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Hartford Puritanism: Thomas Hooker, Samuel Stone, and Their Terrifying God

Description

Statues of Thomas Hooker and Samuel Stone grace downtown Hartford, Connecticut, but few residents are aware of the distinctive version of Puritanism that these founding ministers of Hartford's First Church carried into the Connecticut wilderness (or indeed that the city takes its name from Stone's English birthplace). Shaped by interpretations of the writings of Saint Augustine largely developed during the ministers' years at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, Hartford's church order diverged in significant ways from its counterpart in the churches of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Hartford Puritanism argues for a new paradigm of New England Puritanism. Hartford's founding ministers, Baird Tipson shows, both fully embraced - and even harshened - Calvin's double predestination. Tipson explores the contributions of the lesser-known William Perkins, Alexander Richardson, and John Rogers to Thomas Hooker's thought and practice: the art and content of his preaching, as well as his determination to define and impose a distinctive notion of conversion on his hearers. The book draws heavily on Samuel Stone's *The Whole Body of Divinity*, a comprehensive exposition of his thought and the first systematic theology written in the American colonies. Virtually unknown today, *The Whole Body of Divinity* not only provides the indispensable intellectual context for the religious development of early Connecticut but also offers a more comprehensive description of the Puritanism of early New England than any other document. [From the Publisher]

Keywords

Connecticut, Hartford, Puritan, Puritanism, Divinity, Christianity, Church, Thomas Hooker, Samuel Stone

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Comments

The first chapter of Dr. Baird Tipson's book, *Hartford Puritanism: Thomas Hooker, Samuel Stone, and Their Terrifying God*, is available above for download.

Creating the Thomas Hooker Brand

AROUND 1617, TOWARD the end of his nine-year tenure as Fellow at Cambridge, a terrified Thomas Hooker awoke in his Emmanuel College lodgings. His God, the God in whom he had always put his trust, had turned against him. An overwhelming sense of “the Just *Wrath* of Heaven . . . fill’d him with most unusual Degrees of Horror and Anguish.”¹ Alone in the night, Hooker faced the anger of a terrifying God.

Two decades later, thousands of miles from Cambridge on the Connecticut frontier, Hooker was still haunted by the memory of that experience. Describing the feeling of dread that plagued a sinner terrified of his own damnation, Hooker told his congregation that “the sinner conceives himself in the possession of the Devil really, and irrecoverably in Hell.” “If he do but close his eyes together to sleep,” he went on to say, “his dreams terrifie him, his thoughts perplex him, and he awakens gastered and distracted, as though he were posting down to the pit.” Rising from his bed, the sinner “raves” that “I must go to Hell, Satan is sent from God to fetch me.”²

A twenty-first-century reader might imagine Hooker’s experience of divine anger as a simple nightmare, but the feelings of horror and anguish persisted into his waking hours and days. For some time—“a considerable while” as

1. “Horror and anguish” were what godly people like Hooker were expected to feel in the face of God’s anger. His theological mentor William Perkins said of the damned in hell that “their bodies and soules are tormented with infinite horror and anguish arising of the feeling of the whole wrath of God.” *A Treatise Tending unto a declaration in The Workes of That Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins*, 3 vols. (London: John Legatt, 1616–18), 1:379.

2. AR 8:371. To “gaster” was to frighten or terrify; the term will reappear in chapters 8 and 10. See the Appendix for a guide to the abbreviations of works by Hooker and Samuel Stone.

his Emmanuel colleague John Eliot remembered it—Hooker “had a Soul Harassed with such Distresses.” Hooker’s College Sizar, Simeon Ashe, offered to help, and it was Ashe who brought Hooker through the torment. Only after much struggle did he finally convince himself that his God had not abandoned him to the devil.

For the rest of his life Hooker took careful steps to prevent a recurrence. As he lay down to sleep, he would “Single out some certain Promise of God, which he would Repeat, and Ponder, and Keep his Heart close unto it, until he found that satisfaction of Soul wherewith he could say, *I will Lay me down in Peace, and Sleep; for thou, O Lord, makest me Dwell in Assurance.*”³

What might have occasioned such a prolonged experience of divine anger? What notion of God resided in Hooker’s sleeping brain that could have aroused such dread? And how did the experience, and the understanding of divine activity that lay behind it, shape both his ministry in England and the ministry he shared with his colleague Samuel Stone in Connecticut? This book will address these questions. It will argue that Hooker’s experience, while extreme, was not anomalous. His dreadful, terrifying God lurked in a great many minds in early seventeenth-century England and New England.⁴ Skeptics would call this God cruel, tyrannical, arbitrary, untrustworthy, and willing to consign people to an eternal punishment they had no power to avert. Hooker would have to defend him.

That God might be angry at sinful humans was conventional wisdom in early seventeenth-century Christian Europe.⁵ From childhood, Christians were taught that God had good cause to direct his wrath at the misdeeds of his human creatures. Complicit in the sin of Adam and Eve and habitually putting their own needs ahead of God’s will, they knew only too well that they

3. Our knowledge of Hooker’s wrath experience comes from Cotton Mather, who (erroneously, I will argue in chapter 9) thought of it as a conversion experience; Mather was relying on a manuscript he had obtained from Eliot. *Piscator Evangelicus, or, The Life of Mr. Thomas Hooker, in Johannes in Eremo* (London, 1695), Wing M1117, separate pagination, 5–6, republished in *Magnalia Christi Americana* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967 [reprint of 1852 ed.]), 1:333. It almost surely occurred in 1617 while Hooker was in his early thirties, for Samuel Stone’s 1647 funeral poem speaks of “*the peace he had full thirty years agoe.*” SSCD sig. C3^v.

4. Drawing especially on literary sources, John Stachniewski explores “godly” conceptions of divine anger in *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

5. In *La Peur en Occident (XIVe–XVIIIe siècles): Une cité assiégée* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1978) and *Le Péché et la peur: La Culpabilisation en Occident, XIIIe–XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1983), English translation *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture 13th–18th Centuries*, trans. Eric Nicholson (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), Jean Delumeau argues that such fear was pervasive in both Catholic and Protestant Europe.

had failed to live up to God's lofty standards for their behavior. Although much of its imagery had been defaced or whitewashed over during the early years of the Reformation, the Last Judgment was never far from consciousness. In that judgment all God's enemies, including anyone whose name was not "written in the book of life," would be "cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15). At the very heart of Christian faith was a God whose anger at sin was so great that it demanded human blood-sacrifice, Jesus's "propitiation" (Rom. 3:25) or "ransom" (Mark 10:45) on the cross.⁶

Even so, Hooker's sense of a divine anger directed personally at him went well beyond convention. It dominated his preaching and writing to a degree that startled his godly colleagues in the ministry.⁷ To understand Thomas Hooker, one must explore the source of that sense of anger.

