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## PROSTITUTING THE PULPIT? THE NEGOTIATED AUTHORITY OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NEW ENGLAND CLERGY

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Janice Ellen Wood

The Graduate School  
University of Kentucky

2008

PROSTITUTING THE PULPIT?  
THE NEGOTIATED AUTHORITY OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY  
NEW ENGLAND CLERGY

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
College of Arts and Science  
at the University of Kentucky

By  
Janice Ellen Wood

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Daniel Blake Smith, Professor of History

Lexington, Kentucky

2008

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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### PROSTITUTING THE PULPIT? THE NEGOTIATED AUTHORITY OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NEW ENGLAND CLERGY

Despite the growing population in the colonies throughout the eighteenth century, decreasing numbers of men chose to train for the ministry. New England Congregational clergy not only declined in number; the status, authority and influence enjoyed by their seventeenth-century forbears had drastically declined as well. Early in the century, ministerial authority was bolstered by the clergy's educational and financial superiority, a virtual monopoly over religious sacraments and the force of localism in small covenanted communities. But the social impact of explosive population growth, a series of currency crises, and warfare throughout the eighteenth century eroded conditions supporting ministerial hegemony.

In the midst of these social and economic changes, clergy faced the temptation to prostitute their ministries for the security of their positions. The loss of educational and financial superiority, their monopoly on the sacraments, and the conforming force of localism, drove eighteenth-century clergy to negotiate for more control over their own futures. Late in the century, Congregational clergy largely managed to escape the confines of a life-long tenure with one congregation, but their newfound freedom did not restore their declining prestige and authority; rather the weakened lay-clerical bond accelerated the decline of the office of the ministry.

Ultimately, ministerial authority was a negotiated process between clergy and congregations throughout the colonial period. In spite of the overall decline of clerical status, the theme of negotiation remained constant as the social and economic developments altered the degree of leverage and type of negotiation each could utilize.

KEYWORDS: Clergy, Congregations, Lay-Clerical Relationships, Negotiation,  
Ministerial Authority.

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DISSERTATION

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The Graduate School  
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## Section I. Introduction

Despite the growing population in the colonies throughout the eighteenth century, decreasing numbers of men chose to train for the ministry. New England clergy not only declined in number; the status, authority and influence enjoyed by their seventeenth-century forbears had drastically declined as well. Historians of the colonial period have not missed this phenomenon and have offered various interpretations of this deterioration of ministerial authority. The most provocative theories discover the seedbed of revolutionary thought and American democracy in Congregational churches.<sup>1</sup> Indeed the drama of the Great Awakening and the American Revolution has preoccupied scholars of the eighteenth century and ministers are often interpreted through that lens.<sup>2</sup> Unlike puritan divines of the seventeenth century who have garnered their own full length monographs, this next generation of ministers are usually studied as players in the larger theological and political disputes of the period.<sup>3</sup> While it would be naive to examine

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution*, (Harvard University Press, 1966); Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (Yale University Press, 1989); and *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England*, (Yale University Press, 1977); Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society and Politics in Colonial America*, (Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> Edwin Scott Gaustad, *The Great Awakening in New England*, (Harper and Row, 1957); C. C. Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism in New England: 1740-1800*, (Yale University Press, 1962); William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977*, (Chicago, 1978); Michael J. Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England's Revival Tradition in Its British Context*, (Oxford University Press, 1991); historians who take a more cynical view of the revivals include: Jon Butler, "Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction," *The Journal of American History* 69, (1982-1983): 305-25; and *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*, (Harvard University Press, 1990); Harry Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism*, (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1991); Frank Lambert, *Inventing the Great Awakening*, (Princeton University Press, 1999); and *Pedlar in Divinity: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1745*, (Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1954); Robert Middlekauff, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728*, (New York, 1971); Edmond S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea*, (New York, 1963).

eighteenth-century clergy without considering the context of the Great Awakening and to some degree, the American Revolution, emphasis upon these events has obscured the complex nature of lay-clerical relations. The authority of eighteenth-century New England clergy rested tenuously upon the sometimes overt but often subtle process of negotiation between congregations and their respective ministers. This complicated negotiation of social and religious authority proved to be highly vulnerable to the forces of colonial expansion in the eighteenth century ultimately resulting in the overall decline of the colonial clergy's sphere of influence in society.

During the first generation of colonists the office of the ministry commanded deference and respect from congregational members.<sup>4</sup> But by the early nineteenth century, waning regard for the office of the ministry had diminished the position of New England clergy to a mere profession.<sup>5</sup> Donald Scott offers one of the most in-depth views of this shift. In *From Office to Profession*, he attributed the loss of clerical authority to the gradual professionalization of the position. Scott accurately charts the decline of the office of the ministry; however, he places the controversy of abolition and the Second Great Awakening at the crux of this transition early in the nineteenth century. These two events certainly contributed to and perhaps even solidified the professionalization of the clergy but the erosion of ministerial influence and status had begun much earlier.

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<sup>4</sup> David D. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century*, (Chapel Hill, 1972), 287.

<sup>5</sup> Donald Scott, *From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry, 1750-1850*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), Scott charts this transformation effectively and sparked my own analysis of colonial clergy. However, I differ with Scott on the impetus for this decline of authority.

While the degree of power and authority wielded by first-generation New England clergy is well documented, this emphasis also serves to disguise the level of influence congregations actually held over their ministers.<sup>6</sup> The New England Way of Congregational churches endowed the clergy with an elevated social status within a well-defined hierarchy of church structure.<sup>7</sup> But this did not mean that the laity simply suffered under the oppressive nature of authoritarian clergy. Laymen actively participated in church affairs and provided a significant check upon their minister's behavior. The lay-clerical relationship operated with mutual benefit. Each brought various spoken and unspoken expectations of the other into the relationship. In successful ministerial tenures, these expectations were met or negotiated to the satisfaction of each party. Although congregations tended to render at least an initial level of deference to the office of the ministry, such submission became fragile in the face of familiarity. This authority was retained only when ministers carefully operated within but not beyond, the unseen boundaries of their influence. During the eighteenth century these boundaries of influence diminished.

Seventeenth-century congregational ministers had retained their positions of authority through a complicated and often subtle process of negotiation. Bolstered by factors of localism; intellectual, educational and financial superiority, and a monopoly on

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<sup>6</sup> Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd; and Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment*, (Alfred A. Knopf, 1989). Hall offers the most complete view of seventeenth-century New England clergy and notices the fluidity of power between congregations and clergy in that century. My argument for eighteenth-century clergy furthers his findings and attempts to demonstrate, not only the erosion of ministerial authority, but the loss of social factors which supported it in the previous century.

<sup>7</sup> James F. Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties: the Congregationalists in Colonial Massachusetts*, (Oxford University Press, 1999); Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd; and Worlds of Wonder*.

religious instruction and sacramental duties, puritan divines operated as little “popes” in many places.<sup>8</sup> Yet this authoritarian model of clerical leadership did not result from a system of automatic deference; it rested rather tenuously upon these factors in order to keep their congregations in check. As population growth, currency crises, warfare, and itinerant ministers deteriorated much of these early foundations for ministerial authority during the eighteenth century, the congregation’s role in the negotiation process becomes more visible. Through the lens of personal diary entries, biographical sketches, church records, town records and newspaper accounts, ministerial authority appears less stable than many historians have projected and proved to be vulnerable to the forces of colonial expansion.

For some historians this erosion of ministerial authority represents the early stirrings of American democracy.<sup>9</sup> The close connection between congregationalism and colonial government certainly warrants such consideration. However, much of the erosion of ministerial deference occurred quite naturally as the social elements propping up their influence deteriorated in the face of an increasing colonial population.<sup>10</sup> Even without the republican ideology, which influenced colonists to resist magisterial and

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<sup>8</sup> Solomon Stoddard’s firm hand over his congregation earned him the reputation of a “pope” in North Hampton; Perry Miller maintained that ministers ultimately controlled their congregations and quoted the seventeenth-century minister, Samuel Stone, who described Congregationalism as a “speaking aristocracy in the face of a silent democracy;” Miller, *The New England Mind*, 441, 452; Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*; and *Worlds of Wonder*.

<sup>9</sup> Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*; Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*; and *The Sacred Cause of Liberty*; Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*.

<sup>10</sup> Philip Greven, *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts*, (Ithaca, 1970); Timothy D. Hall, *Contested Boundaries: Itinerancy and the Reshaping of the Colonial American Religious World*, (Duke University, 1994); Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction*, (New York, 1986); Kenneth Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years, Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636-1736*, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1970).

ecclesiastical tyranny, colonial clergy would have struggled to retain the kind of ministerial authority enjoyed by the first generation of “faithful shepherds.”

While much of the ministerial authority deteriorated quite naturally, colonial clergy managed to exacerbate the process of decline through their own efforts to protect their position. The clergy maintained their position of authority, status and influence only through a complex process of negotiation with their congregations, which often played itself out in the financial arrangements between the minister and his flock. In the eighteenth century, clergy began to depend upon pecuniary contracts and ministerial associations to define and protect their social role. Ironically, ministerial contracts not only stipulated the fine points of a salary package, they provided congregations with opportunities for noncompliance, which became a powerful tool against their ministers. The ensuing salary delinquencies coupled with the devaluation from several currency crises, placed the clergy in a precarious position. As clergy become increasingly dependent upon congregations, they risked prostituting their call in exchange for their livelihood and welfare.<sup>11</sup>

Although my initial research was driven by an interest in the decline of ministerial authority from its height in the seventeenth century, a pattern of continuity emerged in the midst of the already well-established diminution of the office of the ministry.

Through the lens of their social interactions, ministers expose their vulnerability to their flocks *throughout* the eighteenth-century. Regardless of their authoritarian reputations or

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<sup>11</sup> Experienced clergy recognized the insidiousness of this temptation and warned candidates against it; “do not profanely prostitute the sacred character to...popularity, impurity, pride...,” 1753, in Clifford Kenyon Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...: with bibliographical and other notes, Vol. XIII*, (Oxford University Press, 1937), 625.

their dogmatic sermons, most colonial clergy reveal their careful attention and accommodation to the desires of their congregations. This is not to suggest that the laity collectively and consciously imposed their demands upon the pastor. Rather, the congregation was often unaware of the effect it had upon their minister's behavior and choices. As much as colonial clergy were influenced by congregational expectations, they frequently attempted to conceal that effect from them. In this manner, ministerial authority becomes the product of a complex process of implicit and explicit negotiation between clergy and congregation.

In order to understand the theme of negotiation, the first chapter describes the importance of the ministry in colonial life. In the lay-clerical relationship, both clergy and their congregations held certain expectations of the other. In many ways, these expectations mirror each other but the differences between them remain significant. Chapters 2 and 3 represent the theme of continuity in negotiation. These chapters depict the tools of negotiation available to the clergy and the congregation. At different junctures in the eighteenth century, those tools varied based on the social and economic circumstances, but the theme of continuity reveals a negotiated relationship throughout the century. In Chapters 4 and 5, the significance of change over time is applied to the lay-clerical relationship. Negotiation continued, but with lesser or greater bargaining power as the increasing population, several currency crises and warfare transformed colonial society. Chapter 4 considers the decline in quantity and quality of trained ministerial candidates as well as the impact of mid-century revivals. In Chapter 5, the loss of communal conformity due to localism is discussed. The explosive growth in

population, further westward settlement, and the relocation of many during the warfare of the Revolution took a toll on the previous patterns of localism.

