, laboring in a vocation predicated on the conversion of the unregenerate and the edification of saints, confronted the existential crises inherent in a society dedicated to Calvinistic cosmology.[5] Their congregants longed to experience the "New Birth": a liberating transformation produced through divine grace that freed them from the shackles of spiritual worthlessness. Yet questions regarding how one could be assured that such grace truly infused their soul remained a rankling problem. In response to these apprehensions, some Puritan ministers and theologians established a complex formula comprised of stages of "preparation" on the road to genuine conversion. Employing this rather nebulous explanation as a type of moral calculus, they claimed that certain "doings" offered a glimpse into the process of regeneration and afforded the opportunity for a soul's opening up to God's spiritual refinement.

Evangelicalism: George Marsden and the State of American Religious History (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 2014).

4. One notable exception to this trend is George McKenna, who claims that a strain of American Puritanism persisted well into the twentieth-century. Despite the intriguing nature of this argument, it tends to rely on far too loose a definition of "Puritan," vitiating the overarching assertions and subverting the general thesis. McKenna's analysis begins to collapse by the mid-nineteenth century, when his comparisons between early New England settlers and Romantic intellectuals becomes overreaching and facile. While vestiges of Puritan theology and ideology undoubtedly remained present in some vein of American life into this and subsequent eras, it is fatuous to equate residual effects with intellectual continuity. See, *The Puritan Origins of American Patriotism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007).

5. Robert Middlekauff, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596–1728* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999), 231–32.

Articulating this point in the early 1640s, "the Father of Connecticut," Thomas Hooker (1586–1647), usefully described the various phases of salvation by drawing a distinction between what he termed "legal" and "evangelical" preparation.[6] The former of these constructs imported "not so much any gracious habit or spiritual quality which is put into the soul, as a principle by which it is enabled to act that which concerns its everlasting welfare."[7] It denoted and established a right method of conduct, which formed the foundation of a social morality that when violated might elicit the compunction of any right-minded, ethical person. Legal restraints, at least in a spiritual context, were a "plashing of the soul not a total cutting off the soul from sin, which makes corruption couch more close, but will never kill it, nor is appointed by God for this end."[8] In contrast, evangelical preparation was derived from something far more spiritually substantial, "to fit the soul fully for faith…implanting by faith into Christ." Operating outside the sphere of human influence, evangelical preparation resembled legal preparation in its inchoate stages. But, as it developed, sinners gained greater spiritual sentience. What began as a powerful sense of contrition over deviation from codified moral conduct grew into profound aversion, as the Holy Spirit progressed from merely acting upon one's soul to joining in union with it. Predetermined by God's grace, this marriage of the Spirit with the soul was contingent on divine imputation. Only God maintained power, authority, and knowledge over one's salvation.

While not all Puritan leaders stood in complete agreement on every aspect of Hooker's explanation for these distinctions, most espoused the same general tenets.[9] At root, these precepts stretched back further than Hooker. As early as 1606, William Perkins appears wedded to an understanding of grace barely distinguishable from later thinkers, claiming: "God gives man the outward meanes of saluation, specially the Ministerie of the

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6. Thomas Hooker, *The Application of Redemption* (London, 1656), Book III, 152. The exact date of the *Application* is uncertain, though most sources cite its original composition to have been sometime between 1639 and 1641. For example see Alan Heimert and Andrew Delbanco, eds., *The Puritans in America: A Narrative Anthology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985).

7. Ibid., 151.

8. Ibid., 152.

9. One of the best sources for an overview of these theological differences and disputes remains Edward S. Morgan's, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1965). For more recent commentaries on these arguments see Baird Tipson's, *Hartford Puritanism: Thomas Hooker, Samuel Stone, and Their Terrifying God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

word: and with it, he sends some outward or inward crosse, to breake and sub due the stubbornnesse of our nature, that it may be made plyable to the will of God.... This done, God brings the minde of man to a consideration of the Law."[10] Thus, for him, regeneration begins with a movement of gratuitous grace from God toward an absolutely depraved man, subduing his stubborn, inherently sinful nature and revealing his dissolution and wretchedness. In this phase of transformation, the sinner gains a righteous fear of God, becomes pliable to His will, and repents. Though Perkins sedulously crafted these features of initial grace, eschewing any whiff of "meritorious action" or proto-Arminianism, his framework tacks closely to that of contemporaneous thinkers, such as François Turrettini's conceptions of *institutio*, *destitutio*, and *restitutio*. And, in the same form, Turrettini followed even earlier paradigms of Reformed distinctions in Christian anthropology and provided grounds for further development of preparation theology in the 1640s and 1650s.[11]

All those who promulgated the doctrine of preparation emphasized the necessity of seeking salvation, despite their equal conviction that no individual possessed the faculties to save oneself. God's grace demanded human exertions, but human efforts in no way guaranteed salvation.[12] In the seventeenth century Puritan mind, to exercise the art of living out one's faith began with the humility of accepting that the inner man's motivations reflected in the outer man's behavior. At its core, colonial New England theology relied on praxis. As the historian T. H. Breen rightly noted, for the Puritans "theory seemed to joggle along behind practice."[13] Their ideas concerning preparation encapsulated this sentiment and turned some of them inward toward excessive introspection.

Yet this belief in preparation, self-examination, and conversion extends far in both historical directions, and a shared terminology among trans-Atlantic Puritans from roughly the mid 16th through the mid 18th centuries often obscures significant religious and social developments. While most

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10. William Perkins, *The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience*, Book I, Chapter V, pp. 50–51.

11. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. J. T. Dennison and trans. G. M. Giger, vol. 3 (Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian Reformed, 1992), VIII. qu.1.

12. For a fairly thorough, if theologically tendentious, overview see, Martyn McGeown, "The Notion of Preparatory Grace in the Puritans," *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* 41 (Fall, 2007).

13. T. H. Breen, *The Character of a Good Ruler: Puritan Political Ideas in New England 1630–1730* (N. Y.: W. W. Norton and Company, 1970), xvii.

Puritan and Reformed leaders in the early modern period found the lineaments of Hooker's or Perkins's theology on the subject agreeable, the specifics mattered and, when left unchecked, expansions or mischaracterizations led to dangerous heterodoxy or outright heresy.