But why need to understand Hooker at all? Three reasons stand out. First, citizens of Hartford, and indeed all Connecticut, look to Hooker as the secular equivalent of their patron saint. His statue stands prominently before the Connecticut State House.⁸ A giant mural behind the bench in the courtroom of the Connecticut State Supreme Court building depicts Hooker presiding over the formation of the colony's 1639 *Fundamental Orders*.⁹ A few hundred yards away, on the walls of the state capitol, his bust takes its place alongside more recent Connecticut worthies. Ordinary citizens celebrate "Hooker Day" in late October, an occasion for "individuals, organizations and the fun-loving among us [to] dress up in their outrageous best and march through downtown Hartford, in celebration of Thomas Hooker, Hartford's founding father."¹⁰ Probably most telling, his image reaches even into the place he most despised: the alehouse! The Thomas Hooker Brewing Company produces a full line of Hooker beer, including "Hooker Blond Ale," "Hooker Hop Meadow IPA," and "Hooker Imperial Porter."¹¹

Second, Hooker's importance in the settlement of New England extends well beyond Connecticut. The enormously influential intellectual historian Perry

6. By no means all twenty-first-century Christians accept the notion of a substitutionary atonement, but it was taken for granted in early seventeenth-century England.

7. Cotton Mather felt obliged to include an explanation for what was apparently Hooker's well-remembered anger in *Piscator Evangelicus*, 30 [*Magnalia* I:345]. For another approach to Hooker's anger, see the next chapter.

8. <http://www.foundersofhartford.org/index.htm>.

9. In recognition of a May 1638 sermon that is believed to have influenced their composition.

10. "Festivals and Traditions: Hooker Day," <http://hartford.omaxfield.com/hooker.html>.

11. <http://www.hookerbeer.com/>.

Miller called him “the mighty Thomas Hooker” and judged him “the greatest of New England preachers.”¹² He served as a moderator at the “Antinomian Synod” that condemned Anne Hutchinson and wrote *A Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline*, an influential early defense of congregational polity.

Third, Hooker’s preaching documents a vital stage in the development of Protestantism from the Reformation to the great Evangelical Revivals of the eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries. In some accounts of American history, the “evangelicalism” that continues to dominate much contemporary religious life seems to arise almost miraculously from the corpse of colonial churches. Lifeless moralism is said to have replaced once-fervent piety, and the great ship launched by the magisterial reformers of the sixteenth century is thought to have run aground. Only the spiritual uplift provided by George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and their colleagues succeeded in refloating the foundering vessel and propelling it forward once again.¹³

But since miraculous resuscitations are not the ordinary stuff of history, imagining the American evangelical tradition as arising Phoenix-like from a once vibrant but now exhausted piety cannot satisfy serious historians. Thomas Hooker—and his lesser known colleague Samuel Stone—can offer a valuable seventeenth-century steppingstone on the way from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century. It is true that Hooker’s theology differed in vital areas from that of the later evangelicals, but as he attempted in his preaching to put core Reformation teachings into practice, he startlingly anticipated much of what was to come.

It has not been customary to imagine Thomas Hooker in the hands of an angry God. In part this results from ancestor worship. Glenn Weaver’s assertion in his history of Hartford that Hooker was “less given to hellfire-and-damnation sermons than were the other ministers in the river towns” probably represents a fair summary of conventional Hartford wisdom, not fond of hellfire and damnation preaching.¹⁴ Hooker’s modern descendants continue to join The Society of the Descendants of the Founders of Hartford

12. *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 16–47, at 16; *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939), 349.

13. “Magisterial” because they relied on the magistrate to support their churches.

14. Glenn Weaver, *Hartford: An Illustrated History of Connecticut’s Capital* (Woodside, CA: Windsor Publications, 1982), 22, reflects a long tradition of interpreting Hooker’s positions as more “liberal” than those of his fellows. William Perkins had taught that since “the soule being spiritual cannot burn . . . hell fire is not a material fire, but a grievous torment fit resembled thereby.” *Exposition of the Symbole, Works*, 1:266. Hooker’s graphic descriptions seem to imagine something material.

and to celebrate Hooker's accomplishments proudly at regular meetings and in a newsletter.

But ancestor worship alone cannot explain how Hooker's memory has been co-opted for often contradictory purposes. In his entry for the encyclopedia *Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and North America*, Stephen Foster comes to the conclusion that "Hooker's historical reputation has suffered to an unusual degree from one form or another of tendentious misrepresentation."¹⁵ Since that misrepresentation has resulted from an almost 200-year struggle to exploit what twenty-first-century people would call the Hooker "brand," it will be helpful at the outset to take a careful look at the way Hooker has been marketed.

An important effort to brand Thomas Hooker reached the public eye in the Spring of 1846, when the painter Frederic Church, later to become famous as a prominent member of the Hudson River School, exhibited his first large work at the National Academy of Design. Three-and-a-half-feet high and five-feet wide, *Hooker and Company Journeying through the Wilderness in 1636 from Plymouth to Hartford* attracted many viewers. Although not yet 20, Church had already completed two years of apprenticeship with Thomas Cole in the Catskills, and he was ready to show the artistic world what he had learned. Church knew that his father, a successful businessman, had a Yale college education in mind for his son; the father would need to be persuaded that the son might forego Yale on his way to an artistic career. Church's impressive canvas depicted what Hartford's leading citizens imagined as the city's founding moment: the trek of the Reverend Thomas Hooker and many of his English followers west through the New England forests from Massachusetts Bay (not Plymouth!) into a promised land along the Connecticut River. Both the senior and junior Church could take special pride as they viewed the painting with friends and relatives, for an ancestor, Daniel Church, had been among Hooker's company on this journey.

Hooker and Company launched Church on a long career as one of the new nation's most revered painters. Quickly sold to Hartford's Wadsworth Atheneum, the painting seemed a perfect embodiment of the way the city's leading citizens liked to imagine its founding.¹⁶ In the words of the art historian

15. "Hooker, Thomas (1586–1647)," *Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia*, 2 vols. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC CLIO, 2006), 1:132.

16. John Howat, *Frederic Church* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 14–16, shows how *Hooker and Company* "in composition and effects of space and light ... is an almost direct appropriation from Cole's *The Pic-Nic*." The Atheneum paid \$130 for the painting. Church continued to celebrate Hartford's early years by producing two separate large oil paintings of its "Charter Oak." (The State of Connecticut chose the Charter Oak for the obverse of its quarter).

Simon Schama, Church portrayed Hooker as an "American Moses" who led his flock "westward, away from the heavy hand of Old World authority represented by the Bay Colony government." The foliage of the Promised Land "trickles with sunlight; its waters run sweet and clear. It is the tabernacle of liberty, ventilated by the breeze of holy freedom and suffused with the golden radiance of providential benediction."¹⁷ Church's Hooker sheds outworn custom for a new beginning in the unsullied Connecticut forest.

Conveniently ignored in Church's myth was Hooker's younger clerical colleague, Samuel Stone. Stone had made the trek the previous Fall and along with William Goodwin had negotiated purchase of the land from the resident native Americans. It was the name of Stone's English birthplace, Hertford, that was to become the name of the new settlement. Had Church been more concerned for historical accuracy, the painting's title would then have had Hooker and his company: *Journeying through the Wilderness from Newtown (soon to be renamed Cambridge) to Suckiaug (soon to be renamed Hartford)*.