In the midst of these social and economic changes, clergy faced the temptation to prostitute their ministries for the security of their positions. The loss of educational and financial superiority, their monopoly on the sacraments, and the conforming force of localism, which bolstered the authority of the ministry in the seventeenth century, left eighteenth-century clergy to alter their forms of negotiation in an effort to gain more control over their own futures. Late in the century, Congregational clergy largely managed to escape the confines of a life-long tenure with one congregation, but their newfound freedom did not restore their declining prestige and authority; rather the weakened lay-clerical bond accelerated the decline of the office of the ministry.

## Section 2 The Social Importance of Colonial Ministry

### 2.1 The Basis of Clerical Authority

There is a power, that belongs to the pastor, and there are privileges that belong to the people, and there should be so prudently exercised, on each side, as not to interfere, the one upon the other.<sup>12</sup>

Ministers occupied a unique position in colonial American society. From the earliest arrival of English immigrants, they functioned not only as spiritual leaders but as political leaders as well; particularly in New England, magisterial and clerical roles blurred. As spiritual shepherds, ministers delivered and interpreted God's word to the people. As civil leaders, they frequently held political positions or at least enjoyed a privileged relationship with magistrates. This combination of religious and social authority elicited a certain degree of social deference from the community and infused the office of the ministry with particular significance. But by the nineteenth century, this position of authority had waned. While eighteenth-century clergy continued to expect and encourage their congregations to defer to their ecclesiastical authority, the office of the ministry struggled to command the deference and maintain the level of lay respect enjoyed by the first-generation of Puritan divines.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> October 19, 1774, Ebenezer Grosvenor, *A Sermon preached at the Ordination of ...Daniel Grosvenor*, (Boston, 1774), 14.

<sup>13</sup> In response to why the previous generation of ministers "lived longer and staid longer in the same place," Lyman Beecher recollected that his uncle "preached twice on the Sabbath, and attended funerals, and that was all except the quarterly sacramental lecture. That was the average of ministerial work in those days [French Rev. days]...Nowadays they wear a man out in a few years. They make him a slave, worse than on the plantation. The old way was healthier," Charles Beecher, ed., *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D., Vol. I*, (New York, 1865), 37; April 10, 1791, William Bentley noted in his travels

One marker of waning ministerial authority was visible in the weakening of the traditionally life-long bond between clergy and their congregations. Throughout the eighteenth century, pastoral tenure declined. While ministers had typically occupied only one or two pulpits for their entire career, this new generation of clergy became increasingly more mobile serving multiple pastorates.<sup>14</sup> Concurrent with this trend toward shorter tenures in a particular locale, the authority and influence of the office of the ministry in colonial society also diminished.

Donald Scott described the decline of clerical authority as the gradual professionalization of the position. Beginning with clergy in 1750, Scott convincingly portrays a clear diminution of ministerial authority; however, he attributes it to increasing interest in translocal issues such as abolition as well as the impact of the Second Great Awakening early in the nineteenth century. These two events certainly played a role but the deterioration of ministerial influence and status had begun much earlier.<sup>15</sup> While the decline of ministerial influence has been located in various political and theological

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that “Mrs. Holt entertained us with the antient respect paid to the Clergy in her own remembrance...She regrets the change that the ministers now are treated just as other men, & make as many bad debts as their neighbors,” *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts, Vol. I, 1784 -1792*, (Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1962), 246-247.

<sup>14</sup> Donald Scott, *From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry, 1750-1850*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978); Using data from the six volume set by Franklin Bowditch Dexter, M.A., *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College with the Annals of the College History*, 6 Vol. (Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1885), Scott demonstrates the dramatic decline in ministerial tenure during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. This set includes a biographical sketch for every Yale graduate between 1700 and 1815.

<sup>15</sup> Scott, *From Office to Profession*, Scott charts this transformation effectively and sparked my own analysis of colonial clergy. However, I differ with Scott on the impetus for the decline of ministerial authority.

aspects of colonial ministry,<sup>16</sup> the most poignant, albeit subtle demonstration of this trend can be found in the day-to-day interactions between clergy and their congregations.

In order to track this decline, one must determine the basis of ministerial authority at its height in the seventeenth century.<sup>17</sup> What exactly did the relationship between a minister and his flock rest upon? The earliest Puritan ministers came to America to establish a society where the word of God would provide the basis for both civil and

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<sup>16</sup> Sidney E. Meade, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America*, (Harper & Row, 1963); Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution*, (Harvard University Press, 1966); Nathan Hatch, "The Origins of Civil Millennialism in America: New England Clergymen, War with France, and the Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 31 (1974); and *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England*, (Yale University Press, 1977); and *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (Yale University Press, 1989); Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society and Politics in Colonial America*, (Oxford University Press, 1986); Harry Stout, "Religion, Communications, and the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 34 (1977); while these authors emphasize the political impact of colonial ministry, the following authors dwell upon the theological developments of the eighteenth century: Edwin Scott Gaustad, *The Great Awakening in New England*, (Harper and Row, 1957); C. C. Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism in New England: 1740-1800*, (Yale University Press, 1962); J. William T. Youngs Jr., *God's Messengers: Religious Leadership in Colonial New England, 1700-1750*, (Baltimore, Md., 1976); William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977*, (Chicago, 1978); Jon Butler, "Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction," *The Journal of American History* 69 (1982-83); and *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*, (Harvard University Press, 1990); Joseph Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards: Religious Tradition and American Culture*, (Chapel Hill, 1995); Michael J. Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England's Revival Tradition in Its British Context*, (Oxford University Press, 1991); Timothy D. Hall, *Contested Boundaries: Itinerancy and the Reshaping of the Colonial American Religious World*, (Duke University, 1994); Frank Lambert, *Inventing the Great Awakening*, (Princeton University Press, 1999); and *Pedlar in Divinity: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1745*, (Princeton, 1993); Harry Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism*, (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1991); James F. Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties: the Congregationalists in Colonial Massachusetts*, (Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> Historians who have shaped our most current understanding of Puritan ministry include Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, (Harvard University Press, 1954); and *Errand into the Wilderness*, (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956); Edmond Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea*, (New York University Press, 1963); Daniel Calhoun, *Professional Lives in America*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1965); Richard Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765*, (Harvard University Press, 1967); Darrett B. Rutman, *Winthrop's Boston: Portrait of a Puritan Town 1630-1649*, (University of North Carolina, 1965); David D. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century*, (New York, 1974); and *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England*, (Alfred A Knopf, 1989); Harry Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, (Oxford University Press, 1986).

ecclesiastical forms of government. Reeling from the authoritative and intrusive practices of the Church of England, New England colonists formed close, covenanted societies in which, theoretically at least, power lay within the entire membership. The laity elected their own ministers and furnished them with a voluntary maintenance from the brotherhood. The clergy's source of ministerial authority ultimately came from God but it was validated and empowered only through the congregation.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the egalitarian nature of Congregationalism, in practice the office of the ministry exacted deference from laymen in exchange for the faithful pastoral watch over the congregation. As early as the 1640s, ministers sought to define the offices of pastor and teacher in the Cambridge Platform.<sup>19</sup> In addition to delineating various practices of Congregationalism such as the details of church discipline, the Platform listed specific prerogatives of the clergy. Several of these rested on congregational limitations: the members could not "refuse" to assemble at the minister's request and members could not "speak" in church without permission from the elders.<sup>20</sup> In the quest for a purified collection of "visible saints", potential members also faced a public examination from the pastor to relate their conversion experience.<sup>21</sup> While the public aspect of this practice empowered the membership to partake in the discernment of worthy candidates, many potential members balked in the face of public testimony. As provisions were gradually

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<sup>18</sup> Hall, *Faithful Shepherd*, chapter 4; Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties*. Through his analysis of church records, Cooper emphasizes the congregational involvement in colonial ministry.

<sup>19</sup> Williston Walker, ed., *Creeches and Platforms of Congregationalism*, (New York, 1893); several historians mark the clergy's efforts to strengthen and defend their positions: Hall, *Faithful Shepherds*; Lazar Ziff, *The Career of John Cotton*, (Princeton University Press, 1962); Emory Elliot, *Power in the Pulpit in Puritan New England*, (Princeton, NJ, 1975).

<sup>20</sup> Hall, *Faithful Shepherd*, 111.

<sup>21</sup> Morgan, *Visible Saints*.

made for members to relate their conversion experiences in private to their pastors, clergy gained ever greater control over the admissibility of members.<sup>22</sup> The rhetoric of the Cambridge Platform may have maintained the Congregational nature of the New England Way by describing it as a contractual arrangement between congregation and clergy but the platform also reflected the clergy's efforts to hedge their ecclesiastical authority.

Later in 1662, the Halfway Covenant enlarged the boundaries of a minister's ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The first generation of Puritan settlers established their religious communities with their personal testimonies of faith. But when the next generation did not express the same degree of religious commitment, membership based on conversion experiences naturally dwindled. Clergy who espoused the Halfway Covenant noticeably enlarged their congregations and thus their ecclesiastical influence. Whether ministers sincerely used the Halfway Covenant as an evangelistic tool in order to bring people closer to sincere religious commitment or whether they merely sought retain their hegemony, the Halfway Covenant extended their waning clerical influence over a significant portion of the population.<sup>23</sup>

Early in the eighteenth century, ministers continued to describe their clerical roles in blatantly authoritarian terms. In an ordination sermon, Greenwood reminded the congregation of their position in respect to their new pastor.

If Ministers are the Rulers of the Church, then the Church is subject. They are not only Teachers but Governours of it... To them is committed the Power of the Keys, to set up and depose other Officers as Occasion requires, to open and shut the Doors of the Church, by Admission of

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<sup>22</sup> Hall, *Faithful Shepherd*, chapter 5.

<sup>23</sup> Although the Halfway Covenant may have extended clerical influence, it merely delayed the decline ministerial authority.

Members, Excommunication of Offenders, and restoration of Penitents.  
They, and they only have the Power to do these things.<sup>24</sup>

Although he admitted that “some” believed that the “Power of Government” was “lodged in the Fraternity, as well as the Presbytery,” Greenwood argued that ministers alone held this role.<sup>25</sup> Yet, as self-serving as it might seem, Congregational clergy did not invent their version of ecclesiastical hierarchy. Taking their view of church structure directly from scripture, they perceived their position to be one of elevated privilege but also one that was tempered by heightened responsibility. New Testament Scripture mandated that “the elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.”<sup>26</sup> This honor seemed justified given the additional warning in the book of James that “not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.”<sup>27</sup> Most colonial clergy took their ministerial calling seriously and expected deference for the office from their flocks.

Despite the Cambridge Platform, the Halfway Covenant, and the authoritarian rhetoric of their sermons, however, the actual influence and status of the colonial clergy remained surprisingly dependent upon their constituencies. While the degree of power

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<sup>24</sup> October 27, 1730, John Greenwood, *Temple of God to be measur'd by his ministers...*, (Boston, 1731), 28.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

<sup>26</sup> 1 Tim 5:17-20, New International Version; Ebenezer Grosvenor quoted from this passage when he reminded a congregation that “nothing is plainer than “a laborer is worthy of his hire”...It is plain duty, that the people ought to afford their minister a sufficient and honorable maintenance,” October 19, 1774, Ebenezer Grosvenor, *A Sermon preached at the Ordination of ...Daniel Grosvenor*, 18.