An Analysis of Crisis and Conflict

In the history of New England Puritanism the "Free Grace" or "Antinomian" controversy serves as the paradigmatic example of such heretical trespasses. Typically conceived in the minds of most historians as revolving around a thorny, convoluted theological dispute with political and gendered underpinnings, scholars tend to center on three key figures: Henry Vane, John Wheelwright, and Anne Hutchinson. Yet though such an analysis is warranted it frequently devolves into ahistorical travesty, missing the larger religious and cultural context within which the controversy transpired. The roots of Hutchinson's, Wheelwright's, and Vane's educated viewpoints stretch back to England, where much earlier, if less noticeable, disputes over the issues of preparation, grace, and freedom rankled elite Puritan clergy.[14]

In some ways, concerns over potential heterodoxy were present within the Puritan mind from the start. William Perkins's fears in 1580 that early Anglican luminaries preached about assurance and salvation in a manner which left "weak" Christians susceptible to heretical ideas share a genetic relationship with subsequent anxiety over antinomian partialities among the faithful some fifty years later.[15]

A tension between some assurance of salvation and constant introspective preparation and examination exerted itself among the faithful throughout social strata and across the Atlantic. By the time of Hutchinson, Wheelwright, and Vane, "free grace" as an alternative to rigidity, scrupulosity, and spiritual decorum echoed long-held and sonorous complaints within Puritan culture.[16] Likewise, critics of "free grace" responded with a ferocity not unknown to related incidents in England. At stake in the debate was an interpretation of life, an entire anthropological and soteriological conception of God, humanity, and law.

14. Michael P. Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 52–53.

15. Ibid., 14–15.

16. Thomas Dwight Bozeman, The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638 (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 185.

Free grace advocates initially struck a chord with Puritan ministerial elites by reconfiguring a central plank of covenantal theology and Calvinist predestination. Most 17th century preachers, theologians, and well-educated laity espoused a dual covenant view of salvation history. Upon this view, God made two covenants of salvation, one of works and one of grace, the first impossible and the second inscrutable. God decreed the covenant of works, according to traditional Reformed ideas at the time, after His declaring the damnation of reprobates. Under such a system God's justice required perfect adherence and obedience to the law, an impossible task in a postlapsarian world. Conversely, God offered a covenant of grace predicated on salvation through faith, though only God imbued those predetermined for righteousness with said faith.[17]

Discontentment with the mechanics and ordering of this view congealed in early New England theology with the work of John Cotton. In an attempt to emphasize reprobates' quasi-volitional role in their deeds, he reorganized the decrees, averring that God's imperatives surrounding a covenant of works preceded any assignation of reprobates. In this fashion, he attempted to reassert the primacy of Calvinism, while also navigating the treacherous waters of potential Arminianism. Although understandably useful in repelling outright Arminianism (or, worse, a Catholic understanding of predestination), Cotton's view failed to garner full acceptance. Rather, his perspective gained only a begrudging appreciation as merely straddling the borders of orthodoxy among many of his clerical contemporaries.[18]

But the attractiveness of Cotton's theologizing to those who already found the punctilious nature of precisionist preparationism daunting, opened the door to a kind of heresy redolent of older trespasses. In the hands of figures like Hutchinson and Wheelwright, Cotton's ideas weren't contained to soteriology. Rather quickly, questions revolving around the nature and forms of revelation itself arose.[19] To confront these challenges to New England orthodoxy the language reached for by ministers like John Winthrop (or even Cotton in distinguishing his view from the unorthodox) borrowed from older controversies. Linguistic atavisms, including "familists" and "antinomian," quickly regained currency against ostensible heretics. Thus, while incontrovertibly new and different, enough similarities existed between 16th century English heterodoxy and 17th century

17. Winship, *Making Heretics,* 31.

18. *Ibid.,* 31–35.

19. Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain,* 6–7.

New England heresy to warrant a sense of communal continuity. Together these forces helped shape a continuing sense of self from the first generation Massachusetts Bay Puritans to their English forebears.[20] Within such a traditionalist milieu, recognizing the present in light of the past holds as normative. To understand a current crisis, then, leaders in the 1630s drew from the 1540s and, as Loring's work partially conveys, to understand the 1740s, ministers drew from earlier generations' conflicts as well.[21]

Language, Transitions, and Dispositions

Still, traditionalism rarely equates with stagnation, except in minds prone to vicious mischaracterization. As such, Puritan New England's continuity and familiarity with its past generations does not imply sterility or inertia. Intellectual and spiritual fecundity during the period from 1700 to 1740 conveys larger, if subtler, cultural changes permeating various segments of society. The conflicts and turmoil roiling this period seems far less "antinomian" than contemporaries lamented. They require an understanding of analogical thinking, contrasting the similarities which highlight real continuity with equal recognition of genuine dissimilitude. Undoubtedly, concerns during the 1740s over "New Lights" (a term borrowed from the Free Grace Controversy) bears some semblance to the core issues over "legalism" and "antinomianism" that embroiled the 1630s, as leaders such as Charles Chauncey realized. But greater differences make univocal, one-to-one comparisons jejune and shallow. Here a sense of continuity pairs reasonably with an understanding of change.[22]

Paying close attention to shifting tendencies on vocabularies, grammars, and religious tropes highlight concomitant, underlying changes in early 18th century "lived religion."[23] And though, as Loring's life indicates,

20. Winship, *Making Heretics,* 35–40. Winship offers an excellent interrogation of Cotton's theology in contradistinction to those who elaborated similar veins of thought well beyond their intended, heavily idiosyncratic purposes.

21. Jonathan Beecher Field, "The Antinomian Crisis Did Not Take Place," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 6 (Fall, 2008). Fields argues along similar lines regarding the shaping of narratives through linguistic atavisms and ideological filters. However, his claims of deliberate collusion in the 1640s and 50s between Independents and Presbyterians probably lacks the force necessary to make his overall assertion that the crisis was entirely manufactured compelling to most early Americanists.

22. Douglas L. Winarski, *Darkness Falls on the Land of Light: Experiencing Religious Awakenings in Eighteenth Century New England* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 14–15.