Overshadowing such minor inaccuracies, though, is the portrayal of Hooker as an "American Moses," leading his people from out of slavery to European institutions. Precious as that portrayal may have been to mid-nineteenth-century Hartforders, it resulted in a Hooker shaped more by what they thought their city needed from its past than from what he actually said and did.

Church's portrayal was eventually destined to clash jarringly with the picture of Hooker contained in seventeenth-century documents. Unfriendly contemporaries, both at Emmanuel College and later at the towns where he preached, described him not as a protector of individual rights but as a "busy controller" who would not hesitate to curtail personal freedoms whenever they were at odds with his sure sense of God's will. The nightmarish descriptions of hellfire and damnation in his published sermons would hardly have felt to his contemporaries as "the breeze of holy freedom."

But the clash was yet to occur in the mid-nineteenth century. On the contrary, the Hooker "brand" depicted in Church's painting gained still more credibility in 1860 when the distinguished antiquarian J. Hammond Trumbull drew the attention of the world to a hitherto-unknown sermon that Hooker had preached before the Connecticut General Court on May 31, 1638. Members of the Court were just beginning to draw up what became the *Fundamental Orders*, a frame of government for the colony, and Hooker drew their attention to three "doctrines" which he supported with "reasons":

17. Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 200.

- I. The choice of public magistrates belongs unto the people by God's own allowance.
- II. The privileges of election, which belongs to the people, therefore must not be exercised according to their humours, but according to the blessed will and law of God.
- III. They who have power to appoint officers and magistrates, it is in their power, also, to set the bounds and limitations of the power and place unto which they call them.

Reasons. I. Because the foundation of authority is laid, firstly, in the free consent of the people.

2. Because, by a free choice the hearts of the people will be more inclined to the love of the persons [chosen], and more ready to yield [obedience].
3. Because of that duty and engagement of the people.¹⁸

To historians enraptured by the promise of America's future, the discovery of such a statement in its earliest past was electrifying. The core principles of American liberal democracy—that “the people” owned the right to choose their magistrates “by God's own allowance” and that they could “set the bounds and limitations of the power and place unto which they call them”—had roots in seventeenth-century Connecticut! Eager to give credit to these roots, and delighted to put “theocratic” Massachusetts in its place, historians like George Bancroft “saw in Hooker's pronouncements the ‘seed’ whence flowered the ‘first of the series of written American constitutions.’” In *The Beginnings of New England*, John Fiske went still further. When one looks for the birth of American democratic institutions, wrote Fiske, Thomas Hooker “deserves more than any other man to be called the father.”¹⁹

Surely Hartford had a founder to admire! One could imagine a trajectory that led from the Protestant rediscovery of the Bible straight through Hooker to the liberal democracy of the Enlightenment. When George Leon Walker, who held

18. Trumbull had discovered the sermon notes in Matthew Grant's manuscript diary. The notes Trumbull published are reprinted in George L. Walker, *History of the First Church in Hartford, 1633–1883* (Boston: Brown & Gross, 1884), 105–6.

19. Bancroft, *History of the United States*, rev. ed. (Boston: D. Appleton & Co., 1876), 1:291, 318; Fiske, *Beginnings of New England* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1889), 127, cited in Sydney E. Ahlstrom, “Thomas Hooker, Puritanism, and Democratic Citizenship: A Preliminary Inquiry into Some Relationship of Religion and American Civic Responsibility,” The Third Hooker Lecture, First Church of Christ, May 16, 1962, 1, later published in *Church History* 32 (1963): 415–31. It was in this hagiographic spirit that the Hooker statue before the State House was erected in 1950; a quote from the sermon notes appears prominently at its base. Connecticut still proudly identifies itself as the “Constitution State.”

the same position as Minister of Hartford's First Church that Hooker had held so many years before, sat down to write a serious biography in 1891, he would imagine Hooker as a proto-democrat.²⁰

Fiske's version of the Hooker brand would reign nearly fifty more years before the Harvard historian Perry Miller drove a stake through its heart. Provoked by what he considered the mistreatment of Hooker in Vernon Parrington's standard *Main Currents in American Thought*, Miller set out to demolish the characterization of Hooker as a "Puritan Liberal."²¹ Reading Parrington today, most readers will quickly recognize what aroused Miller's ire.

For Parrington pronounced the ideals of the leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony "feculent." Very much as had Frederic Church, he imagined Hooker as leading a secession from the outworn institutions of the Bay to found "a free church in a free state." "A better democrat than his fellow ministers" and the true "father of New England Congregationalism," Hooker had the vision to reject "the reactionary theocracy" of John Cotton and John Winthrop.²²

Miller firmly insisted that Parrington and his predecessors had missed the point of Hooker's sermon. Hooker's critical "doctrine" was not the first but the second: that the people must exercise their privileges not "according to their humours, but according to the blessed will and law of God." The "irrepressibly democratic dynamic" that Parrington had found in Hooker was in fact common to all Protestant theology, "though all good Protestants strove to stifle it," as Hooker had in his second doctrine. In every important respect, Miller concluded, Hooker's positions were almost identical to those of Massachusetts Bay.²³

Miller's 1931 article effectively silenced those historians who imagined that a liberal Connecticut had seceded from a conservative Massachusetts Bay. In a series of subsequent articles, Miller proposed a new school of Hooker

20. *Thomas Hooker: Preacher, Founder Democrat* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1891). Walker's biography appeared in the "Makers of America" series. His earlier *History of the First Church in Hartford* treats Hooker's theology more systematically.

21. *Main Currents in American Thought: An Interpretation of American Literature from the Beginnings to 1920*, vol. 1, *The Colonial Mind 1620-1800* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1927), 53-62.

22. *Main Currents*, 51, 53. Parrington relied heavily on Walker's *Thomas Hooker*.

23. Miller, "Thomas Hooker and the Democracy of Early Connecticut," *New England Quarterly* 4 (1931): 663-712, reprinted in *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 16-47. By far the most insightful discussion of the relationship of political thought in early New England to later democratic institutions is now David D. Hall, *A Reforming People: Puritanism and the Transformation of Public Life in New England* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011).

interpretation. Miller saw the New England Puritans—and the Harvard College they founded—as the wellspring of a distinguished American intellectual history. While they may not have been social democrats, Miller was determined that the Puritans not be dismissed as dogmatic Biblicists whose “ideal” was “simply an impassioned harangue, the sort of emotional evangelicalism familiar to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century revivals.” In his pathbreaking *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, he contended that “in Puritan thought the intellectual heritage was finally more decisive than the piety.” He proceeded at painstaking length to uncover the intellectual roots of their “cosmology,” “anthropology,” and “sociology,” to demonstrate their awareness of the writings of a broad range of contemporary European intellectuals, and to draw particular attention to their indebtedness to the logic and rhetoric of Peter Ramus.