<sup>27</sup> James 3:1, New International Version.

and authority wielded by first-generation New England clergy is well documented, this emphasis also serves to disguise the level of influence congregations actually held over their ministers throughout the colonial period.<sup>28</sup> As James F. Cooper and others have demonstrated, the New England Way of Congregational churches may have endowed the clergy with an elevated social status within a well-defined hierarchy of church structure, but this did not mean that the laity simply suffered under the oppressive nature of authoritarian clergy. Laymen actively participated in church governance.<sup>29</sup>

While historians have tended to emphasize either the dominance of clerical control in the seventeenth century or the increasing boldness of congregational initiative in the eighteenth century, my research reveals a surprisingly constant theme of negotiation in the lay-clerical relationship. Colonial clergy could not simply demand social deference; they gained, retained, and eventually lost their ecclesiastical and civil authority through a complex process of negotiation with their congregation. Although the eighteenth century reflects a steady decline in the level of respect rendered to the office of the ministry, the theme of negotiation between the laity and the clergy remained consistent.

The lay-clerical relationship operated with mutual benefit. Each brought various spoken and unspoken expectations of the other into the relationship. In successful ministerial tenures, these expectations were met or negotiated to the satisfaction of each party. These most basic expectations, similar for most colonial communities, provided the framework for both the overt and as well as the more subtle forms of negotiation

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<sup>28</sup> Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*; and *Worlds of Wonder*.

<sup>29</sup> Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties*; Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*; *Worlds of Wonder*.

between a minister and his congregation. Despite the authoritative stance of many colonial clergy, in practice, the power of congregational approval or disapproval circumscribed clerical behavior to a greater degree than most historians have noticed.

### 2.1.1 *Congregational Expectations*

Throughout the eighteenth century, congregational expectations could vary by degree and quantity from one community to another, but at minimum, most congregations anticipated that a pastor would perform certain elemental tasks and maintain a basic level of pious behavior in the office of the ministry. First and foremost, congregations expected biblical exposition from their ministers on a regular basis. In more populated and older settlements, this might include both a morning and afternoon sermon on Sunday followed by a midweek lecture. At the very least, even in smaller congregations in the most remote areas, a Sunday morning sermon was the minimal requirement. Religious services could vary in regard to supplemental music, prayer, readings, and additional lay participation, but the service hinged on the sermon prepared and delivered by the minister. When ministers traveled, they necessarily arranged pulpit coverage in their absence. Pastors who became physically incapacitated by illness or injury tried the patience of their congregations who sometimes wearied of paying substitute ministers while simultaneously keeping up their pastor's salary.

As the primary function of the office of the ministry, preaching became the basis of selecting a minister to settle among the congregation. Candidates often preached several sermons for a church on a trial basis before they received an invitation to settle

among them. Congregations hoped to sample a potential pastor's oratory skills during candidacy. When the citizens of East Haven sought a minister to settle among them they voted "to seek Sir Heminway that he would give them a taste of his gifts, in order to settlement in the work of the ministry."<sup>30</sup> A month later, "they having had some taste of Sir Heminway in preaching the word" decided to formally offer Heminway the position.<sup>31</sup>

A sermon revealed various aspects of a candidate's promise as a potential pastor and his theological disposition, but candidates were tested for more than their doctrine and preaching style. After a six-month-trial, one promising candidate failed to secure the position with the Old South Church in Boston simply because his voice was considered too weak for the large meetinghouse.<sup>32</sup> Preaching was such a priority that a lengthy illness could precipitate a pastor's dismissal. Joseph Wheeler was deemed "unfit for the public Dispensing of the Word: and of late wholly unfit for it: Which has occasioned the Town Extraordinary Cost; and sometimes after all they have been left Destitute of Preaching upon the Sabbath Days."<sup>33</sup> When the ecclesiastical council recorded his vote of dismissal three weeks later, the church was careful to testify to both his "moral and Ministerial character" and to heartily "recommend him to any People that stand in need

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<sup>30</sup> Nov. 20, 1704, as quoted in Dexter, *Yale Biographies*, Vol. I, 23.

<sup>31</sup> Dec. 19, 1704, *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> In the 1760s, Joseph Dana, newly licensed to preach in 1763, supplied the pulpit of Old South Church to their satisfaction but he did not receive an invitation to settle permanently because "his voice was thought scarcely adequate to fill so large a building"; William Buell Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, (Robert Carter & Brothers, 1857), 598.

<sup>33</sup> From a statement offered by the deacons to an advisory council on July 7, 1768 as quoted in Henry S. Norse, *History of the Town of Harvard*, (Harvard, 1894), 197.

of his Labours should his Health ever permit him to engage in Ministerial Service.”<sup>34</sup> Even when incapacitated in other ways, clergy could maintain their ministry as long as they could preach. Paine Wingate continued to preach until “his youngest son had to carry him into the pulpit and hold him during the sermon.”<sup>35</sup> Other functions of the office may have been important to the congregation but no candidate was asked to settle based on his skills in performing sacramental duties of communion and baptisms. Nor was a minister chosen for his dutiful and regular visitation of the members; the minister’s weekly role as the messenger of God was his primary responsibility.

While the Bible represented a finite amount of material from which ministers could compose messages, congregations still expected the sermons they received be a fresh word from the Lord composed by their own minister. Several ministers irritated their parishioners by repeating sermons. Ebenezer Parkman agonized in his diaries over the many distractions, which kept him from sermon preparation. He typically waited until Saturday to prepare his message and after a particularly busy week, he often felt forced to rely on his own previously written and delivered sermons.<sup>36</sup> The first few times Parkman offered an old sermon, his journal entries were laced with guilt. But later on in his career, he justified his lack of new sermon material citing his many drop-in guests and

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<sup>34</sup> July 26, 1768, *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Clifton Kenyon Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...: with bibliographical and other notes, Vols. VII, (Oxford University Press, 1937), 289*; This massive collective biography of Harvard Graduates begins with the first graduating class in 1642. Langley Sibley edited the first 3 volumes, Shipton edited the Vol. 4 – 17, and the final volume was completed by Conrad Edick Wright and Edward W. Hanson. While collective biographies carry an inherent weakness in the bias of their authors, they are useful for tracking trends across a broad spectrum. The primary sources used in this collection are particularly well documented, even when they occasionally are beyond retrieval.

<sup>36</sup> *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782 First Part Three volumes in One, 1719-1755*, ed., Francis G. Walett, (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, 1974).

other duties, which kept him from his studies. Congregations could forgive the occasional repeated sermon and usually did not find it worthy of confrontation. But when clergy faced conflict over any other matter such as salary compliance, complaints about the sermons often emerged in the record of shortcomings they were holding against their pastor. This build-up of unvoiced criticism eventually caught Parkman off-guard who, upon hearing no objections, had repeated sermons with increasing frequency throughout his career.<sup>37</sup> An even worse offense was cited by another congregation who reported to the Windham association of ministers that William Bosson preached sermons, which they had “very good grounds to believe were not of his own composing.”<sup>38</sup> At minimum, congregations expected their ministers to avoid plagiarism. The clergy were not required to be dynamic or outstanding speakers but congregations did expect to hear a message recently composed for their personal benefit by their own minister.

These congregational aspirations for colonial clergy may appear petty but a legitimate concern lay just beneath the surface of their complaints. Regardless of the quality of the composition or the delivery, a newly written sermon reflected a minister’s time spent with God and in study of the scripture. Even when he admitted that the sermon was not a new composition, the minister who offered an old sermon, unwittingly attested to his own lack of study and lack of personal time with God.<sup>39</sup> Ordination

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<sup>37</sup> Feb., 15, 1748, *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 171.

<sup>38</sup> November 1730, as reported to the Windham association of ministers in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College, Vol. VII*, 149, this case (although the name is recorded here as ‘Blossom’) is also reported in Ellen Larned, *History of Windham County, Connecticut, Vol. I*, (Worcester, 1874), 44.

<sup>39</sup> *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, Parkman would occasionally admit to his congregation before he preached that the sermon would be a repeat. This admission seemed to alleviate some of the guilt he felt for resorting to old sermons.

candidates were encouraged to study for “if they are without Knowledge themselves, they cannot feed the People therewith...”<sup>40</sup> Pastors could only “rightly divide the Word of Truth” if they gave personal “Attendance to Reading, Exhortation, and Doctrine.”<sup>41</sup> On one hand, if congregations considered preaching to be the primary function of the office of the ministry, then all other issues should have been secondary. However, a lack of personal piety negated the most stellar delivery of God’s word. The desire for original sermons indicates that the congregations ultimately cared more about the piety of their ministers than about their preaching abilities.

Furthermore, if the minister presented someone else’s sermon material as his own, his own integrity was at stake. Congregations predictably attributed the sermon to the minister as the message he had personally received from God. To pass off the intellectual and spiritual property of another as his own, greatly compromised his veracity and brought his own piety into question. The sermons may have been designed as a message from God for the laity but the clergy dared not forget that the sermons also represented a weekly (and occasionally more frequent) witness of their own spiritual state.

Closely related to the expectation of personal piety, congregations also desired trustworthy ministers. As the “teacher of piety, religion and morality,” a pastor could be removed when he “created distrust” and destroyed the “confidence which is so essential for a preacher” to retain an effective ministry.<sup>42</sup> Confidence was not only essential for

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<sup>40</sup> October 27, 1730, Greenwood, *The Temple of God...*, 26.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> April 1, 1799, by a close vote of the town of Windham, John Brown’s services were terminated on the basis of these and other charges. Oddly enough, they recommended his dismissal but still offered their

ministerial success; it was “necessary for a people to have in one whom they are to consider their spiritual guide....”<sup>43</sup> The First Church of Gorham complained that their minister had “weaned our affections from him, and in a great measure spoilt his usefulness towards us: further, his common conduct seemeth to us to be very extraordinary in setting neighbors against neighbors, which keeps us in a fire of contention.”<sup>44</sup> Trustworthiness extended beyond their confidence in their minister’s integrity and personal piety; they also expected to be confident that their minister would promote peace within the community. Most colonial clergy made it a practice to regularly visit their parishioners throughout the year thus exposing themselves to the local disputes and community gossip. Although laymen routinely confided in their minister and even sought his advice, they did not always appreciate his interference in their conflicts. Colonial ministers did not miss much in terms of community conflict, but the more successful clergy deftly avoided direct involvement in it. Even when a congregation attempted to force the pastor to intervene as a peacemaker, wise ministers attempted to remain neutral between feuding parties.