23. For pieces discussing these historical frameworks see Robert Orsi, "Everyday

the dominant jargon in colonial New England unabashedly remained Reformed and Calvinist, its hue continued to brighten into ever lighter shades of individualism and emotionalism in succeeding centuries. For the Puritans and their posterity, all events in this life—mundane, superlative, or eldritch—were couched in the language and metaphors of cyclical depravity, unmerited grace, and sainthood; an idiom of constant conversion or movement toward God.[24]

But the general acceptance and use of shared narrative language passed from generation to generation fails to adequately encapsulate wider conflicts. From the start, the Puritan "experiment" in Europe, and especially within the wilderness of New England, possessed various sometimes incompatible religious methods or, in more extreme cases, disparate theologies.[25] Topics of soteriology and conversion often took center stage in these disputes, in which combatants deployed similar terms to opposite effect. As a 16th century movement rooted in spiritual revival and renewal, Puritanism never shed its original skin. Instead each generation fought anew what it perceived as threats to the established understanding of grace, preparation, and salvation.[26]

Loring and the Puritan Strain

In this vein of spiritual self-analysis and idioms of preparation and conversion, Israel Loring weighed the state of his soul against the content of his character. To him, fear was the heart of love and confession the earnest measure of piety. Preoccupied with the depths of depravity and the ceaseless humiliation borne out by a conception of humanity's condition as immanently hopeless, his only escape from psychologically induced debility stemmed from God's regenerative mercy. In light of this acknowledgement, he led a life of constant self-examination, in which protracted experiences of desperation and abasement functioned as cathartic expressions of faith. Maintaining a journal detailing the tumultuous nature of these struggles,

Miracles: the study of Lived Religion" in David D. Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997); Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Kim Knibbe and Helena Kupari: "Theorizing Lived Religion" *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 35 (Issue 2, 2020), 157–76.

24. Winarski, *Darkness Falls on the Land of Light*, 13.

25. Michael P. Winship, *Making Heretics*, 12–27.

26. Hendra Thamrindinata, "Preparation for Grace in Puritanism: An Evaluation from the Perspective of Reformed Anthropology," *Diligentia* 1 (Issue 1, 2019), 59–60.

Loring wrestled with his understanding of grace and justice in a predestined world. Never fully enjoying a secure sense of certainty regarding salvation, his writings convey the thoughts and emotions of a man tortured by niggling fears of inadequate devotion.[27] Imbued with an elegiac rhetoric of societal declension and marked by an urge for self-deprecation, Loring's texts reveal deep-seated anxieties rooted in potent convictions of personal iniquity. This impulse for near performative admission of sin in private writings appears to gesture toward a puritanical outlook of predestination and preparationist theology.

But, unlike Hooker, his predecessors, or his immediate descendants, Loring did not reach a state of intellectual maturation in the sixteenth or seventeenth century. Born in 1682 at Hull, Massachusetts and graduating from Harvard in 1701, he belonged to the third generation of New England ministry.[28] He earned a Master of Arts degree in 1704, spending the succeeding two years tutoring at the college and preaching to various churches across the colony, particularly at Barnstable and Hull. Accepting a call to the parish of Sudbury, Massachusetts in 1706, he received formal ordination in November of that same year.[29] Retaining this post until his death sixty-six years later, Loring's ministerial career displayed surprising continuity in a period of rapid social and cultural change. By the end of his life in 1772, the political and religious landscapes stood in stark contrast to the milieu in which he grew into adulthood. In an odd comparison to these revolutions, Loring's most visceral convictions were redolent of those held by Thomas Hooker, Increase Mather (1639–1723), and their clerical contemporaries more than the value systems of mid-to-late eighteenth century elites.

Although these similarities with older luminaries appear understandable given Loring's uncommonly long lifespan of ninety years, his lived experiences placed him in an entirely separate era. With the death of Increase Mather in 1723, his son Cotton (1663–1728) in 1728, and

27. Israel Loring, *Journal of the Rev. Israel Loring of Sudbury, Massachusetts, 1682–1772*, ed. Louise Parkman Thomas (Nevada City, Calif.: self-published by Eleanor L. Rue, 1987), 10. Loring's first entry, dated April 1, 1705, remarks despairing upon spending the Sabbath "very Unprofitably" by allowing his thoughts to be "taken Up about things of Worldly concern." Continuing in this fashion, he implores the Lord to "Humble me deeply and for it and punish my Sin, thro' the blood of Christ."

28. Emerson Davis, *Biographical Sketches of the Congregational Pastors of New England*, 5:140 (Five-Volume typescript of pre-1869 manuscript, Congregational Library, Boston, 1930). I use the guidelines laid-out in Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5.

29. Loring, *Journal*, 8–9, 29.

Solomon Stoddard (1643–1729) a mere year later, few prominent second and early third generation Puritans remained to hold significant sway over the course of New England's religious and political existence. Profoundly affected by these three deaths, Loring rightly perceived them as the end of an era in Puritan thought. Describing these three men as the "chariots and horsemen of these people, their glory and defence," he viewed their deaths through an eschatological lens, determining that their ends were inextricable from the demise of New England's religious purity. This concern weighed heavily upon him, prompting the question: "when God sendeth his angels to pluck out his righteous Lots, what may Sodom Expect, but fire and BrimStone to be rained down upon them?"[30] However, in all its apocalyptic imagery and hyperbolic excesses, the central point of Loring's query rang true: what kind of men would take charge of maintaining an evermore threatened "Citty vpon a hill."[31]

Perhaps not surprising, many of Loring's contemporaries found an answer to this question in new language. By the early 1740s references to "awakened" youths became so prevalent within various modes of literature—personal correspondence, diaries, sermons—that revivalists coined a pair of neologisms describing the phenomenon. Soon "New Converts" or "Young Converts" littered various texts throughout the period, implying an acceptance of sincerity and truth to these events belied by the raucous debates among ministerial elites surrounding these new instances of supposed transformation.[32] Yet, also unsurprising was the ministerial elite's responses rooted in older language and a feeling of having been here before; in essence in their traditional outlook. For Loring and others thrust into the crisis of this Great Awakening, as the middle path between the extremes eroded, a language of and connectedness to traditional ideas, however varied, of preparation and conversion drew them back toward the "old lights."

Conversion Psychology and Puritan Culture

The anxiety that permeated Puritan society in both New and Old England during the seventeenth century persisted in the American colonies well into the eighteenth. Peel away the inevitable, yet often superficial and material changes that transpired between centuries and the lines dividing how

30. Ibid., 131.

31. *A Modell of Christian Charity*, Reprinted in *Winthrop Papers*, 4 vols. (Boston, 1931), 2:282–95.