Miller’s brilliant opening chapter, “The Augustinian Strain of Piety,” recognized that the New Englanders’ thinking arose from 1,200 years of western Christian tradition that stemmed largely from the writings of St. Augustine. It also prepared the way for one of his major theses: that Puritans were trying to escape from the dark shadow of John Calvin. Although he could not deny that their theology was in some sense “Calvinist,” he was certain that they were struggling to get out from under the harshest implications of Calvin’s positions. Deliberately or unconsciously, they were devising schemes that would undermine the notorious doctrine of double predestination. “The stark predestination of early Calvinism was too often driving the devout to distraction . . . it needed somehow to be softened.”²⁴

Miller believed that he had identified two schemes in particular—“covenant theology” and “preparation for salvation”—that would support this thesis. Calvin and his most faithful followers had insisted that God determined any

24. Miller’s most important publications on these topics were “The Marrow of Puritan Divinity,” *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 32 (1937): 247–300, reprinted in *Errand*, 48–98, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, and “‘Preparation for Salvation’ in Seventeenth-Century New England,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4 (1943): 253–86. The above citations are from *The New England Mind*, 301, 330, and 386. Miller’s thinking was influenced by that of his colleague, Samuel Eliot Morison, who wrote in 1935 that “after reading some hundreds of puritan sermons, English and New English, I feel qualified to deny that the New England puritans were predestinarian Calvinists.” *The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960); originally published as *The Puritan Pronaos* (New York: New York University Press, 1935), 11. Miller’s influence has endured far longer than that of most historians. John Micklethwait, the Editor-in-Chief of *The Economist*, writing with Adrian Wooldridge as his co-author, recently termed him “the premier historian of the [American] Puritans.” *God Is Back: How the Global Revival of Faith is Changing the World* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 57. E. Brooks Holifield provides the most persuasive corrective to Miller’s thesis in his *Theology in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), especially 31–44.

individual person's final destination—heaven or hell—unconditionally. Before a person was born, before the creation of the world, in fact, God elected or reprobated each person without any consideration of what that person might or might not do during her lifetime. There was no way any person could influence God's choice; the decision had been made from eternity. Unwilling to imagine that his intellectual forebears could actually have believed in a creed that seemed to reject any meaningful human agency, Miller was convinced that the New England Puritans had found mechanisms to reintroduce conditions into God's decisions. In practice, there were actions human beings could take to influence God's choice. In practice, one's ultimate fate was conditional; it depended on how a person chose to respond to the preacher's call to repentance.

Everyone knew, he argued, that God had made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants. In the book of Genesis, God promised to "establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations for an everlasting covenant." In return, God required of Abraham, "Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their generations."²⁵ Miller believed that this covenant was in practice understood, and preached, as if it were a contract whose fulfillment was contingent upon each party's performing agreed-upon conditions. If Abraham and his seed kept the terms of the covenant, God would keep his promise to multiply their number and would grant them the land of Canaan. If he or she kept the appropriate covenant terms, each individual descendant of Abraham could also be a recipient of God's promise and gain eternal salvation. Keeping the terms of the covenant meant repenting of misdeeds and obeying God's commandments as laid out both in the Old Testament (testament and covenant being virtually synonymous terms) and as expanded and amended in the New Testament.

Miller argued that by stressing God's covenant promises and by preaching the covenant as a "voluntary contract," ministers "sundered the outward manifestation [how salvation was preached] from the inner principle [the doctrine of predestination]." In other words, while paying lip-service to God's absolute sovereignty, New England sermons in practice subverted it. Preachers encouraged their congregations to exert themselves to good deeds, because by those good deeds they could claim to have met God's conditions and so provoke God's favor. Covenant theology was "an extremely subtle ... device within the framework of predestination for arousing human activity," and the ministers'

25. Gen. 12:1–3, 17:1–22; the citations are from Gen. 17:7 and 9. These and all subsequent biblical citations are from the Authorized Version of 1611 (KJV).

"imposition of the covenant doctrine upon the system of Calvin produced at last in the New England theology an altogether different philosophy from any propounded in Geneva."²⁶

The concept of "preparation for salvation," in Miller's judgment, was just the tactic to implement the covenant strategy. By preaching the need for preparation, ministers could encourage their hearers "to seek holiness in the midst of a determined world." Admitting that no one's deeds could merit salvation, they could nevertheless exhort their congregations to "prepare" for it, to "make themselves ready to entertain" the gift of faith should God choose to implant it in their hearts. By living an upright life and attending to the words of the preachers, by cultivating "a mere inclination to accept faith, should faith ever come," every human being could "prepare" for God's converting activity.

Such preparation did not require any special divine assistance; it was within the power of every human being. While the preachers stressed that preparation could put no claim on God, "it was noted that normally those who most strove to prepare themselves turned out to be those whom He shortly took into the Covenant of Grace." Furthermore, argued Miller, preaching preparation allowed the preachers to call upon all their hearers, not just the regenerate among them, to be good, "to exert themselves in precisely such a course of moral conduct as was required of all the society." Preparation offered "a fulcrum for the lever of human responsibility, even in a determined world." And the main proponent, "the most explicit exponent" of preparation was Thomas Hooker, who by developing and advocating this doctrine "did more than any other to mold the New England mind."²⁷ Hooker was now rebranded as the one who saw most clearly, and preached most persuasively, New England's departure from orthodox "Calvinism."

Miller left his readers in no doubt of his admiration for "the mighty Thomas Hooker." Although John Cotton was "the better Calvinist" (not a mark of praise for Miller), Hooker was the more "exquisite diagnostician of the phases of regeneration." It was Hooker whose preaching anticipated "the direction in which Puritanism was travelling."²⁸

For the next several decades, Miller's characterization dominated the study of early New England. No historian of its intellectual life could avoid grappling with his positions, and most built their arguments upon the foundation

26. *New England Mind*, 379, 394, 367; "Preparation for Salvation," 259.

27. "Preparation for Salvation," 261–63, 278, 265.

28. *Errand into the Wilderness*, 16, *New England Mind*, 349, 335; "Preparation for Salvation," 261, 267, 263, 286. Parrington also saw Hooker as "the most stimulating preacher of early New England," *Main Currents*, 55.

he had laid. Cracks began to appear by the 1960s. Students of Christian theology found his descriptions of Calvin's positions (most notoriously regeneration as "a forcible seizure, a holy rape of the surprised will") little better than caricatures. Others pointed out that the biblical covenant—and the New Englanders use of it—was more nuanced than Miller had allowed. One can find plenty of examples (e.g., Psalm 25:9: "All the paths of the LORD are love and faithfulness to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies") where God's willingness to keep his covenant in force seems to depend on the willingness of Israel to observe its conditions. In the seminal texts, however, those where God establishes the covenant with Abraham and his seed, the covenant is a promise rather than a contract, a promise that remains in force despite Israel's unfaithfulness.²⁹ The closing verses of the Magnificat, Mary's prayer in Luke's Gospel, celebrate this everlasting promise: "He has come to the help of his servant Israel, for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever" (Luke 1:54–55).³⁰

Intellectual historians and students of literature began to take issue with Miller's willingness to assume that New England "Puritanism" was a single entity; that (with the notable exceptions of Cotton, John Wheelwright, and Anne Hutchinson) the preachers all agreed with one another and that the laypeople

29. In particular Gen. 15:1–21; cf. Jer. 31:31–34. Thomas Hooker did not see the covenant as a contract, e.g., "in the Covenant of Grace, all is firstly, freely, wholly, and only in the hand of the Lord to dispose, to whom he wil, what, when, and after what manner he wil." AR 10:301–302. This is entirely consistent with what Richard A. Muller takes to be the conventional Reformed position: the covenant of grace "stands as a gracious promise of salvation given to fallen man apart from any consideration of man's ability to respond to it or to fulfill it and apart from any human initiative." See "foedus gratiae" in Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1985), 120–21. The Hebrew word *chesed*, often translated as "loving-kindness" but more accurately as "covenant-faithfulness," poignantly expresses the belief that God remains committed to Israel despite her frequent transgressions.