Congregations did not expect perfection from their ministers yet, certain offenses reached beyond the pale. As the “teachers of piety, religion and morality,” personal scandals compromised their effectiveness and ultimate success in the office of the ministry. Incidences of intemperance, adultery, or other indiscreet acts could lead to

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recommendation to other churches; Abijah Perkins Marvin, *History of the Town of Winchendon: (Worcester County, Mass.) From the Grant of Ipswich Canada*, (Harvard University, 1868),166.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> March, 1757, in a letter addressed to the proprietors of Gorham from 21 of its inhabitants, *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith, and the Rev. Samuel Deane, pastors of the First church in Portland*, Williams Willis, ed., (Portland, 1849), 145; and in McLellan, *History of Gorham*, 181-182.

congregational charges, the calling of an ecclesiastical council to discuss their fate, and an ultimate dismissal. But congregations could also exhibit a surprising degree of forgiveness toward their spiritual leaders. Charged with “indiscreet acts” which remain unspecified for modern historians, Nicholas Bowes faced dismissal from his congregation. But “upon his formal confession it was voted that he should remain a brother in good standing and charity.”<sup>45</sup> He later served as a chaplain at Fort Edward. John Seccomb’s offense also evades detailed description but upon offering “Christian satisfaction for his offense” his congregation was “reconciled to him and Receive[d] him into their Charity.”<sup>46</sup> The process of dismissal was also underway for William Williams in the town of Weston when he presented an acceptable confession for his misdeeds. At the recommendation of an ecclesiastical council, the church received the confession of their pastor and voted to continue to accept his “Right to Ye Priviledge of special ordinances among them.”<sup>47</sup>

Other clergy responded to accusations with less humility. When the Windham County association of ministers met to hear criminal charges brought against John Wadsworth by a female parishioner, he refused to respond. The association thus determined his “usefulness and serviceableness in the ministry” to be “cut off and taken away by the scandal he lyeth under” and declared him “released from his pastoral

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<sup>45</sup> August 22, 1754, The town of Bedford voted Nicholas Bowes’ dismissal, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College*, VII, 456.

<sup>46</sup> In 1739, Norse, *The History of the Town of Harvard*, 189.

<sup>47</sup> October 24, 1750, Mary Frances Pierce, *The Town of Weston: Births, Deaths, Marriages, 1707-1850. 1703-Gravestones-1900. Church Records 1709-1825*, (Harvard, 1901), 533.

office.”<sup>48</sup> He neither bothered to confess nor attempted to clear his name. Under these circumstances, the congregation felt they had no choice but to assume his guilt. Yet, it was not the guilt of personal scandal, which cost him his pulpit. Rather, his lack of “visible” repentance became the determining factor. As the most “visible” of the “visible saints,” colonial clergy may have received less tolerance from their congregations than the average layman received for his offenses, but ministers who offered compelling repentance and owned their faults, however sordid or trivial, could earn back the favor of a forgiving congregation.<sup>49</sup>

Beyond the issues of personal character and piety, which displayed themselves in the clergy’s “publick ministry,” congregations also expected their pastors to execute other public tasks essential to their religious culture. As ordained ministers, they alone possessed the ecclesiastical authority to perform sacramental duties. The religious rituals and ordinances of baptism, marriage, and communion retained great social importance in colonial New England regardless of a colonist’s religious commitment. On the frontier, the initial desire for an organized church with a settled minister often revolved around the availability of these services. Some colonists were savvy enough to capitalize on this fact. Ezra Stiles noted that

Col. Godfry Malbone owns about one quarter of the land in the small parish of Brookline in Connecticut. For some years he voluntarily consented to pay a part of the ministerial Tax, as making a parish & settling a minister there has given perhaps a fourfold Value to his

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<sup>48</sup> May 27, 1741, Judgment from the Windham County Consociation regarding the ministry of Rev. John Wadsworth of the Church of Canterbury as quoted in Larned, *History of Windham*, 297.

<sup>49</sup> October 27, 1730, Greenwood, *The Temple of God*, 10; Greenwood explained that the church must be “formed, not out of ... dead Sinners, but visible Believers,” Morgan, *Visible Saints*.

Land...Col. Malbone is a Gentleman of Politeness & great Honor, was educated at Oxford, and dispised all Relligion.<sup>50</sup>

Apparently, Malbone's disregard for religion did not keep him from recognizing the social benefits of the religious institutions and benefiting from the colonists' religious interest.

Most religious colonists desired the prompt baptism of their infants and expected to be offered the sacraments in a communion service at periodic intervals. Based on church records, baptism clearly took precedence over participation in communion. In a lifetime, a pastor could tally the baptisms he performed to be in the thousands, while his additions to the church through membership might not exceed 500.<sup>51</sup> Little wonder that the clergy used the Halfway Covenant to increase their membership to include all of those who sought their services. These public tasks also represented a significant point of negotiation between clergy and their congregations. Ministers recognized the significance of infant baptisms for their flock and could withhold this service in a fit of retaliation for some previous offence.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> June 2, 1770, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, ed. under the Authority of the Corporation of Yale University by Franklin Bowditch Dexter, Volume 1, January 1, 1769 – March 13, 1776, (New York, 1901), 30-31.

<sup>51</sup> *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith, and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, 13; At the church of Harvard, Joseph Seccomb added 246 to membership and baptized 783 between 1733-1757, Joseph Wheeler added 65 and baptized 328 between 1759-1768, Daniel Johnson added 93 and baptized 371 between 1769-1777, and Ebenezer Grosvenor added 47 and baptized 137 between 1782-1788; Norse, *History of the Town of Harvard*, 190, 197, 201, 211.

<sup>52</sup> John Bowman refused to baptize Paul Hall's baby following a dispute in which Paul had "purposely shot and killed a number of Mr. Bowman's fowls" when they trespassed onto his land. The pastor was unwilling to baptize the child until their uneasiness had been resolved, "Remarks on the Result of an Ecclesiastical Council, Which met at Dorchester, on November 16, 1773," (Boston, 1774), 4.

Many basic congregational expectations became explicit only when parishioners were seeking their minister's removal and delineating their complaints to an ecclesiastical council. Joseph Wheeler's ill health had not only deprived his congregation of his "publick ministry" but "likewise in a great measure his private Instructions, Visiting the Sick, attending funerals, catechizing children, and Baptizing Infants."<sup>53</sup> These duties were not likely to be specified upon settlement but certainly comprised the unspoken expectations of parishioners.

Most clergy took visitation duties quite seriously. In addition to visiting those who were ill, many ministers took responsibility to visit each parishioner at least once a year in order to check on their religious health.<sup>54</sup> Some ministers found the task of systematic visitation with each family to be "as laborious as any in all my ministry."<sup>55</sup> Some kept meticulous records of each parishioner under his charge and monitored the number of visits he paid to each one throughout the year.<sup>56</sup> From these records, one can deduct either whom he felt closest to or who might have been his biggest "thorn in flesh." But whether or not laymen enjoyed spontaneous ministerial visits to inquire about their spiritual condition, parishioners did expect and sometimes demanded that ministers visit when they were ill. This pastoral function could become a tall order, which often reflected the general health of the population. In 1748, Thomas Smith recorded that he

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<sup>53</sup>From a statement offered by the deacons to an advisory council on July 7, 1768 as quoted in Henry S. Norse, *History of the Town of Harvard*, 197.

<sup>54</sup> Habijah Weld visited his parishioners several times a year to check on their religious health and reproved them for every failing that he unearthed, yet no one ever seemed to record a negative word to say against him, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College, Class of 1723, Vol. VII*, 271.

<sup>55</sup> 1686, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. I, 1682-1708*, (Fredrick Ungar Publishing Co., NY), 55, 114-115.

<sup>56</sup> *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*.

was “hurried perpetually with the sick” and that he had “not been in my study this week, only yesterday P.M. I am out all day visiting and praying with the sick.”<sup>57</sup> But three years later, in 1751 he noted that “It is a time of health and therefore a time of leisure with me.”<sup>58</sup>

Cotton Mather lived through several serious outbreaks of smallpox, which overwhelmed him with sick calls. Despite his best intentions, he simply could not keep track of nor respond to everyone who fell ill. A sarcastic entry in his journal suggests that some of his parishioners must have groused about his negligence, “The Flock ought to be better advised, about Sending for the Elders, to the sick, and not expecting them to come without sending for.”<sup>59</sup> For Mather, this congregational expectation had reached an unreasonable level and clearly exceeded his understanding of the pastoral role.

Although sick calls were a warranted and accepted responsibility understood by both clergy and the congregation, occasionally there was less agreement on the purpose of these visits. Ezra Stiles noted that he had been “Called to visit & pray with a sick person in the Eveng, as I frequently am.”<sup>60</sup> Whether this was a prayer for healing, a prayer for comfort, or a prayer regarding the sick person’s eternal destination is unclear, but at the very least, members frequently sought the presence of their pastor and his communication with God on their behalf. When Ebenezer Parkman was called to visit a dying woman, he dutifully asked her about the condition of her soul. To his surprise, his

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<sup>57</sup> 1748, *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith, and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, 12, 133.

<sup>58</sup> 1751, *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith, and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, 12.

<sup>59</sup> November 18, 1717, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. II, 1709-1724*, 489.

<sup>60</sup> August 31, 1785, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, 181.

interrogation in the presence of several family members infuriated the patient's elderly brother who considered the question private and unnecessary. The situation deteriorated into a loud confrontation in front of the dying woman who, according to Parkman, defended her minister.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps the family merely sought a prayer of healing for their loved one, while Parkman's view of the minister's role was to secure her soul for eternity through a confession of faith. Both layman and clergy agreed on the need for visiting the ill, but the purpose of the visitations was less clear.

When an illness resulted in death, congregations also expected their pastors to attend funerals. Given the death toll during outbreaks of small-pox and other viruses, funeral attendance also represented a time-consuming task for colonial clergy. Yet parishioners complained if ministers missed funerals or failed to make follow-up visits to those who had lost family members.<sup>62</sup> Fellow parishioners even felt free to complain *for* each other when they felt a pastoral visit was overdue to a grieving fellow member who was unlikely to demand his own visit.<sup>63</sup> For these natural rhythms of life, congregational expectations were high. In the extreme, congregations believed their ministers should respond to their beck and call any time of the day or night.<sup>64</sup> At minimum, congregations

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<sup>61</sup> March 31, 1727, *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 24.

<sup>62</sup> December 30, 1746, *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 147.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, one of his parishioners, Mrs. Maynard, reminded Parkman that he had neglected to visit Abner Newton since the death of his father, mother and little child. A surprised Parkman assured her that he had "neglected with no design" and would soon visit. Mr Maynard told him same thing the next day. Parkman made the visit that very day only to be assured by the Newtons that they had not felt slighted. He admitted his fault and recorded in his journal his concern that the ministry might not be blamed.

<sup>64</sup> September 30, 1741, Thomas Smith recorded that "at night I was called to Mrs. Stephen Jones, who it was said was a dying; I have for a fortnight prayed with her every day." His tone reflects a minister weary of responding at all hours of the day or night to crises which may be less imminent than his parishioners portrayed them, *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith, and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, 102; On his way to a

were appreciative when their pastors took note of their physical ailments and offered words of spiritual comfort.

Additional functions of the ministry involved private religious instruction. Private instruction could take several forms but one of the most common involved the catechizing of children within the congregation. In many towns, families bore the responsibility to provide religious instruction to their young. But when ministers sensed the demise of adequate religious training, clergy began to “assume the burden of catechizing all the children in the church or town.”<sup>65</sup> A pastor might invite children to come to his home for group religious instruction tailored to their level of maturity. Ministers also tutored and prepared young men from other communities for the ministry.<sup>66</sup> It was fairly common for a pastor to supplement his salary by taking in prospective ministry candidates to read theology and prepare them for further study at Harvard or Yale. Pastors offered most private instruction at their own discretion and the congregations rarely demanded these services. Congregations rarely complained about the lack of these services if their minister had never instigated them; but once a minister began children’s catechism, it was sorely missed if he failed to maintain it. In some ways, the clergy managed to generate some of the congregational expectations, which they later held against them.