32. Winarski, *Darkness Falls on the Land of Light*, 178–79.

Thomas Hooker and Israel Loring conceived of heaven and earth, of God and man, and of good and evil become virtually indistinct. Both men suffered from an ever-present feeling of anxiety. But this anxiety was neither morbid nor neurotic in the modern sense. It did not flow from a crisis of identity—the Puritans confidently knew their place in the cosmos—rather it arose from a reasoned set of objective truths based in constant inquiry. The doctrines of predestination and preparation, which both men used to measure every alteration in society against, guided their sentiments and behaviors.[33] Ironically, by the simple act of asking what the ministers that replaced Stoddard and the Mathers would be like, morally and spiritually, Loring provided insight into answering his own inquiry. The clergy who assumed control over New England's religious duties—including Loring himself—would retain an equal commitment to the Congregational Way, though within a context of greater toleration, and stress the power and importance of conversion as an individual and communal experience necessary to salvation.[34]

As an eighteenth-century figure, Loring epitomized this enduring legacy of spiritual psychology and conversion theology. Though effaced with time and overlooked by historians who, understandably, favor focusing on more prominent minds—namely Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), George Whitefield (1714–1770), or even Charles Chauncy (1705–1787)—Loring's intellectual existence offers an interesting looking-glass with which to survey putatively moribund Puritanism for two reasons. First, despite his historical obscurity, Loring was an articulate and respected minister in his youth and a venerated pillar of congregationalism in old age. He produced

33. Owen C. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience: Studies in Spiritual Autobiography* (N.Y.: Schoken Books, 1972), 3–5; Middlekauff, *The Mathers*, 7; *John Owen King, III, The Iron Melancholy: Structures of Spiritual Conversion in America from the Puritan Conscience to Victorian Neurosis* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), 58–59, 354.

34. Stout, *New England Soul*, 132–33, 191. The overlap between clergy of the late third generation (such as Loring, Benjamin Colman, and Timothy Edwards) and early fourth (such as Jonathan Edwards, Charles Chauncy, and Ebenezer Parkman) makes it difficult to distinguish any independent sense of spiritual, cultural, and ethical inheritance each might have had. Because of this fact, it is best to assume that both comported themselves as leaders poised to meet the demands of an increasingly fractured society. As Stout notes, the fourth generation was, even in the most generous scholars' interpretations, incontrovertibly the last maintaining any formal continuity with "Puritanism." The Great Awakening ensured a bizarre democratization that shifted significant power from clergy to laity. By the 1750s, vestiges of Puritanism could only be located in various strains of early "Evangelicalism," a testament to social splintering and religious upheaval left in the wake of mid eighteenth century style revivalism.

ten published sermons and a theological tract, received an invitation to deliver Massachusetts's 1737 election sermon, and maintained intimate friendships with other esteemed religious leaders throughout his life, from Increase Mather to Benjamin Colman (1673–1747). These achievements and recommendations defy the depictions of Loring offered by the few historians that have dealt with him as a subject. He was not merely a clergyman struggling in a small parish far out of reach from Boston's religious and political environs; rather, by most contemporary accounts he wielded considerable influence given the size of his rural outpost in Sudbury.[35] More important than this reason, however, was Loring's promotion and practice of self-examination.

For Loring, knowing thyself was a critical imperative, which demanded both public theological defense and private practice. Working within the Puritan disposition, in a 1731 series of three interrelated discourses he urged New Englanders to recognize and earnestly pursue the "great duty of self-examination."[36] Deploying a skillful exegesis of 2 Corinthians 13:5, he laid bare the underpinning tenets of conversion and introspection, writing that "the reflection of our consciences on the course of our lives" and "more especially the inward Acts of our soul" was a central "Christian Duty."[37] Adumbrating a specific method for assessing one's "spiritual estate," Loring proffered a theory of three stages for the process of genuine self-examination before God. Self-examination was a "work," beginning with the "looking inward" and a "looking backward upon the motion of our inward and outward Man." According to Loring, it attended to the "Sense of our Minds, the choice of our Wills, the bent of our affections, and the Tenor

35. For the election sermon see, Israel Loring, *The Duty of an Apostatizing People to Remember from Whence They are Fallen, and Repent, and do Their First Works* (Boston, 1737), Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University (hereafter BRBM). In November of 1737, Loring received a letter in high praise of his election sermon from Joseph Nash of South Hadley. Slightly over a month after getting this missive, a piece of post arrived from Dr. Benjamin Colman containing a copy of "Mr. Edwards's Narrative," as well as a note offering both personal commendations and relayed compliments from "Dr. Watts and Dr. Guise," *Journal*, 206–208. Thomas Kidd is the most recent example of this potential misrepresentation. See, Kidd, *Protestant Interest*, 26. However, he does find Loring a useful fixture for later parts of his argument and mentions his election sermon on page 72.

36. Israel Loring, *Three Discourses on Several Subjects* (Boston, 1731), 119.

37. Ibid., 122–23; The verse reads: "Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test Yourselves. Do you not realize Jesus Christ is in you?—Unless, indeed, you fail to meet the test!", NRSV.

of our whole Walk."[38] From these initial phases, one moved toward deeper introspection, trying the sincerity of his acts against the will of God and, eventually, concluding with qualifying the impetuses behind those acts by judging their moral worth. In this branch of Calvinist theology, all humankind was "naturally full of self-flattery and Hypocrisy," and it was through serious self-examination that one identified the extent of his or her spiritual failings.[39]

In this way, Loring attempted to standardize how one might consider their own regeneration in the presence of God and one's own true self. So visceral was this conviction that more than merely making it the subject of a significant body of his theological thought, he also sedulously recorded examples of his personal religious experiences. Loring's entire journal, which he started keeping shortly after his graduation from Harvard, is best understood as a spiritual autobiography in the Puritan mold. His recordings and recollections of both the mundane and sublime follow a narrative style that highlights divine providence as reality's central driving force. Analyzing the minutia of day-to-day life in order to evaluate his spiritual condition, Loring attached himself to an intellectual tradition and psychological habit that connected him with his Puritan ancestors while transcending the socio-cultural disparities between historical eras. Even the scriptural basis and language he employed bound him to this heritage and helped him define self-examination as an action upon which Christians' salvation depends. Drawing from a full well of examples extending back to early seventeenth century England, Loring's public admonitions echo those of Thomas Shepard (1605–1649), Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680), and Thomas Watson (1620–1686).[40] Likewise, his private writings resemble the works of earlier Puritans in both England and the colonies.