30. "Preparation for Salvation," 261. Among the most perceptive early critics were Gerald J. Goodwin, "The Myth of 'Arminian-Calvinism' in Eighteenth-Century New England," *New England Quarterly* 41 (1968): 213–37; and George Marsden, "Perry Miller's Rehabilitation of the Puritans: A Critique," *Church History* 39 (1970): 91–105. Charles Cohen, *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 75–84, provides a thorough refutation of Miller's position on preparation. Amy-Jill Levine, Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt University, offers an apt summary of how covenant is understood in the Hebrew Bible (and by Jews today): "the election of Israel is based on grace, not merit or works. Jews do not follow Torah in order to "earn" divine love or salvation . . . it is part of the covenant. Divine love is already present; it is not earned." "Bearing False Witness: Common Errors Made about Early Judaism," in Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 501–4, at 502.

passively accepted the pronouncements of their preachers.³¹ Social historians identified ways of thinking that long pre-existed English Puritanism or were in obvious disagreement with ministerial dogma. Almost everyone came to the recognition that Miller's positions made his intellectual ancestors either muddle-headed or dishonest.³² They seemed unable to see that while professing a deterministic "Calvinism," they were in practice telling people that their behavior could provoke God to grant them grace.

Miller advanced his characteristic positions at the time of World War II; generations of graduate students first cut their teeth on them and then made their reputations by attacking them. By the second decade of the twenty-first century, one might be forgiven for assuming that Miller's work had long been consigned to the academic trash heap.

But it is a mark of Miller's brilliance that even those who believe that they are repudiating him often remain under his influence. To single out two important monographs among many, Janice Knight's *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts* appears to take a position against Miller when she argues that there were two schools of Puritan thought in New England, not one. But her descriptions of Hooker and his "preparationist" colleagues could have come straight from *The New England Mind*. "The modification of high Calvinism inherent in their assertion of conditional promises and the doctrine of preparation," she explains, "were adaptations made within the boundaries of traditionally defined Reformation 'orthodoxy.'" "Faced with the terrifying abyss of irrational power and immeasurable sin, these preachers invented a doctrine to limit and contain both. They moved with agility from this initial terror to the comforting rationality of the covenant bond."³³

Darren Staloff, while arguing that the important disputes in early New England were actually about clerical authority, simply takes for granted the validity of Miller's analysis of theology: "The very 'marrow of Puritan divinity,' according to the venerable Perry Miller, was a 'federal' or covenant theology. This theology, which found expression in the 'preparationist' preaching of the orthodox majority, stipulated that if unregenerate man would but engage in a sincere and solemn quest for the 'habit of faith,' God

31. E.g., Michael P. Winship, "Reconsiderations: Were There Any Puritans in New England?" *New England Quarterly* 74 (2001): 118–38, at 132, who criticizes the "reflexive essentialism of Puritan scholars."

32. Peter Thuesen suggests that laypeople did not "simply dismiss their pastors as double-dealers." *Predestination: The American Career of a Contentious Doctrine* (New York: Oxford, 2009), 54.

33. Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 22, 81.

would respond by ‘justifying’ the sinner as part of a contractual agreement known as the covenant of grace.”³⁴ The British theologian Alister McGrath, whose two-volume *Iustitia Dei* has become the standard source for those tracing the history of the doctrine of justification, cites Miller’s “Marrow” unproblematically.³⁵

Miller’s influence also persists among those interpreters who, recalling Miller’s description of Hooker as an “exquisite diagnostician of the phases of regeneration,” understand Hooker chiefly as a psychologist of the soul. Like Miller, many American scholars have until recently tended to see Hooker almost entirely in a New England context, most often as an opponent of Cotton, forgetting that he was almost 50 when he first arrived in Hartford.³⁶ Because he did disagree with Cotton on the nature of conversion, locating him in such a context almost inevitably results in laying emphasis where Miller did, on Hooker’s analysis on “the phases of regeneration” (what Miller’s student Edmund Morgan called “the morphology of conversion”).³⁷ But Hooker was never simply observing psychological changes in those converted by his preaching; his preaching was actively

34. *The Making of an American Thinking Class: Intellectuals and Intelligentsia in Puritan Massachusetts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 56. See also Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination*, 81, who cites Miller in imagining an “increasingly mellow” version of Puritanism in New England where “God’s sovereignty was explicitly moderated by covenant theology.” In 1986, Charles Cohen contended in the bibliographical discussion of *God’s Caress* (p. 282) that Miller “recreated the field, defined it, endowed it with the prestige of his awesome intellect, and created a synthesis that, if eroded in countless ways, has not yet been replaced.”

35. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 2:207 n. 8.

36. E.g., Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), esp. 88–101; David Leverenz, *The Language of Puritan Feeling: An Exploration in Literature, Psychology, and Social History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980); Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Amanda Porterfield, *Female Piety in Puritan New England: The Emergence of Religious Humanism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*; Staloff, *The Making of an American Thinking Class*; Lisa Gordis, *Opening Scripture: Bible Reading and Interpretive Authority in Puritan New England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); some notable exceptions are Stephen Foster, “New England and the Challenge of Heresy, 1630 to 1660: The Puritan Crisis in Transatlantic Perspective,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 38 (1981): 624–60; David Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil War England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004); and Theodore D. Bozeman, *The Precisionist Strain: Disciplinary Religion & Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

37. Edmund Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965), 66–73.

producing those experiences. In addition, seeing Hooker primarily in a New England context obscures the evidence that, except perhaps on questions of church polity, his positions were fully formed in England and not in controversy with Cotton.³⁸

An upside-down version of Miller's thesis was proposed by R. T. Kendall in his *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*. Kendall praised Calvin but argued that his followers Theodore Beza and William Perkins had distorted Calvin's theology. None other than Thomas Hooker presented this "Beza-Perkins tradition" in its worst guise, and Kendall termed Hooker's teaching "a fully developed teaching of preparation for faith prior to regeneration." Kendall found that Hooker preached that people did not need special grace to "prepare" for salvation: "the natural man by virtue of common grace 'is able to wait upon God in the means, so that he may be enabled to receive grace.'" ³⁹ Although vigorously disputed by many Reformed scholars, Kendall's thesis remains influential.⁴⁰

While still under the influence of Miller's general approach, more recent American historians have questioned his admiration for Hooker. Andrew Delbanco portrays a "bitter and defensive" Hooker who grew "contracted" in New England, abandoning the Augustinian Platonism toward which he had

38. Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, c. 1620–1643* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 300–303, tends to date even the development of his positions on polity to his experience in England and Holland, an interpretation with which I concur, as does Frank Shuffleton, *Thomas Hooker, 1586–1647* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

39. R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 133 et passim. See also Kendall, "The Puritan Modification of Calvin's Theology," in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*, ed. W. Stanford Reid (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 199–216, at 205, 212. Kendall would presumably agree with Miller as he imagined that "the horrified ghost of Calvin shuddered to behold his theology twisted into this spiritual commercialism." *New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, 389.