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neighboring town, Parkman was called away from his traveling companions “at the urgent request” of a parishioner whose daughter-in-law was “under Spiritual Troubles,” April 11, 1739, *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 62.

<sup>65</sup> Hall, *Faithful Shepherd*, 169.

<sup>66</sup> Biographical sketches both in *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College* as well as *Biographical sketches of the Graduates of Yale* usually record where and with whom each minister read theology. Room and board generally accompanied this close mentor relationship between teacher and student.

### 2.1.2 *Expectations of clergy*

Clergy brought their own set of expectations to the office of the ministry. To some degree, their expectations mirrored those of their congregations, but they also carried some subtle differences. Armed with a college education and shaped by their training under seasoned ministers, most clergy expected some degree of deference, if not for their personal character, at least for the office of the ministry. While the degree of deference rendered to colonial clergy gradually diminished from its height among the first generation of Puritan divines, throughout the eighteenth century ministers continued to expect and encourage their parishioners to render appropriate respect toward the office of the ministry. The clergy's continuing insistence upon deference and their attempts to demarcate the ministerial role reflect their awareness of their own decreasing status and influence.<sup>67</sup>

Ordination sermons provided the perfect venue to describe clerical roles for the benefit of both the ordination candidate as well as the entire congregation. In these sermons, veteran clergy offered advice and warning to younger ministers. They challenged their charges not to expect more than they were likely to receive and emphasized the solemnity of their chosen profession. Experienced in the process of negotiating their own positions of authority, older, wiser clergy attempted to temper the enthusiasm of optimistic ministerial candidates. Veteran clergy also took the opportunity to challenge congregational expectations and remind parishioners of the sacred nature of the ministerial role. Ordination sermons were generally given by a visiting preacher who

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<sup>67</sup> Cooper notices an increase in ministerial authoritarian attitudes in the eighteenth century but also contends that they "could not exercise increased control in local churches by simply claiming the right to do so." They were still held in check by lay consent, Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties*, 180.

had little at stake with the captive audience he found at ordination services; a visiting minister's future did not rest on his relationship to the host congregation. As such, ordination sermons tend to offer some the clergy's most candid views of colonial ministry.

In a sermon preached for the ordination of Samuel Kingsbury, Amos Adams reminded the congregation of the deference they owed their new preacher.

I am far from supposing Ministers infallible, I would have all Christians examine Judgment for themselves: We should exercise no Dominion over your Consciences, we are not Lords over God's Heritage; but yet there is a Regard to be given to men who make it the whole Business of their Lives to know the Mind of Christ.<sup>68</sup>

In return for their lifelong dedication to spiritual concerns, colonial ministers believed their views and position were worthy of respect. In another ordination sermon, Ebenezer Grosvenor pointed out that "there is a power that belongs to the pastor," and "privileges that belong to the people."<sup>69</sup> Yet, his remarks reflect more concern for potential congregational misuse of privilege than pastoral misuse of power. Grosvenor emphasized the seriousness of the congregation's role in ordination. Once a flock had claimed the "right...to ordain their minister," Grosvenor warned them not to "assume the right [to] release themselves from his charge over them, at their pleasure: - They would then...assume a right, which they have no right to."<sup>70</sup> The privilege of arbitrary dismissal

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<sup>68</sup> November 25, 1761, Amos Adams, *A Sermon preached at the Ordination of ... Samuel Kingsbury*, (Boston, 1762), 17-18.

<sup>69</sup> October 19, 1774, Grosvenor, *A Sermon preached at the Ordination of ... Daniel Grosvenor*, 12.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 14-15.

of a minister clearly eroded the deference colonial clergy expected to receive in the office of the ministry.

Yet, clergy recognized the price for the deference they expected. Despite the waning respect and influence over the course of the century, many of the fundamental expectations that ministers brought to the office of the ministry remained consistent. As students of the word of God, clergy anticipated spending much of their career in study. Fresh from their college careers, some craved time spent in study while others found it difficult even to find time to study. Highly disciplined ministers like William Bentley, might dedicate the first part of their week to writing out two sermons for the following Sunday but other ministers rarely began sermon preparation before Saturday.<sup>71</sup> John Barnard confessed that he battled the “temptation” to “be idle and neglect my studies many times to put off preparations for the Sabbath to the Latter end of the Week.”<sup>72</sup> Others recognized the danger of spending too much time in study. Robert Breck advised an ordination candidate to get out of his house on a regular basis. “If ministers did more towards preparing their public discourses on the horse, and less in the study, it would be more for their health, and in no degree injurious to the people.”<sup>73</sup> There was clearly more than one way to prepare a sermon.

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<sup>71</sup> *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman; Diary of William Bentley, Vol. 1*, xviii, although he was less introspective than some ministers, Bentley’s four volume diary is a rich resource for the social history of the period. He diligently recorded marriages, births, deaths and baptisms with detail. Perhaps in part because he never experienced the distraction of marriage and children, his journals are quite complete with the social events of the period. Bentley’s involvement in various ecclesiastical councils and his extensive traveling habits acquainted him with the details of many of his clergy contemporaries and their congregational situations.

<sup>72</sup> *Congregational Quarterly*. IV, 382, documented in *Shipton, Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard, Vol. V.*, 477.

<sup>73</sup> Robert Breck, “The Character of a Good Minister,” in *Two Discourses*, (Springfield, 1783), 60.

As the primary function of the office, sermon delivery represented the most minimal requirement of their position and took precedence over other pastoral duties. Yet, older clergy warned prospective ministers against approaching the task of sermon preparation in a perfunctory manner, “do not pinch them with scanty sermons, for with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.”<sup>74</sup> Veteran clergy recognized the potential to “turn their people off with their old sermons” when they “omitted their studies” out of their own “laziness.”<sup>75</sup> Ministers could not simply expect deference for the office of the ministry without realizing the seriousness of fulfilling their responsibilities. Experienced ministers also understood the power of a congregation to “mete” out their own measure of justice. Although a congregation might initially offer their minister deference out of respect for the office, he only retained that respect and influence through the faithful performance of expected behavior.

However, some ministers found their sermon preparation to be complicated by “worldly incumbrances” and “unnecessary diversions.”<sup>76</sup> Most eighteenth-century clergy brought at least a minimal expectation of pecuniary remuneration in exchange for their ministerial work but in many cases, ministers found their salaries to be insufficient as their sole source of revenue. When a preacher depended upon supplemental income in order to provide for his family, he was predictably distracted from a singular focus on his

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<sup>74</sup> September 18, 1728, John Tufts, *A Humble Call to Archippus...A sermon at the Ordination of Rev. Mr. Benjamin Bradstreet*, (Boston, 1729), 22.

<sup>75</sup> Samuel Dunbar, *The Duty of Christ's Ministers*, (Boston, 1775), 7; Ebenezer Grosvenor warned against a minister who “neglects his work, and trifles away his time; or is too much entangled with the affairs of this life,” lest he “bring reproach upon his office, disgrace himself, wound religion, and give just cause of uneasiness and offence to the people he is among,” October 19, 1774, Grosvenor, *A Sermon preached at the Ordination of ...*, 12, 13.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

ministerial duties. Ironically, as a minister sought to augment his income, the very people who could not or would not meet his financial needs sometimes criticized their pastor's lack of singular focus on the office of the ministry.<sup>77</sup> At least one shrewd minister used this angle to negotiate for a higher salary.

I am still willing to continue the pastor of this church and congregation on condition of such support as will give me time to do the work of a minister of the gospel; but on this point I am extremely perplexed to know how to express myself. What I have had is not fully sufficient for the purpose, and the people think it is as much as they can conveniently pay. Here then lies the difficulty; when I labour for my own support the people think I neglect the ministry: If I labour not, my family suffers.<sup>78</sup>

The town and congregation worked out a compromise that must have been satisfactory, for the minister continued in that place for forty-seven more years.<sup>79</sup> Phineas Whitney offered a veiled threat to his congregation who had not met his stipulated salary; “you must not blame me if I don't trust your generosity so late another year, nor if I continue to pay some small attention to some other business which may assist a little to support me.”<sup>80</sup>

Many colonial clergy balanced other equally demanding professional careers with their pastoral duties. Early in the colonial period, clergy often practiced medicine and

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<sup>77</sup> Bunker Gay's congregation sent a committee to “advise him...not to employ so much of his time in secular employments, so as to hinder his studies and render him unfit and unable to perform the ministerial function,” Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College*, Vol. XIV, 607.

<sup>78</sup> November 1774, Paul Coffin, *Collections of the Maine Historical Society*, Vol. IV, (Portland, 1856), 246.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 259, Coffin preached his farewell sermon in 1821.

<sup>80</sup> March 1778, A letter “To the Inhabitants of the District of Shirley,” in Seth Chandler, *History of the Town of Shirley*, (Shirley, 1883), 224.

offered legal services to their communities.<sup>81</sup> Management of extracurricular business activities came easily to some ministers while others found even a small farming enterprise to be a great distraction from the ministerial role. Ezra Stiles managed to run a successful silk farm operation without sacrificing his attention to his ministry or arousing complaints.<sup>82</sup> But Ebenezer Parkman would spend most of the week during crucial periods of the farming season riding through his parish soliciting labor from parishioners, which had been promised in his contract. One wonders if his farming tasks might have been accomplished in less time if he had merely stayed home and tackled it himself. His diary is rife with preoccupation with his farm's labor needs and his subsequent frustration that unannounced Saturday visitors interrupted his only remaining time for sermon preparation.<sup>83</sup>

But beyond the excuses for a lack sermon preparation, perhaps the most damaging interpretation of a poorly prepared sermon was that the minister simply did not have a message from God to preach. As influential as their sermons might be, the sermon also represented a significant point of vulnerability for the clergy. While the congregation might have attributed a weak sermon to a lack of personal diligence and devotion, for the clergy, a weak sermon could represent a lack of favor with God. Ministers believed that

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<sup>81</sup> Benjamin Prescott, Harvard class of 1709; Samuel Phillips, Harvard class of 1708; Benjamin Doolittle, Yale class of 1716; Timothy Collins, Yale class of 1718; John Smith, Yale class of 1727; Timothy Mix, Yale class of 1731; these ministers represent just a sampling of those who juggled the practice of law or medicine as well as the office of the ministry; Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College, Vol. V.*; Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College*, Volumes 1-6.

<sup>82</sup> Ezra Stiles was farming silk worms on the side and sent a large shipment of 450 pounds on February 18, 1772 yet seems to thrive upon his diligent organizational and administration skills, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*; Ebenezer Parkman, however, struggled to stay abreast of his weekly sermon duties while keeping his farm work done, *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*.