The reasons Loring kept a journal recording his experiences were manifold, but each one was related to the others and all were rooted in a genre of writing and a mode of communication essential to Puritan religious culture.

38. Ibid., 123

39. Ibid., 124.

40. For excellent examples of these similarities and comparative passages see, Thomas Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins* (London: Aberdeen and London, 1855) 271–72; Thomas Watson, *Heaven Taken by Storm* (London: 1669), 60, accessed through BRMB online archives; Thomas Goodwin, *Works*, vol. 6 (London: 1863), 27. Thomas Watson's writings on self-examination are perhaps the closest of the three to Loring's discourse on the matter. Like Loring, Watson desired to "prevail with Christians to take pains with themselves in this great work of examination. Their salvation depends on it."

Puritans who prepared for meeting God through the sacraments, sabbath, and self-examination were acutely aware of ultimate realities linked with the human soul and divine grace.[41] Puritan conversion was a self-interpretation rather than a form of actualization or rationalization. The meaning imputed to it arose from a conscious effort to interpret particular events in light of the actions and motivations that led to them.[42] As such, the positive and negative valences of spiritual introspection created a strain between self-abasement and self-confidence in God's graciousness. This pressure comprised the paradoxical pairing of self-examination's crucial elements: conviction of sin, followed by experience of forgiveness.[43]

Loring's diary adopts this approach, tracing his torturous recordings of moral success and failures in an endless cycle of reveling in God's enabling of his exceptional achievements before engaging in flagellation over his own mean condition of innate sinfulness. From its opening, his journal conveys this tendency.[44] In typical Puritan fashion he appeals to the greatest human authority of his early life, Cotton Mather, copying the sentiment that "when God has done Excellent things, we are not only to speak of them, but (if we can) to write of them too. Every good man should leave to his Children, a Diary for a Legacy."[45] Here is an acknowledgement that the Lord has worked for good through his life as, in the Puritan vernacular, a saint. But, Loring's acceptance that he is regenerate in Christ and elect by God's mercy is ephemeral, as his thoughts transported in the text turn almost immediately toward guilt and anxiety. As he confesses it: "I came into the World guilty of Adam's first transgression…A most heinous Sin this; A Complicated iniquity."[46] Launching into a general narrative of his childhood,

41. Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth Century New England* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 287–88.

42. Charles Lloyd Cohen brilliantly describes Puritan conversion and examination by noting, "faith changed how they regarded their behavior rather than the behavior itself," in *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 17, also see pages 108–10.

43. Watkins, *Puritan Experience*, 9.

44. For an interesting modern sociological take on the relationship between language and the nature of conversion with some, albeit limited, applicability to Puritanism see, Andrew M. McKinnon, "The Sociology of Conversion Narratives: A Conundrum, a Theory, and an Opportunity," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 37 (issue 1, 2022), 89–105.

45. Cotton Mather, "The Wonderful Works of God Commemorated" (Boston: 1689), 119.

46. Loring, *Journal*, 2.

Loring continues to oscillate between these two poles of ecstatic faithfulness and lowly degeneracy. This section of his writing serves as a template for the journal's religious explorations and transmits to the reader through prosaic dexterity a tale of tension between providence and perdition.

The Incident in the Orchard

Israel Loring fell into his ministerial vocation, quite literally. In 1694, at around the age of twelve, an energetic and curious Loring set out to explore his uncle's orchard. As expected of a vigorous youth, the temptation to climb trees and pick apples overpowered him, and he proceeded to attempt both. However, while reaching out upon a limb to retrieve the fruit, the branch broke and he crashed into the ground, leaving his wrists "hurt and distorted to that degree."[47] This seemingly mundane, inconsequential instance of childhood frivolity functioned, at least in Loring's mind, as a seminal happening in his life. His seeming haplessness was, in actuality, a pivotal moment of divine guidance, setting in motion a series of events which incidentally led to an ensuing calling as a cleric.

In good Puritan fashion, Loring retrospectively ascribed providential import to this occurrence and framed it in a typological explanation of biblical proportions. His injured wrist inhibited him from continuing his writing lessons under the minister of Hull, Reverend Zechariah Whitman (1644–1726). Given this incapacity, Loring's father, John, "got a Grammar" for him and he made "some progress in that, thro' Mr. Torrey of Weymouth, [Reverend Samuel Torrey (1632–1707)] and Mr. Whitman." These tutors subsequently prevailed upon John to bring Israel "up to Learning," marking God's remarkable grace in bringing about his "liberal education."[48] In looking back, Loring found solace in the Lord's wise, yet enigmatic foresight, as it proved that "the afflictions which his people meet With are Subservient to promote their good, temporal as Well as Spiritual."[49] Like Joseph, God had preordained his life's course, forming the basis of his spiritual advancement through physical obstacles and emotional difficulty. Without the initial turbulence created by his accident, Loring believed the chances of him joining New England's clergy were slim. Therefore, he regarded the orchard incident as a profoundly significant episode. It encapsulated his early religious

47. Ibid., 3.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., 4.

leanings and underlined an axial shift in his day-to-day behavior. As Loring described it, "my fall proved the Means of my rising."[50]

The method by which Loring interpreted his "fall" had a distinctively Puritan hue to it. Contrasting the glory and graciousness of God with his own abject impiety, he viewed his formative years through the same psychological lens that pervades other portions of the journal. His acceptance of a kinship with Joseph belies a deeper desire to fear God righteously, in a similar manner to the biblical intermediary he assigns to John—Obadiah. This, coupled with the general tone of his reassessed childhood, evidence the type of potent seventeenth-century values his parents inculcated. The prejudices he imbibed in youth laid the foundation for the belief system that matured in his later life. But it was his ministerial training that sheltered these early roots, enabling them to grow and eventually flourish.