40. Although Alec Ryrie terms Kendall's book "the classic study of English predestinarianism," *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 7 n. 7, its arguments have in my view been persuasively refuted by Richard Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition on the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012). For other disagreement, see Leif Dixon, "Calvinist Theology and Pastoral Reality in the Reign of King James I: The Perspective of Thomas Wilson," *The Seventeenth Century* 23 (2008): 173–97; Jonathan Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), especially 220–21; and for earlier critiques Muller, "Calvin and the 'Calvinists': Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities between the Reformation and Orthodoxy," *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 (1995): 345–75 and 31 (1996): 125–60; and Robert Letham, "Faith and Assurance in Early Calvinism: A Model of Continuity and Diversity," in *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives*, ed. W. Fred Graham (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1994), 355–84. See also Muller's entry, "*praeparatio ad conversionem*," in *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, 237.

struggled in England and that continued to animate Cotton. Michael Winship places much of the blame for the Antinomian Controversy on Thomas Shepard, but he suggests strongly that Shepard may have learned his theology from the “idiosyncratic” positions of his father-in-law, Thomas Hooker. Janice Knight lumps Hooker with an “Amesian” group trapped by the “logic of contract,” over against the “passionate mysticism” of “Sibbesians” like Cotton. Knight also focuses on Hooker’s anger, as opposed to Cotton’s “meekness” and “tenderness,” anger which she attributes in part to his frustration over his relative lack of position or effective patronage.⁴¹

It has been British scholars, for the most part, who have prepared the way for a new rebranding. From their perspective, Hooker needs to be understood as thoroughly involved in the efforts of “godly” Protestants for control of the Church of England. The research of Patrick Collinson, Peter Lake, Kenneth Fincham, Nicholas Tyacke, and Tom Webster has demonstrated convincingly that it is anachronistic to see Puritans in opposition to “Anglicans.”⁴² As John Spurr notes, Puritans were caught up in the long seventeenth-century process of working out the implications of the English Reformation. Not only did the “Anglicanism” of earlier histories not yet exist, but in the early decades of the seventeenth century—the very period during which Hooker’s theology was being formed—a broad “Calvinist consensus”

41. Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal*, 170–77; Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636–1641* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 69–71, where Hooker functions as a kind of *éminence grise*; Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, 64, 66–69, 86.

42. Especially Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559–1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) and *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religion and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), *The Boxmaker’s Revenge: “Orthodoxy,” “Heterodoxy,” and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), and (with Michael Questier), *The Antichrist’s Lewd Hat* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Kenneth Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor: The Episcopate of James I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, “The Ecclesiastical Policies of James I and Charles I,” in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603–1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 23–49, 234–35, 251–56; Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590–1640*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored: The Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547–c. 1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Webster, *Godly Clergy*. To these analyses should be added two books by American scholars, David Como’s *Blown by the Spirit* and Theodore D. Bozeman’s *The Precisionist Strain*. In his brief survey, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2004), 138, Collinson asserts, “It is hardly an exaggeration to say that [Puritanism] was the real English reformation.”

prevailed in the Church of England.⁴³ Peter Marshall aptly summarizes the historiographical shift:

Patrick Collinson has encouraged us to regard the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods as an essential part of the Reformation “process,” and to see that the attempts of an army of godly ministers and lecturers to inculcate a truer understanding of the Protestant message must constitute the “real” Reformation, the fleshing-out of the skeleton released from the cupboard by the settlement of 1559. Most particularly, Collinson has transformed our understanding of “Puritanism,” a phenomenon we can no longer view as an “opposition party,” the symmetrical counterpart of Catholic recusancy, but rather as a set of attitudes and impulses making for “further Reformation” which was situated close to the mainstream of contemporary Protestantism. The work of Collinson, and of scholars such as Peter Lake and Nicholas Tyacke who have broadly endorsed his interpretation, has left us in little doubt about just how “Protestant” the Elizabethan and Jacobean Church was. His work has done much to demolish the idea that there was any such thing as “Anglicanism” much before the middle of the seventeenth century.⁴⁴

Far from being its completion, the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559 was but a stage of an initially unpopular “Long Reformation” that extended well into the seventeenth century.⁴⁵ Martin Ingram speaks for many historians in describing this Long Reformation as

a massive doctrinal and jurisdictional shift [that] involved among other things the destruction of religious houses (whose *raison d'être* had been as powerhouses of prayer, charity and holy living); the abolition of

43. John Spurr, *English Puritanism, 1603–1689* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 8.

44. Marshall, “Introduction,” in *The Impact of the English Reformation, 1500–1640*, ed. Peter Marshall (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 1–11, at 5–6. Michael Winship, “Weak Christians, Backsliders, and Carnal Gospellers: Assurance of Salvation and the Pastoral Origins of Puritan Practical Divinity in the 1580s,” *Church History* 70 (2001): 462–81, at 480, states that “the origins of puritan practical divinity reinforce Patrick Collinson’s claim (“Comment on Eamon Duffy’s Neale Lecture and the Colloquium,” in *England’s Long Reformation, 1500–1800*, ed. Nicholas Tyacke [London: UCL Press, 1997], 71–86, at 73) that “Puritanism represented the mainstream, ongoing thrust of the Protestant Reformation, its longterm fruition.”

45. On its initial unpopularity, see J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984); Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400–c. 1580*

prayers for souls in purgatory, thus effecting deep changes in parish religion and rupturing the bonds between the living and the dead; the restructuring of other aspects of worship, including changes in church services and the abolition of pilgrimages, processions and the veneration of the saints; a reduction in the numbers of the clergy and alterations (of which clerical marriage was one symptom) in their religious and social role. More generally it entailed the desacralization on a large scale of places, times and objects that had hitherto been seen as holy. These changes may be summarised as a move to a primary emphasis on faith rather than works, to a religion of the Word (scriptures and sermons) rather than ritual practice, and towards increasing stress on the personal responsibility of the individual in religious faith and observance. . . . the cataclysmic changes of the Reformation profoundly disturbed existing patterns of popular belief and observance, inducing in the short term bewilderment, loss of confidence, even alienation; so also did the only slightly less dramatic changes of the civil wars and interregnum. New patterns took time to establish and were always in some respects fragile.⁴⁶

In his more recent work, Collinson spoke of Puritanism as part of a "second" English Reformation which brought the initial emphasis of Cranmer and his colleagues to maturity.⁴⁷ While broadly accepting Collinson's framework, early Stuart historians over the past decade or so have emphasized the differences between "moderate" and more radical Puritans and the instability of mechanisms that sustained consensus among them.⁴⁸

A second important historiographical development has been the work of Richard A. Muller on Reformed theology. Muller's wide-ranging exploration

(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Christopher Haigh, "Success and Failure in the English Reformation," *Past and Present* 173 (Nov. 2001): 28-49. For its longer term success, see especially Eamon Duffy, "The Long Reformation: Catholicism Protestantism and the Multitude," *England's Long Reformation, 1500-1800*, 33-70.