<sup>83</sup> July 10 and 21, 1740, Parkman continued to repeat sermons but never seems comfortable with the practice, *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 81.

a successful sermon was not solely a result of careful preparation; they understood that God granted the increase.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, a poor sermon reflected not only poor preparation but also a lack of supernatural intervention. Most clergy knew that they exposed their personal interaction with God and his Word when they preached their sermons and expressed their discouragement in their journals when they believed they had fallen short of the task or when God had not seemed to give them power in the pulpit.<sup>85</sup>

Clergy preached with the authority placed in the office of the ministry but they ministered under the shadow of their personal character and piety. The successes and failures of their ministerial careers rested in large part on their example of a Christian life to their congregations. Ministers challenged each other to guard their behavior carefully. By virtue of their prominent public position within the community, colonial clergy functioned as local celebrities in many places. Cotton Mather found local fame to be both a bane and a blessing at various moments in his life. Early in his preaching career he confessed the “Temptation of being flock’d after” and reminded himself that “an affection of displaying ones gift before Throngs, is too often an abominably proud Fishing for popular Applause.”<sup>86</sup> But seventeen years later as he attempted to court a

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<sup>84</sup> Thomas Smith referred to God’s intervention in his sermon delivery as “assistance” in 1733 on January “29. Public Fast. A very full meeting. I was as much enlarged, and had the most extraordinary assistance that ever (I think) I found...I here record it to encourage myself to depend and rely upon God, having been enabled to pray for assistance more than usual, being out of order, and much concerned about it,” and again in 1775 on August “25. I went over to Purpoodock and lodged at Mr. Clark’s. 26. I preached there with much assistance and to much acceptance,” *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith, and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, 79, 230.

<sup>85</sup> August 18, 1745, Following a Sunday morning when Parkman repeated a sermon, he “mourn[s] over my Dullness and want of Spiritual taste,” *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 122; Thomas Prince worried about his pastor, Peter Thatcher claiming, “He was so dejected, on Account of the Unsuccessfulness of his Ministry; that every Time I went thither, he wou’d be discoursing with me about laying it down,” *Christian History*, II, 79, in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard*, Vol. V. 320.

second wife, attention from the community was less desirable. He complained that “I have the Inconvenience of being a Person, whom the Eye and the Talk of the People is very much upon.”<sup>87</sup> Whether good or bad, ministerial behavior became the stuff of newspapers and the talk of the towns. Ministers could whine about this fact or they could use it as a tool of their ministry; Mather eventually learned to accept his notoriety and hoped that through his own experiences of suffering, he could teach his flock by example.<sup>88</sup>

Maintaining a personal example worthy of imitation required personal discipline and directly affected a pastor’s clerical success. Young ministers were challenged to

take heed unto your Self also, that your conversation in all things, be as becomes the Gospel...The better Christian you are, the more useful and successful Minister you are like to be. If you fall under declension in personal Holiness, your whole Flock as well as your own Soul will fare the worse for it...<sup>89</sup>

Success might have been a fluid concept for colonial ministers but their view of failure sheds light on the expectations they brought into ministry. In his resignation, Roy Fairfield admitted “little if any apparent success, attending Ministry among you, evidenced by no additions being made to the Church and by the fewness of those who

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<sup>86</sup>April 1685, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. I*, 93.

<sup>87</sup> June 1702, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. I*, 487; During his ministry late in the eighteenth century, Lyman Beecher described feeling like he was being “watched like a cat” by his congregation, *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, Charles Beecher, ed., Vol. I., (New York, 1865), 103.

<sup>88</sup> In 1713 when Mather’s wife, his infant twins, his two-year-old child, and his maid all died within a 3 week period, he worried about “giving the Town, an Exemple of bearing Adversity after a suitable Manner...” *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. II*, 263; John Greenwood contended that “Ministers are set as Lights for others to observe and walk by...And Persons will be most apt to follow their Leaders Examples,” October 27, 1730, Greenwood, *The Temple of God*, 27.

<sup>89</sup> Tufts, *A humble call to Archippus*, 21-22.

attend the public worship....” He further hoped that by “the ministry of another” the “decayed Church” would “revive and increase in numbers and graces.”<sup>90</sup>

Colonial clergy generally kept careful records of church membership, marriages, and baptisms.<sup>91</sup> They, above anyone else, tracked their own progress in expanding the flock.<sup>92</sup> At the very least, ministers hoped for natural increase through the children of current members. But clergy also noticed significant drops in lay attendance or negligence in taking communion. On Nov. 5, 1769, Ezra Stiles listed all 29 individuals in attendance and another 11 absentees by name. The next year he recorded that although his “Congregn. Consists of five hundred & fifty souls Whites & seventy Black, Men Wom. & Children. But of these about fifty or 55 are Communicants.”<sup>93</sup>

Pastors recognized that a variety of legitimate reasons might keep a member from the communion table, but the most serious excuse for not receiving communion involved the layman’s spiritual condition.<sup>94</sup> Scripture advised those who came to the communion

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<sup>90</sup> 1798, Roy P. Fairfield, *Sands, Spindles, and Steeples*, (Portland, 1956), 21.

<sup>91</sup> Record keeping tended to be the responsibility of the pastor and could even become a point of contention if an irritated pastor refused to surrender the record books: one pastor took record books with him to a newly divided parish when the town refused to settle accounts with him in 1723, another refused to relinquish record books over a pension dispute with his congregation in 1764, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College; Vol. V.*, 388; another pastor contended with a colleague minister over who got to maintain the church record books in 1786, *The Diary of William Bentley, V. I*, 49; Ezra Stiles is an example of a particularly meticulous record keeper, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*.

<sup>92</sup> Thomas Smith described church attendance in general terms such as a “very full meeting” (Jan. 29, 1733) or a “very thin meeting” (April 19, 1747), and at other times he reported more specifically “An exceeding full congregation and communion; and yet I reckoned more than sixty heads of families that were absent, and many of their families with them,” (August 3, 1740), *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, 79, 128, 94.

<sup>93</sup> *Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, 28, 33.

<sup>94</sup> Cotton Mather considered the state of his flock noting on May 6, 1711 – “There is among the Communicants of our church, a Number of exceeding wicked People, and yett such as cannot easily be

table to first examine their spiritual state. In regard to the sacrament of communion, the New Testament further warned “he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.”<sup>95</sup> This passage could strike fear in the heart of a timid believer and keep some conscientious members at home.<sup>96</sup> As the “spiritual parents” of their flock, a minister kept watch over the spiritual condition of his congregation and felt responsible to verify their absences.<sup>97</sup> Attendance to public worship and sacramental ordinances served as an important marker of the congregation’s religious vitality and the minister’s level of success.

Colonial clergy anticipated visiting sick congregational members but many regularly visited their flock with their spiritual health in mind. Besides verbal inquiries regarding a parishioner’s spiritual state, pastors attempted to increase their ecclesiastical influence by handing out books of piety. By offering their members spiritual instruction in book form, some ministers reasoned that they were “preaching to many of them” every day of the year.<sup>98</sup> Samuel Sewall “relished giving books away” and used them to “create networks of exchange.”<sup>99</sup> Another minister lamented the lack of book reading in his community but his poor salary prevented him from passing out “So much in Books of

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reached by our Discipline.” Thus he determined to “study the best Wages I can, to recover the Wicked out of their miscarriages,” *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. II*, 69, 70.

<sup>95</sup> King James Version, I Corinthians 11:29.

<sup>96</sup> Erik R. Seeman, *Pious Persuasions: Laity and Clergy in Eighteenth Century New England*, (John Hopkins University Press, 1999); Seeman discusses the laity’s cautious and serious approach to communion. Despite the clergy’s encouragement to partake, the laity did not want to risk coming to the table unworthy of the sacrament.

<sup>97</sup> Thomas Foxcraft, *Ministers, Spiritual Parents...Preached at the Ordination of John Lowell*, (Boston, 1726).

<sup>98</sup> Feb., 1705, *Cotton Mather Diary, Vol. I*, 539.

<sup>99</sup> Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, 236.

piety among them as I would be glad to do.”<sup>100</sup> For the clergy, a successful ministry exhibited heightened spiritual interest among the flock.

In general, ministers were pleased to encourage increasing religious vitality in their communities. Particularly in times of revival, ministers rejoiced in the increased religious vitality of their congregations and communities. At their onset, the dramatic revivals of the 1740s were received with joy and wide participation among New England congregational churches. Several preachers who would later ban him from their midst, had initially welcomed George Whitefield into their pulpits. These revivals began to polarize the clergy only after they became known for excessive emotionalism and after Whitefield had offended many clergy by questioning whether many of them had ever been converted.<sup>101</sup>

Conversely, ministers lamented the waning of spiritual interest within their communities and congregations.<sup>102</sup> Clergy marked their ministries by the number and length of various revivals or harvests.<sup>103</sup> Lyman Beecher admitted that “his revivals were slower in coming, more gradual in their movement,” but they lasted longer because he did not “push it by protracted meetings....”<sup>104</sup> Revivals may have come in various forms

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<sup>100</sup> Feb. 28, 1733/4, John Owen, Colman Mss. (Mass. Hist. Soc.) documented in Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale, Vol. VII, 1722-1725*, 244-245.

<sup>101</sup> These happenings are well documented in the following works: Gaustad, *The Great Awakening in New England*; Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism in New England*; McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America*; Stout, *The Divine Dramatist*.

<sup>102</sup> Jonathan Edwards described the rise and fall of the colonial revivals, Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative*, C.C. Goen, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: The Great Awakening*, (Yale University Press, 1972).

<sup>103</sup> Solomon Stoddard noted five different “harvests” that occurred during his ministry, Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 159.

to various preachers, but the heightened spiritual interest which revivals promoted with a congregation represented ministerial success and influence.

Ultimately, all pastoral duties, public and private, theoretically concerned the “edification” of the congregation. Sermons, examples of piety, visitation, religious instruction, and sacramental duties all represented the clergy’s efforts to be “serviceable” to their flocks. Ministers acknowledged the hierarchy of church structure and considered themselves “rulers” but as rulers, they also saw themselves as “servants of those over whom they rule[d].”<sup>105</sup> Caleb Prentiss reminded an ordination candidate that “spiritual, as well as civil rulers, are designed to be Ministers of God for good unto the people: Their authority is given for edification, and not for destruction. They are not to be lords over God’s heritage.”<sup>106</sup> Overall, a successful colonial ministry required a careful balance of clerical duties.

In return for their faithful administration of clerical duties, clergy expected to receive some form of pecuniary compensation. Whether that support took the form of voluntary maintenance or a mandatory tax upon each proprietor, ministers rarely served without any remuneration for their services.<sup>107</sup> Clergy justified their remuneration from the scriptures. In a pamphlet endorsing the general taxation to support the ministry, Joseph Metcalf quoted from the fifth chapter of I Timothy,

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<sup>104</sup> *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, Vol. I*, 216.

<sup>105</sup> Caleb Prentiss, *A Sermon, Preached at the Installment of ...Joseph Willard...in Boxborough*, (Worcester, 1786), 7.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> It was not uncommon for a minister to offer to forego their salaries in times of hardship or warfare, however the relinquishment of their stated pecuniary arrangements only represented a meaningful gesture if a consistent expectation of payment existed.

Let the Elders which Rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they which labour in the Word and Doctrine, for the Scripture saith, “Thou shalt not muzzle the Ox that treadeth out the Corn, and the Labourer is worthy of his reward.”<sup>108</sup>

Although the neighboring Quakers disputed this feature, most Congregational parishioners did not object to ministerial salaries in principle. Congregations offered a variety of salary and settlement packages to potential ministerial candidates.<sup>109</sup> Yet, these financial arrangements easily became a point of dispute when other expectations were not met and negotiated both to the clergy and to the congregation’s satisfaction.