Formative Relationships and the Nature of Self-Inspection

Completing his program of education under Rev. Whitman, Loring entered Harvard College in June of 1697, at sixteen years old. Upon commencing his studies Loring's spiritual condition collapsed, as he "fell from good beginnings" by growing "Dull and lifeless in the ways of religion."[51] Indolence and errant behavior nearly ruined him, at least by his account. However, considered within the journal's overarching narrative context, Loring's comments largely reflect a continuation of puritanical thinking regarding the self and God. Following the mode of preparation, he was "awakened" from his apathy, brought into a state of "distress," and moved to a stage of conscious self-examination through contrition before reaching emptying his soul in humiliation.[52] Once God provoked Loring to recognize his waywardness,

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., 5

52. The style of preparation Loring seems to describe is ambiguous, leaving room for an interpretation of it as containing elements reminiscent of both Hooker's and Shepard's various formulations on preparatory doctrine. Although an alignment with Shepard would be expected, given his upbringing in late seventeenth-century Massachusetts and the general milieu in which he developed his own thought, his description does appear to contain some elements more suggestive of a congeniality with Hooker. Loring's journal does imply in some form that he stirred himself with "assistance of the Spirit," in line with Hooker's propounded theory on the issue. However, one may read into a potential separation between phases of conviction and compunction redolent of Shepard. The description provided is short, personalized, and heavily introspective, making it more difficult to ascertain Loring's precise method. For further consideration of Hooker's view see, *The Unbelievers Preparing for Christ* (London, 1638), 2:2, 40, 70; *The Soul's Humiliation* (London, 1638), 135–50; *The*

he dutifully sought out scripture and fortuitously opened his Bible to the fourteenth chapter of Hosea where he read, "O Israel, return to the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."[53] Jolted by these words, he found a path toward joyous reconciliation, reorientation, and contentedness of the soul. Yet, outside of Loring's immediate psychological preoccupation of self-examination there remain questions of how his studies and the relationships he formed at college reinforced the sentiments and practices his private writings conveyed.

The blossoming of Loring's religious affections at various times in his early life often coincided with the encouragement and guidance, not simply of God, but of his various mentors. As his journal entries intimate, the reverends Whitman and Torrey detected an aptitude for writing and grammar in Loring since at least he injured his wrists in the orchard, and probably before then. While this conflicts with Loring's narrative of providence, he was already under the tutelage of Whitman prior to his fall.[54] It seems fair to assume that Whitman was aware of his intellectual capabilities and had already taken an interest in his continued education before he began grammar lessons.[55] Moreover, that Torrey also impressed upon John Loring the importance of raising his son for ministry is significant. An eminent New England clergyman, despite never having completed his formal theological training, Torrey preached three election sermons and received two separate offers to assume the presidency of Harvard, in 1681 and 1684, though he declined it on both occasions.[56] Similarly, he maintained

Application of Redemption, 15–20, 110–15. For Shepard see, *The Sound Believer* (London, 1645), 4–54, 129, 147; *The Sincere Convert* (London, 1646), 220–40. For secondary source comparison see, Petit, *The Heart Prepared*, 86–124; and also, Abram C. Van Engen, *Sympathetic Puritans: Calvinist Fellow Feeling in Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 63–67.

53. Loring, *Journal*, 6.

54. Ibid., 3. Loring states that "when I learned to read I was Sent to School to the Rev'd. Mr. Whitman, the Minister of the town, to learn to Write." Whitman also knew Loring's parents well since his parent were members of his congregation and John served as a church deacon. Moreover, he baptized Israel and recorded his mother's final words on her deathbed. See pages 89 and 415, respectively.

55. Throughout this early section of the journal, it is best to view Loring's recollection of events as somewhat unreliable, considering the large gap of time between when they occurred and when he recorded them. One must also bear in mind his purpose in writing the journal and its function as a spiritual autobiography.

56. Davis, *Biographical Sketches*, 5:363–64. For Torrey's election sermons see, *An Exhortation Unto Reformation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1674); *A Plea for the Life of Dying Religion from the Word of the Lord* (Boston, 1683); *Mans Extremity, Gods Opportunity* (Boston, 1695).

intimate friendships with William Stoughton (1631–1701) and Samuel Sewall (1652–1730), who frequently called upon him to provide advice for Massachusetts's leadership regarding the colony's knottier problems.[57] If Torrey saw promise in the young Loring, his recommendation probably acted as a powerfully persuasive factor in swaying John toward allowing his son to pursue further education.

While Whitman and Torrey promoted Loring as a possible candidate for ministry, their impact upon his life, though discernable in certain respects, paled in comparison to the man under whose tutelage he labored at Harvard, William Brattle (1662–1717).[58] An Anglophilic latitudinarian, Brattle graduated from Harvard in 1680, staying at the college under the formal title of fellow until 1696, when he was ordained pastor of the church in Cambridge. This additional professional obligation notwithstanding, he continued to serve Harvard until his death in 1717, training students and working as an unofficial administrator with his close associate and later college president, John Leverett (1662–1724). Due to Increase Mather's rather laissez-faire approach toward managing collegiate affairs during his presidency, which lasted from 1685–1701, Leverett and Brattle gained tremendous influence acting as de-facto superintendents and were later contributory in forcing Mather to vacate the post.[59] This insubordination and the internecine political squabbles it produced chafed the Mather family, particularly Increase's son, Cotton, who later described Leverett as "that unhappy Man," responding to the news of his passing in 1724.[60]

Although specific details regarding their relationship are sparse within either man's writings and personal correspondence, the lasting effects of Brattle's theology, ministrations, and pedagogy on Loring remains apparent in what little direct evidence still exists and in their similarities of style. Both Leverett and Brattle were considered "Fathers to many Ministers and Younger Gentlemen," and for Loring this was certainly the case.[61]

57. Frederick C. Torrey, *The Torrey Families and their Children in America* (Lakehurst: N.J., 1924), 26.

58. Loring, *Journal*, 5.

59. Stout, *New England Soul*, 135; Michael G. Hall, *The Last American Puritan: The Life of Increase Mather* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 280–89; Rick Kennedy, "Thy Patriarchs' Desire: Thomas and William Brattle in Puritan Massachusetts" (PhD diss., Univ. of California, Santa Barbara, 1987).

60. Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681–1724* (Boston: Mass. Historical Society, 1911) 2:723–24; Middlekauff, *The Mathers*, 361.

61. Benjamin Colman, *A Sermon at the Lecture in Boston* (Boston, 1717), 28. American Antiquarian Society Archives; hereafter AAS.