46. Ingram, "From Reformation to Toleration: Popular Religious Cultures in England, 1540-1690," in *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850*, ed. Tim Harris (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 95-123, 241-47, at 97, 100.

47. E.g., "the Reformation matured in the secondary movement of exacting religious seriousness known as Puritanism," "'Not Sexual in the Ordinary Sense': Women, Men and Religious Transactions," in Patrick Collinson, *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 119-50, at 124.

48. Especially Como, *Blown by the Spirit* and "Predestination and Political Conflict in Laud's London," *Historical Journal* 46 (2003): 263-94; Lake, *The Boxmaker's Revenge*; Webster, *Godly Clergy*.

of the progress of the Reformed tradition from its beginning in thinkers like Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531) through the great systematicians of the late seventeenth century like François Turretini (1623–1687) and Herman Witsius (1636–1708) has given historians a new way of looking at theological developments in the early seventeenth-century. Scholars who previously tossed off terms like “predestination,” “Calvinism,” “Arminianism,” “*ordo salutis*,” and “preparation” can now be far more attentive to their background and to the nuances of their meaning.

The three most recent individual studies of Hooker—by George Williams, Frank Shuffleton, and Sargent Bush—appeared before the impact of Collinson’s and Muller’s work was widely felt.⁴⁹ Williams was chiefly concerned to uncover every extant detail of Hooker’s biography, but he did not hesitate to pass judgment on Hooker’s theology in a way that might have satisfied Perry Miller, most notably in a comment on the lecture(s) published as *The Carnal Hypocrite*: “Hooker’s treatise turns out to be to a comprehensive scriptural defense of precisely that kind of moralism or works-righteousness once pilloried by Martin Luther in his proclamation of justification by faith alone.”⁵⁰ Williams failed to see the similarities between Hooker’s insistence that sinners experience divine wrath and Luther’s notorious *Anfechtungen*.

Shuffleton’s straightforward biography likewise remains in the interpretative tradition of Miller. His analysis of Hooker’s preaching, like Miller’s, concentrates on the “balance between natural man’s passivity in the work of salvation and his concurrent need for voluntaristic action.” Shuffleton finds significant development between Hooker’s English sermons and those preached in New England, arguing that the former may err on the side of “urging men to react under the influence of preparing grace” at the expense of “reminding them of their essential helplessness before union with Christ.” The “maturity and greater depth of scholarship” behind Hooker’s New England sermons, on the other hand, allowed him to be “much more careful to articulate the precise relationship between supernatural and natural action in the process of salvation.”⁵¹

49. Williams, “The Pilgrimage of Thomas Hooker (1586–1647) in England, The Netherlands, and New England,” *Bulletin of the Congregational Library* 19/1 (Oct. 1967): 5–15 and 19/2 (Jan. 1968): 9–13, and “The Life of Thomas Hooker in England and Holland, 1586–1633,” in *Thomas Hooker: Writings in England and Holland, 1626–1633*, ed. George H. Williams, Norman Pettit, Winfried Herget, and Sargent Bush, Jr. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 1–35; Shuffleton, *Thomas Hooker, 1586–1647*; Bush, *The Writings of Thomas Hooker: Spiritual Adventure in Two Worlds* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980).

50. Williams, “Life of Hooker,” 8.

51. Shuffleton, *Thomas Hooker*, 254, 264.

Bush, as his title suggests, approaches Hooker's texts as a student of literature. Like Miller and many of Miller's followers, Bush wants to highlight connections between Hooker's writings and those of later American giants like Edwards, Emerson, and Thoreau. In several hundred pages, Bush expands on Miller's depiction of Hooker as "exquisite diagnostician of the phases of regeneration." He sees Hooker's account of "the soul's progress from the earliest stirrings of self-awareness to the climax of heavenly glorification" as a "tale of adventure," a narrative that "follows a clear plot outline" and can be analyzed with literary tools. As Hooker preaches, "the story evolves into a myth which offers the listener a new definition of himself and a new understanding of his destiny." Where Miller had seen Hooker through the eyes of Peter Ramus's modifications of Aristotle, Bush presents Hooker's myth as Platonic. Regeneration occurs as an "upward ascent through the stages of redemption." "Hooker's sympathy with . . . Platonic thought is nowhere so centrally present as in his narrative exegesis of the long ascent of the soul to eternal communion with God."⁵²

Reading Hooker's writings in the light of the work of Collinson and those who follow his thinking impels one to conclude that Hooker is long overdue for yet another rebranding, one that takes full account of his *Sitz im Leben* in early seventeenth-century England. In the course of this book, it will become clear that the positions Hooker took during his fourteen years in New England—including even his positions on congregational polity—were almost entirely formed before he arrived in the new world. He did not "harden" his positions in reaction to those of John Cotton and the Antinomians or as a result of his disappointment in not finding what he sought in New England.⁵³ Further, the theology of the English sermons that constitute the bulk of his mature preaching should not be understood in opposition to an "Anglicanism" (which had yet to reach a mature form) or even to what Peter Lake has aptly called "avant-garde conformity."⁵⁴ For the most part, they are unconcerned with Laudian ceremonialism. If conventional wisdom imagines Hooker as the victim of Laud's persecution, this book will present Hooker's preaching as deliberately provoking

52. Bush, *Writings of Hooker*, 165, 185, 246, 242. In *Puritan Ordeal*, Andrew Delbanco presents a Hooker who rejects Augustinian Platonism; it is John Cotton who upholds it.

53. Pace Delbanco, *Puritan Ordeal*; Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*; Staloff, *American Thinking Class*; and Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

54. Peter Lake, "Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge and Avant-garde Conformity at the Court of James I," in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 113–33, 303–8.

Laud's intervention. Hooker struck at the heart of the Church of England by belligerently driving a wedge into the "Calvinist consensus," openly challenging the sort of worship fostered by *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Subsequent chapters will also contend that it is misleading to understand Hooker as a particularly sensitive observer of the stages of conversion, as if conversion were a well-defined human experience like puberty or menopause. Rather than assume that there exists a generic "experience of conversion" which humans may or may not undergo, and that Hooker was an unusually skillful analyst of that experience (Miller's "greatest analyst of souls"), the book will describe a Hooker who developed a set of expectations about how a "conversion" ought to occur and then imposed those expectations on the experiences of his hearers.⁵⁵ He did not simply observe and record the inner life of a "convert"; he actively created it. The book will also demonstrate, against Miller and those who follow him, that far from softening or unconsciously undermining the theology of John Calvin, Hooker's (and Stone's) theology was more extreme, more "Calvinistic" (to use an anachronistic term) than Calvin's. "Preparation" is misunderstood as humans doing something to provoke a response from God (Miller's imagining the prepared as "those who most strove to prepare themselves"). Rather, it was the preacher, as God's agent, who "prepared" initially unresponsive hearers by overcoming their resistance with his rhetoric.