The relationship between a minister and his flock rested upon mutual spoken and unspoken expectations. Within the framework of these expectations, ministers negotiated with their congregations to retain their positions of authority. Congregations recognized ministers as the voice of God to his people but ministers also represented fallible human messengers.<sup>110</sup> To the degree that congregations became distracted by the humanity of their ministers, they could find it difficult to see them as the courier of God’s message. Ministers also understood the precarious nature of their position as the voice of God. Most recognized their need to retain the respect of their parishioners in order to fulfill

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<sup>108</sup> Thomas Chalkley, “Forcing a maintenance not warrantable from the Holy Scripture, for a minister of the Gospel. Being an answer to some false and erroneous [sic] pages, writ by Joseph Metcalfe tending to stir up persecution by Thomas Chalkley,” (Philadelphia, 1714); although a copy of Metcalf’s original document is not known to exist, Chalkley’s careful refutation carries the substance of his argument.

<sup>109</sup> The biographical sketches of Yale and Harvard graduates attest to a wide variety of salary packages and negotiations which usually included a partial cash arrangement accompanied by promises of firewood and ministerial land for their improvement; Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale, 6 Vol.* and Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College, Vol. V – XVII.*

<sup>110</sup> Cotton Mather prayed that he might be “the mouth of God to the people,” *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. II, 279.*

their role as God’s messengers.<sup>111</sup> Successful ministries depended upon the careful negotiation of expected behavior and faithful execution of clerical duties. Clerical authority may have emanated from God but a minister only retained it when a congregation endorsed and empowered their minister as an authentic messenger of God.

### 2.1.3 *Pillars of Ministerial Authority*

While many of the fundamental expectations of congregations and clergy remained fairly constant over time, social and economic factors which contributed to ministerial authority were subject to change during the eighteenth century. Bolstered by their intellectual, educational and financial superiority, a monopoly on sacramental duties and religious instruction, and the impact of localism, seventeenth-century puritan divines had operated as little “popes” in many places.<sup>112</sup> A traveler passing through a New England town asked the minister, “Are you, Sir, the person who serves here? To whom he replied, I am, Sire the person who rules here.”<sup>113</sup> This level of ecclesiastical authority and social influence, however, did not exist merely because clergy demanded it. Several social and economic factors specific to the stage of colonial development in the seventeenth century provided the pillars of their ministerial hegemony.

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<sup>111</sup> Ordination sermons reminded ministerial candidates to live up to the office of the ministry.

<sup>112</sup> Solomon Stoddard’s firm hand over his congregation earned him the reputation of a “pope” in North Hampton; Perry Miller maintained that ministers ultimately controlled their congregations and quotes the seventeenth-century minister, Samuel Stone, who described Congregationalism as a “speaking aristocracy in the face of a silent democracy”; Miller, *The New England Mind*, 441, 452; Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd; and Worlds of Wonder*.

<sup>113</sup> Quoted from “Genealogical Memoirs of the Family of Rev. Nathaniel Rogers,” NEGHR, V (1851), 124 in Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, 15; Hall freely admits that this account may be “apocryphal” yet he contends that it still conveys the sense of power held by early Puritan divines.

The earliest generations of New England clergy generally enjoyed intellectual and educational superiority over those that they shepherded. While ministers migrating to the colonies typically possessed college degrees from England, the establishment of Harvard and Yale began to produce college-educated clergy on American soil.<sup>114</sup> Most early graduates from these universities trained for the ministry and eventually pastored Congregational churches.<sup>115</sup> As the majority of these college graduates trained specifically for the ministry and then dispersed throughout New England congregations, clergy often found themselves the most highly educated persons in their communities.<sup>116</sup>

Although these collegiate schools originated from a “sincere regard to and Zeal for upholding & Propagating of the Christian Protestant Religion by a succession of Learned & Orthodox men,” clerical education degrees included much more than theological studies.<sup>117</sup> Students were “instructed in the Arts & Sciences” with the intention that they might be “fitted for Publick employment both in Church and Civil State.”<sup>118</sup> Harvard and Yale graduates received rigorous training in classical languages, biblical languages and philosophy. Clergy not only qualified as some of the best-

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<sup>114</sup> Hall, *Faithful Shepherd*, 72; While not all migrating ministers held college degrees, “all but a few were experienced professionals.”

<sup>115</sup> Schmotter offers a quantitative analysis of Harvard and Yale graduates revealing that between the years of 1691 and 1710, out of 273 graduates, 157 became ministers while only 16 dedicated themselves to medicine and only 6 chose the law; James Schmotter, “Ministerial Careers in Eighteenth-Century New England: The Social Context, 1700-1760,” *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, (1975), 250.

<sup>116</sup> Ebenezer Parkman was “for many years the only man in Westborough who had been to college, (and) was the intellectual leader of his community,” *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782, Vol. I*, xi; Schmotter notes the seventeenth-century clergy’s demand for standards of “piety and scholarship” among their ministerial candidates and the increasing quest to formalize these standards in the eighteenth century; James Schmotter, “The Irony of Clerical Professionalism: New England’s Congregational Ministers and the Great Awakening,” *WMQ* 3<sup>rd</sup> Ser., Vol. 31, Summer 1979, 151.

<sup>117</sup> Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College*, 3; Yale was known first as seminary.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

educated men in their communities, many held renown throughout the colonies. The Rev. John Adams was known as a poet and a “Master of Nine Languages.”<sup>119</sup> Stephen Sewall served as the first Professor of Oriental Languages at Harvard College, and was reputed to be the best classical scholar of the day.<sup>120</sup> Other clergy practiced medicine and law.<sup>121</sup> Early colonial clergy frequently participated in or performed autopsies in an effort to research the physical afflictions, which claimed colonial lives.<sup>122</sup> While those professions may not have represented their primary vocation, their biological and legal knowledge generally equaled or exceeded most laymen in their community.

Despite the argument later posed by unschooled itinerate preachers such as Lorenzo Dow that even the Apostle Peter was an ordinary, uneducated fisherman; New England clergy defended the premise for college-educated ministers from scripture.<sup>123</sup> Mather Byles reminded his congregation that the Apostle Paul was a “scholar” before he ever began his ministry. Byles insisted that “A Minister then, should be a Man of universal Knowledge” and should “understand the Controversies of the Polemical

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<sup>119</sup> Harvard class of 1721, Matthew Adams to Josiah Cotton, Curwen Mss. (A.A.S.), III, II in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College, Vol. VI*, 425.

<sup>120</sup> *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, 306.

<sup>121</sup> For many years Westborough had no other lawyer so in addition to his pastoral duties, Parkman also drafted deeds, wills and business documents for his parishioners, *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782, Vol. I*, xi; see additional examples listed in footnote 69.

<sup>122</sup> April 1, 1693, A bowel obstruction was discovered to be the cause of Cotton Mather’s infant son’s death which had been foretold by a “specter”, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. I*, 163-164.

<sup>123</sup> Lorenzo Dow stated “...larnin isn’t religion, and eddication don’t give a man the power of the Spirit.... Peter was a fisherman- do you think he ever went to Yale college?...When the Lord wanted to blow down the walls of Jericho, he didn’t take a brass trumpet, or a polished French horn; no such thing; he took a ram’s horn-a plain natural ram’s horn-just as it grew. And so, when he want to blow down the wall of the spiritual Jericho...he don’t take one of your smooth, polite, college larnt gentlemen, but a plain, natural ram’s horn sort of man like me.” Lorenzo Dow, “Call to Preach,” as quoted in Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 20.

Systems; and be a ready Causist to the doubting Mind.”<sup>124</sup> The clergy perceived their advanced education as a tool for the kingdom in order to convince doubting men of the truths of God’s word. Some even found it necessary to display their education to the community. Cotton Mather believed it was important to wear his “Signet Ring as a Token and Assertion of the Doctorate in Divinity.”<sup>125</sup> While their personal status among the community may not have been as self-serving as it first appears, the exclusive nature of their college educations definitely rendered New England clergy the benefit of intellectual and educational superiority over their flocks.<sup>126</sup>

The clergy did not rest on the laurels of their higher education; they actively sought to further their scholarly achievements. Although some ministers did not garner the wages to accommodate their taste for printed materials, many slowly but consistently built their own personal libraries throughout their lifetime. Occasionally, the value of these libraries comprised the primary asset of their estates.<sup>127</sup> Upon the death of a fellow clergyman, ministers might purchase the entire lot as they continued to collect prized religious materials.<sup>128</sup> Long after the taking of their initial degrees, ministers continued to network with former collegiates and fellow clergy.<sup>129</sup> The cooperative nature of

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<sup>124</sup> Mather Byles, *The Man of God*, (New London, 1758), 10-11.

<sup>125</sup> *Cotton Mather Diary, Vol. II, 1709-1724*, 63.

<sup>126</sup> Perry Miller quotes Samuel Stone who declared that the colonial clergy represented a “speaking aristocracy in the face of a silent democracy,” Miller, *The New England Mind*, 441, 452.

<sup>127</sup> Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale, Vol. 1-6*; throughout these 6 volumes, the value of a minister’s personal estate often contains the value of his library as a marker of his financial success or lack thereof.

<sup>128</sup> In 1702, a generous parishioner provided Cotton Mather with the necessary funds to purchase the library of a late minister when he heard that Mather desired it, *Cotton Mather Diary, Vol. II, 1709-1724*, 2.

ordination ceremonies and ecclesiastical councils also provided an important network of colonial ministers who worked together.<sup>130</sup> Many attended subsequent graduation ceremonies at Harvard and Yale and received advanced degrees while holding permanent positions as pastors.

Besides the opportunities to interact with fellow clergy at graduations and minister meetings, many clergy also subscribed to various publications, which kept them informed of both ecclesiastical and civil affairs.<sup>131</sup> With their connections and access to even transatlantic events, colonial clergy functioned as the locus of outside information to their own communities. Historians even attempt to determine the doctrinal leanings of various clergy based on the type of publications to which they subscribed.<sup>132</sup> Pastors not only absorbed printed material for their own benefit, many published their own works, which became distributed among the colonies. Given the scope of ministerial status, influence and civil authority early colonial clergy possessed, the notoriety, which developed from this form of publicity, is difficult to overstate. Even bad publicity for

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<sup>129</sup> Given the limited number of ministers in New England during the seventeenth century and the compact nature of settlement patterns, ministers remained close enough to stay in contact and often listed news of other ministers in their diaries, *Cotton Mather Diary, Vol. I and II*.

<sup>130</sup> Youngs gives a helpful discussion of ordination practices in New England; J. William T. Youngs, Jr., "Congregational Clericalism: New England Ordinations before the Great Awakening," *WMQ* 3<sup>rd</sup> Ser. 31, (1974) 481-490.

<sup>131</sup> Parkman kept up with colonial news through frequent travels and subscriptions to newspapers, *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782, Vol. I*, xi; Whether through independently published pamphlets or public newsletters and newspapers, Schmotter discusses the opportunities for staying abreast of religious debates and maintaining access to the press particularly in Northeast Massachusetts counties where 41% of the ordained Congregational clergy resided in 1700; Schmotter, "Ministerial Careers," 255.