Following his graduation from Harvard, Loring preached in several parishes in the region around Hull. Hoping to receive a call to Yarmouth, where he had been serving temporarily since early 1705, Loring "earnestly requested" that God present a clear path forward. His confidence was soon shattered, however, when news reached him that Thomas Barnard (1663–1723) had been asked to fill Yarmouth's vacancy instead. Despondent, if not somewhat incredulous, Loring traveled to Boston in order to confirm the rumors concerning Barnard. Once assured of their veracity, he set out for Cambridge to discuss the matter with Brattle. Either in the course of their conversation or shortly thereafter, Matthew Stone (1660–1743), a deacon of Sudbury, arrived to inquire whether Brattle knew any promising new ministers willing to preach in their parish that coming Sunday. Naturally, Brattle proposed Loring, providing the means for him to receive a call there less than two months later.[62]

In spite of Loring's rather laconic retelling of the episode given his characteristic concern with its providential meanings and spiritual nuances as opposed to the human elements involved, the intimacy of his and Brattle's relationship as student and teacher still shines through. This closeness manifests in how both men comported themselves behind the pulpit and among peers. The parallels between descriptions of their styles bear striking resemblances. In pedagogy and preaching Brattle was "all calm and soft and melting," and perceived as "Wise and Discreet; Humane, Affable, Courteous, and Obliging."[63] Likewise, while Loring was described as "energetic and forcible" in deploying his sermons, he was also depicted as "calm" and "affectionate."[64]

Moreover, Loring inherited an irenic ecclesiology from Brattle. Once telling a former student that he aimed to "exercise his thoughts" with "weightier things" than the myriad, petty controversies of his times, Brattle confessed that, "I hopefully shall for ever be cautious how I let my religion spend itself in those trifling controversies."[65] In his mind, Congregationalism in New England was best served by a theology of peace, one open to reconciliation with the Church of England and the larger Anglican Com-

62. Loring, *Journal*, 25. It is also noteworthy that Brattle requested Loring preach at his Church in Cambridge the Sunday after his initial service in Sudbury and persuaded him to serve "three Sabbaths" in Groton through late August and early September of 1705.

63. Colman, *A Sermon at the Lecture*, 29, 34.

64. Pope, *Loring Genealogy*, 29.

65. William Brattle to Mr. Dudley, 18 November 1700, Massachusetts Historical Society, C. E. French manuscripts.

munion. For Brattle "true wisdom is peaceable" and when this is forgotten "religion suffers."[66]

Nevertheless, his ecclesiology never conflated peacemaking with dogma. Doctrine, in Brattle's work, received due attention and defense. As one of his students famously attested: "he searched out vice and browbeat and punished it with the authority and just anger of a master."[67] The general theological outlook of Brattle amounted to a wealthy, well-educated elite with an additional predilection for symbolic gestures of goodwill toward a wider Anglican establishment. In short, he was a classical, dogmatic Puritan in the mold of Mather intellectually, but a hopeful mediator like Cotton at heart. It was these same theological and social aspirations which Loring readily adopted from his mentor.

It is unsurprising that Loring's ecclesiology, theological sensibilities, and rhetorical techniques matched those of his eminently charming and successful tutor. Many, if not most or all, of Brattle's students lavished their compassionate and charitable teacher with high praise, extoling his capacity to uphold orthodox Puritan principles while allowing for greater toleration and accommodation of other Protestant denominations. Even Increase Mather admitted to "taking much comfort in his conversation," despite intellectual and ecclesiological divergences, and recommended him to the church in Cambridge.[68] Yet most important were the values of humility and ideas of moderation, as well as conservation, that Brattle inculcated in Loring and his other pupils.

Salient among these virtues was the method by which Loring's recollections were recorded: conscious self-examination. From Brattle, Loring learned the importance of understanding humanity's moral turpitude and God's infinite grace in the context of religious introspection. Despite their theological differences in several significant strands of thought, both believed firmly that previous generations' admonitions to "know thyself," was a tradition worth conserving. Yet as Brattle taught his young pupil, seeking the self required meekness and strength of spirit.[69] Loring came to investigate his own life with these qualities in mind, consistently struggling with the profound mercies of God that granted him success and the

66. William Brattle, sermon on James 3:17, March 16, 1700, Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Am 1100.

67. John Langdon Sibley, *Biographical Sketches of Harvard Graduates*, vol. 3, 201.

68. Increase Mather in the preface to Joseph Sewall, *Precious Treasure in Earthen Vessels* (Boston, 1717), AAS.

69. Loring, *Journal*, 26.

evil inextricable from his human condition. As such, he fluctuated from the heights of joy to the nadirs of self-loathing with the caprices of everyday life. This vacillation holds as a primary theme throughout his autobiographical journal and hinges upon an exacting deployment and understanding of the terms "I" and "self."

Understanding the "Self:" Puritan vs. Evangelical Mindsets

The uses of these terms ties Loring to older Puritan writing within the same literary genre, which served a similar purpose. Unlike early Evangelicals, many of whom began to record their spiritual excursions thirty to forty years after his, in the late 1730s through the 1740s, Loring's journal was built upon an epistemological structure that adhered to Puritan precepts and idealizations more than a semi-subjective, individualized, and, in some cases, mystical Evangelical emphasis on firsthand experience. In the latter tradition, which overlapped with Loring's later life, assurance of conversion grew increasingly pivotal and the location of a singular, momentous instance of redemption in God's presence proved one's salvation.[70] This reliance on experience, assurance, and evidence of salvation separated Loring from most Puritans and some later fourth and nearly all fifth generation New Englanders. Although a latent interest in this experiential framing of conversion had infiltrated the works of some earlier Puritans, most notably Solomon Stoddard and Increase Mather, it never reached the degree of potential excesses displayed by mid-century evangelicals.[71]

In the style of Mather and Stoddard, Loring's journal contains distinctively proto-Evangelical overtones. However, it does not enter into a dialog on the certainty of transformation, a trend that became commonplace in later decades. By the 1740s, men and women like David Brainerd (1718–1747) believed that through self-examination and communication with God, one could enjoy "the full assurance of His favor."[72] In opposition to this position, Loring's autobiographical writings are filled with withering

70. Jerald C. Brauer, "Conversion: From Puritanism to Revivalism," *Journal of Religion* 58 (July 1978): 234–35; James S. Lamborn, "Blessed Assurance? Depraved Saints, Philosophers, and the Problem of Knowledge for Self and State in New England, 1630–1820" (PhD diss., Miami University, 2002), 210–25.