Finally, I contend that while Hooker's mature thinking is better understood as arising in the context of the final two decades of the Jacobean Church of England than in his years at Hartford, it is still better understood against the broader background of what scholars like Collinson, Lake, and Como have come to call the "Long Reformation." If we conceive the English Reformation in the words of Alexandra Walsham as "a plural, protracted, and often fractious movement that sprawled across two centuries," we can locate Hooker as a participant in an ongoing, as yet incomplete, theological conversation.⁵⁶ Recent scholarship has finally buried the canard that New England Puritans were working their way out from under the long shadow of John Calvin.⁵⁷ Hooker's primary antagonists were not John Cotton or Anne Hutchinson but Jesuits and their Arminian imitators. In his published sermons and treatises, in other words, Hooker was wrestling with the broader theological issues raised by

55. Miller, "Preparation for Salvation," 263.

56. Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, & Memory in Early Modern Britain & Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 80.

57. Both summarized and epitomized in Peter Thuesen, *Predestination*.

the Protestant Reformation and not yet finally resolved. In his own mind, his most compelling conversation was with the written words of Scripture, but his theological training placed him in a tradition of interpretation that stemmed ultimately from the anti-Pelagian writings of Augustine.

By turning to the work of scholars like John Bossy and Jean Delumeau, this book will argue that Hooker's thought (along with Stone's) is most fully understood in an even longer *durée*, the development of western Christianity, Protestant and Catholic, in the millennium and a quarter since Augustine.⁵⁸ Many historians of doctrine argue that the decisive disputes of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations—despite Luther's claims to have rediscovered the authentic meaning of Paul's letters—had largely to do with differing interpretations of Augustine. But most interpretations of Hooker's thought ignore the extent to which he took positions in deliberate opposition to those of Roman Catholic, and particularly Jesuit, thinkers.⁵⁹ I will argue that Hooker's mature theology is best understood as an extreme version of Augustinianism, developed in conscious opposition to Lutheran and Jesuit positions. His preaching is a particularly striking example of what Delumeau calls *surculpabilisation*, the creation of an intense feeling of guilt that characterized both Protestant and Catholic practice in late medieval and early modern Christianity. It is anachronistic to term him a "Calvinist," not because he disagreed fundamentally with Calvin but because he operated in the broader tradition of extreme Augustinianism and in the narrower tradition shaped by the writings of William Perkins.⁶⁰

58. Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Delumeau, *Le Catholicisme entre Luther et Voltaire* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1971), English translation *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire* (trans. Jeremy Moiser, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977); *La Peur en Occident; Le Pêché et la peur*.

59. E.g., Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)*, 5 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971–90), 331. Jesuit priests worked clandestinely throughout England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; see most recently Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Trials of Margaret Clitherow: Persecution, Martyrdom and the Politics of Sanctity in Elizabethan England* (New York: Continuum, 2011).

60. Diarmaid MacCulloch recently argued both that "Anglicanism is a word best jettisoned by historians" and that "Calvinism ought to go the same way." "Protestantism in Mainland Europe: New Directions," *Renaissance Quarterly* 59 (2006): 698–706, at 702. Any dissenter must now contend with Richard Muller's carefully argued position: "Calvin did not originate this tradition; he was not the sole voice in its early codification; and he did not serve as the norm for its development." *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition*, 68; see also his "Reception and Response: Referencing and Understanding Calvin in Post-Reformation Calvinism," in *Calvin and His Influence, 1509–2009*, ed. Irena Backus and Philip Benedict (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 182–201.

Delumeau argues that because early modern Europeans found themselves perpetually assailed by “a dangerous conjunction of fears”—plagues, famines, invasion by the Turks, violence from marauding soldiers, the rupture of the Catholic Church first by the Great Schism and then by the Protestant Reformation—they lived in “a climate of insecurity.” To cope with these fears, people turned for explanations to theologians and clerics, who explained that God was punishing them for their wickedness. Heretics, witches, Jews, and Muslim Turks, all agents of Satan, were being allowed to terrorize sinful Europeans. Delumeau contends that a “massive intrusion of theology into daily life” produced an unprecedented fear of divine punishment throughout European populations, particularly as that punishment awaited sinners at the last judgment.⁶¹ Theologians persuaded people to “substitute” this fear of sin and the last judgment for their pervasive fear of physical suffering and death. The result on both Protestant and Catholic sides was a “hyperacute awareness of sin,” an “obsession with hell,” and “almost morbid delight in original sin.”⁶²

One can separate Delumeau’s controversial exercise in historical mass psychology from the evidence he presents that large numbers of Europeans, Protestant and Catholic, were obsessed with sinfulness—their own and that of their compatriots—and feared divine retribution. Looked at from the perspective of the *longue durée*, the terrifying God preached from early Hartford’s pulpit becomes less exceptional if no less compelling.

The Hooker of Frederic Church’s painting was a reflection of nineteenth-century American imagination. While he was certainly more “democratic” than Miller was prepared to admit, Hooker never imagined himself as escaping from tradition. Until God should choose to bring history to a close, Thomas Hooker was determined to bring “the heavy hand of old World authority” to the fields and forests of Connecticut.

61. Article 12 of the authoritative Augsburg Confession of 1530 almost casually explains that repentance must include “contrition” defined as “terror[s] smiting the conscience with the knowledge of sin” (terrores incussi conscientiae agnito peccato). *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Reprecht, 1986), 67, English translation *The Book of Concord*, trans. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 34; emphasis added.

62. “une dangereuse conjunction de peurs,” *La Peur en Occident*, 17; un climat d’insecurité, *ibid.*, 2; “une intrusion massive de la théologie dans la vie quotidienne,” *ibid.*, 23; “une peur—théologique—était substituée a une autre qui était antérieure, viscérale et spontanée: medication héroïque,” *ibid.*, 27; “de part et d’autre de la frontière religieuse, cette conscience suraiguë du péché, cette obsession de l’enfer, et accent mis avec une delectation presque morbide sur la faute originelle,” *Catholicism*, 189, translated in *Catholicism*, 126. Bossy does not like the term *culpabilisation*; see his review of *Le Peche et la peur*. “Five Centuries of Sin,” *Times Literary Supplement*, Feb. 24, 1984, 180.

The middle sections of this book will explore how Europeans in general and Hooker and Stone in particular came to imagine their dreadful God. But before turning to intellectual history, we must first do something more practical: learn something about the lives of Hooker and his colleague Stone and about the godly community Hooker created in the English town of Chelmsford.