71. Solomon Stoddard, *A Treatise Concerning Conversion* (Boston: Franklin, 1719), 75–85.

72. Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians*, in the *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 7, ed. Norman Pettit (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 143.

doubt and self-loathing punctuated by transient periods of ineffable joy in describing God's goodness. Approximating some earlier Puritans from elites like John Bunyan to obscure laymen in the making of Nehemiah Wallington, he was seldom secure in his feelings of election nor absolute in his knowledge of God's character.[73] Although the Divine's salient traits were discernable as omniscience, omnipotence, and omnibenevolence, He remained largely inscrutable. As Loring comprehended it, the "Spirit of God Works where and When he pleases."[74] This interpretation meant that he perceived the "self," or his "I" in the text, as available for introspection only in the soul's relationship to God and humanity, not as open to answering definitively the mystery connoted by predestination.

Moreover, Loring's sense of self or "I" in the journal is associated with the larger communion of saints and by extension some emphasis on wider society. Since his autobiography contains no central point of unqualified conversion or salvation, he consistently renews his covenant with God, lending to an uneasy, palpable anxiety regarding assurance of salvation.[75] This uncertainty is not confined to the individual "self," as is the case with Evangelical spiritual autobiographies; instead it encompasses family, neighbors, New England, Britain, and the greater Protestant world. Concerned with the sin and redemption of these groupings, his journal points to a Puritanical notion of community reminiscent of Michael Wigglesworth's (1631–1705) apocalyptic poem *The Day of Doom*.[76] And, in a like-manner to Wigglesworth, his language supports these sentiments. Tormented over his own destiny and the fates of his neighbors, Loring acted according to divine prescriptions in spite of his depravity, not because of his salvation.

This subtle difference placed Loring in a discrete category from most Evangelical leaders. He was not a radical individualist and he did not see conversion as an extraordinary event marking the certainty of sainthood. Instead, he behaved as most ordinary Puritans throughout generations,

73. See, John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, eds. John Stachniewski and Anita Pacheco (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); and Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford, Calif..: Stanford University Press, 1985).

74. Loring, *Journal*, 40.

75. Loring's entire diary is littered with examples, in particular entries at the end and beginning of the year. For some examples see, *Journal*, 10–11, 15–16, 21–24, 222–23, 243–44; for instances regarding his sense of salvation as containing certain communal or social aspects see pages 113–16.

76. "The Diary of Michael Wigglesworth, 1653–1657," ed. Edmund S. Morgan in *Publications* of the colonial Society of Massachusetts, xxxv, 311–444 (Boston, 1951).

that conversion was something "not wrought all at one instant, but in continuance of time, and that by certain measures or degrees."[77] To Loring, conversion and the experiences of anxiety and faith concomitant with it were cyclical, occasionally imperceptible changes in one's spiritual life. Behavior preceded conviction of salvation and redemption for the Puritans. Conversely, Evangelicals gradually broke from this inclination, assigning significance to an increase in holy "doings" that followed a seminal, transformative moment of "awakening." That Loring's writings traced the contours of a Puritan model rather than an early Evangelical one, displays a psychological, spiritual, and linguistic mindset that drew heavily from earlier traditions, binding him more to his past than his immediate present.[78]

Autobiography and Typology in Focus

Loring's psychology of abasement and his related conceptions of conversion and salvation stressed his affirmation of Puritanism's regnant doctrines. To him, man wallowed in uncertainty and the potential for regeneration rested solely with the omnipotence of God. These core beliefs informed his worldly and spiritual outlooks, forming him in a Puritan as opposed to early Evangelical mold throughout the 1730s and early 1740s. Loring's journal supports these dogmas in its opening pages in its description of his father, John. John Loring, who migrated to Massachusetts as a child with his family in 1634 and served as a town clerk in Hull, functions as a paragon of probity and piety in the text. Depicting his father as a man "much in prayer, heavenly meditation, and self-examination," and who "as it was said of Obadiah…feared the Lord from his youth," Israel subtly submits a typological lineage.[79] Like his father, he too lived in a manner evocative

77. William Perkins, *Works* (Cambridge: J. Legat, 1616), I: 637.

78. On Puritan conversion see, Murray Murphey, "The Psychodynamics of Puritan Conversion," *American Quarterly* (summer, 1979): 135–47; James Hoopes, *Consciousness in New England: From Puritans and Idea to Psychoanalysis and Semiotic*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 24–26. On Evangelicals see, Kenneth P. Minkema, "A Great Awakening Conversion: The Relation of Samuel Belcher," *William and Mary Quarterly* 44 (January 1987): 121–26; D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 43–45; Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 45–47.

79. Loring, *Journal*, 2; See also, Thomas Foxcroft, "A Discourse on The Great Happiness, Which God Hath Laid Up For: Occasioned by the Death of Mr. John Loring, Late Ruling-Elder of the Church at Hull" (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1720); Charles Henry Pope, *Loring Genealogy*, ed. Katharine Peabody Loring (Cambridge, Mass.: Murray and Emery,

of Obadiah. Deploying the rhetoric of declension, he is quick to imply an inferior moral status when compared with his father, and by metaphorical extension, Obadiah. His spiritual autobiography, published writings, and portions of his sermonic corpus suggest this, and the way he illustrates his own life in the journal confirms it.

While typology in itself does not prove Loring's Puritan tendencies, when combined with his lack of assurance and activism, it becomes evident that his psychological and spiritual approach was incongruent with those of rising Evangelicalism. To appreciate this is to understand that there Loring stood in continuity with his ancestors, not in radical departure from them. The state of his mind was one of fear, uncertainty, grace, and redemption as prescribed by the Puritans and carried on through the later generations despite increasing social and cultural alterations. Loring's psychology of self and society emphasized the centrality of life and faith in relation to predestination, springing not from an assurance of conversion or salvation, but a strain of Calvinistic Protestantism with transatlantic, historical roots.

1917), 13–15. For excellent studies on the history of Puritan concern with exemplary figures, typology, and spiritual autobiography see, Margo Todd, "Puritan Self-Fashioning: The Diary of Samuel Ward," *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 31 (July, 1992): 236–64, and John R. Knott, "A Suffering People: Bunyan and the Language of Martyrdom" in *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith*, ed. Francis Bremer (Boston: Massachusetts Historical, 1993). Loring also used the biblical figure of Obadiah to describe the Rev. Mathew Henry, see *Journal*, 49.