<sup>132</sup> Shipton often uses a minister's subscription to various publications by feuding authors like Charles Chauncey and Jonathan Edwards to determine (or assume with perhaps too much certainty) their standing on religious disputes such as the colonial revivals, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College*.

erring preachers undergirded the significance of the office of the ministry in colonial society and the authority, which accompanied it.<sup>133</sup>

In addition to their contacts through printed materials, colonial clergy traveled more than the average colonist. Attending various minister's meetings, ordination services, weddings, and ecclesiastical councils occupied a significant portion of a pastor's schedule during the year. Laymen took advantage of their travels to send correspondence by way of their ministers to those in neighboring towns. In light of their common interests and the network of ministers, traveling clergy typically lodged with other clergy. They shared news and concerns about fellow clergy, argued theology, and discussed the state of religion in the colonies.<sup>134</sup> Ministers did not limit their hospitality to their own profession. In the absence of a local inn, the minister's home operated as temporary housing for nearly any passersby.

In most cases, the hospitality of the clergy was genuine, although there are hints of those who felt less than welcome in a pastor's home.<sup>135</sup> One particularly vivid case of inhospitality appears in Samuel Deane's diary. On a frigid January evening, Samuel Deane and three other travelers were forced to travel by moonlight when their progress

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<sup>133</sup> 1683, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. I*, 79; Cotton Mather records his awareness of a renown minister who falls by the seventh commandment recognizing that his actions have "a most infamous Wound unto Religion," 79.

<sup>134</sup> May 1702, Mather even reports the very personal doubts shared between clergy, "a very religious young Minister...visited me, desiring Advice, about his distress'd Case; for, he told me, he was fully convinced of his being to this Day, an unconverted and unregenerate Creature."; *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. I*, 427-428; June 1711, some "Professors of Religion in my Neighborhood that are fallen into the way of drinking to Excess. Their Intoxications begin to be observed; there is a Danger lest they hasten upon themselves Rebukes and Censures from the Church of God." Mather sought "the best way to admonish them, so as to recover them," *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. II*, 78-79.

<sup>135</sup> 1765, *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, 309-310; although this case appears mid-way through the eighteenth-century, it may reflect clerical expectations based on the treatment of minister in previous years.

was hindered by snowfall and an abandoned “mast sled” which blocked the “highway”. Fearing that their toes were frozen, they were grateful to arrive at Mr. Steward’s house expecting to be invited in; but he turned them away with a “dose of flip.” Their next stop was the home of the local minister; however, Mr. Lombard and his wife were not at home. Deane and his party asked the Lombard’s son if they might have shelter and water for their sweaty horses. But Deane was impudently informed that there was no room. Deane pressed the matter requesting that some cattle be let out to make room to which the son retorted that he would “not turn them out of the barn for the best men’s horses in the world.” Eventually, the Lombards returned but their hospitality was only slightly more gracious than the son’s. Mrs. Lombard offered only tea for their supper claiming that they had no more porridge. Yet in the morning, she mysteriously found a “mess of porridge” to offer her grandchildren. She further asserted that the cows were dry and there was no cheese or butter in the house, so Mr. Deane and his party “breakfasted on tea and Johnny cake, without butter, and fled for [their] lives.”<sup>136</sup>

While this episode perhaps serves as an exception to local custom, the details reveal the expectations of traveling ministers as well as the expected duties of hosting clergy. Certainly, clergy must have wearied of caring for every wandering traveler at the expense of their own animals’ shelter and their own families’ provisions. But Deane’s surprise and indignation at their lack of hospitality indicates the typical manner in which traveling clergy were received. Whether colonial ministers enjoyed or merely tolerated their unwritten role as local innkeeper, exposure to travelers (often notable ones involved

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

in the political and social development of the colonies), and the news that they carried contributed to the status of local clergy within their own communities.<sup>137</sup>

Another factor, which fostered ministerial authority and influence of the colonial clergy was their financial standing in the communities. Seventeenth-century clergy often relied upon the voluntary maintenance offered by their flock.<sup>138</sup> Through the generosity of their congregations and the supplemental incomes of extracurricular vocations, the estates of ministers ranked them among the “wealthiest 15 percent of colonists.”<sup>139</sup> Some built large, pretentious homes.<sup>140</sup> Several owned the first chaise to appear in the town and many kept servants or slaves.<sup>141</sup> Others embarked on successful business ventures or benefited from the financial independence afforded by the inheritances of their wives. The marriage patterns of the clergy reveal many matches made among some of the richest families in New England.<sup>142</sup>

Despite many of the concrete markers of wealth in colonial society, the financial status of the clergy can still be difficult to ascertain with accuracy. The nature of

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<sup>137</sup> John Adams, *The Works of John Adams, II*, (Boston, 1850), 240-241; *John Adams Diaries* also shed light on the various condition of minister’s homes in which he lodged and he freely rates their hospitality as well.

<sup>138</sup> Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*; Hall discusses the early attempts of John Cotton and others to keep the ministers on voluntary maintenance despite the appeal of some ministers for relief from the state.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, 183.

<sup>140</sup> Many of the New England town histories compiled in the nineteenth century list the parsonages as the grandest homes in the community.

<sup>141</sup> Out of Harvard’s class of 1709; one particular minister and his wife were known for their pretentious arrival to the meetinghouse with their servants, black and white, flanking their arrival with the children following behind; John Taylor, *Memoir of Samuel Phillips*, (Boston, 1856), 9-10 documented in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College, Vol. V.*, 435.

<sup>142</sup> Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, 183.

voluntary maintenance and the advantages, which accompanied the office of the ministry, tends to obscure their true level of wealth and privilege in relation to their parishioners. Although clergy could be found at the top of the tax base, many colonial ministers were exempted from various forms of taxes.<sup>143</sup> This benefit rarely earned note in settlement terms but could become an issue of contention when a pastor faced dismissal.<sup>144</sup> In addition to cash maintenance, ministers often received other privileges, which defy simple monetary assessment, such as rights to common lands or settlement acreage, which significantly boosted their financial standing.<sup>145</sup> Ministers also benefited from the generosity their flock offered on the basis of their pastoral position.<sup>146</sup> The communal nature of many congregations is revealed in the extensive network of debts found within colonial communities. Pastors and laymen exchanged services and goods which might be settled on an annual or semi-annual basis. Congregations voluntarily held spinning bees for their pastors during hard times and rebuilt barns and houses destroyed by fire. Colonial clergy even benefited from the competitive spirit of their congregations. In one town, ninety men built their minister a mansion in order to inspire other towns to deal more generously with their pastors.<sup>147</sup> Ministers may have lived at the upper levels of society but they owed a large degree of their financial status to their flocks. This fact

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 152, Using New Haven's colonial records, Hall finds that first generation puritan ministers commonly ranked at or just below the top of town tax or population listings.

<sup>144</sup> *Shipton, Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College, Vol. XII, 1746-1759, 273.*

<sup>145</sup> For a full discussion of settlement and salary packages beginning in the late seventeenth century, see James Schmotter, "Ministerial Careers," 249-267.

<sup>146</sup> July 1, 1731, *Boston News-Letter*, Nathaniel Gookin posted a public note of gratitude to his congregation for their voluntary contributions to "assist" him in maintaining his son at Harvard.

<sup>147</sup> Mar. 18, 1728, *New England Weekly Journal*.

would prove to be a major point of vulnerability as an increasing colonial population diminished the communal nature of New England towns.

The clergy's religious qualifications and the exclusive nature of ordination also served to buttress ministerial authority. First and second generations of Congregational clergy held a virtual monopoly over the administration of religious sacraments and other ceremonial duties. Once established into the standing order of colonial clergy, ministers protected the office through careful scrutiny of ordination candidates. Congregations may have called those they deemed worthy of the office to settle among them and proposed their ordination but fellow ministers interviewed the prospective ministerial candidates and officiated at the ordination ceremony. Candidates submitted to rigorous examination by veteran clergy regarding conversion, doctrinal beliefs, and sermon preparation before officiating ministers agreed to carry out the ordination service. According to one veteran minister, the ordination candidate could only be "*Called* and *Authorized...unto the Work of the Ministry*" if he met four standards:

1. That he has the requisite *qualifications* of a Gospel minister.
2. That he is well and rightly *spirited* unto the Work.
3. That there is some *place* for him to exercise his Ministry in, where with the Blessing of God on his Labours, he has a Prospect of doing service for Christ.
4. That he is regularly *Ordained*, or set apart unto this Sacred Employment.<sup>148</sup>

"Qualifications" included a calling from God and "good Knowledge in the Principles and Practices of Christianity, accompanied with an aptness to communicate them unto others."<sup>149</sup> As a "Teacher of the Christian Religion," knowledge gained in reading theology and training for the divinity was mandatory. This requirement tended to

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<sup>148</sup> John Tufts, *A Humble Call to Archippus*, 5.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

limit the pool of ministerial candidates to only college-educated men. Ministers also needed to be “rightly spirited” and satisfied to make the task of reconciling men to God the whole “business” of their lives. The last two requirements depended upon congregational empowerment. For Congregational clergy, legitimate ministry only existed in connection to a given congregation who offered a candidate a vacant pulpit and then agreed to ordain him unto the office of the ministry. John Tuft maintained “no man has a right unto the Pastoral Office in any church, until he is Chosen unto it by the majority of the Brethren.”<sup>150</sup> A minister’s calling emanated from God but required empowerment from a congregation and sanction from other clergy.

While the definition of “rightly spirited” and “requisite qualifications” may have been fluid concepts from one ministerial committee to another, once a minister received ordination, he protected the scope of his ministry within rather rigid boundaries. Ordained ministers freely exchanged pulpits with each other but carefully guarded their pulpits from illiterate, untrained itinerate preachers. No one but ordained ministers could offer sacraments to parishioners or perform baptisms.<sup>151</sup> Ordination, through the laying on of hands, conferred authority upon clergy to “administer in holy things, which they might not do without such a Separation or Designation.”<sup>152</sup> As important as the rituals of baptism and communion were to colonial religious expression, after congregations vested this power upon their ministers, those clergy retained a monopoly over these services.

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>151</sup> Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, 67; Hall discusses the benefits of lectureship but notes that only ordained ministers could offer communion to the congregation.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid, 8.

Furthermore, the sacred and exclusive nature of a “solemn Ordination” commanded deference from the congregation, which ultimately bolstered ministerial authority.

A final and perhaps the most significant factor supporting the ministerial hegemony enjoyed by seventeenth-century clergy was the localism of New England towns. New England towns originated as “pious, unified, and above all autonomous communit[es]” in which members of the town covenanted themselves to one another.”<sup>153</sup> In these “covenanted utopias,” conformity to the will of the people was essential. Some historians have suggested that the success of these early covenanted towns represents the value colonists placed on the interests of the group over the interests of the individual. In this argument, it is the commercial greed and arrogance of individualism, which eventually eroded the utopian model of these societies. Kenneth Lockridge contends that American localism was “transformed into an aggressively democratic force which mixed in equal degrees narrow local suspicions...with a fecklessly competitive individualism.”<sup>154</sup>

But in small towns where the survival of the individual depended in large part on the goodwill of the community, individualism necessarily expressed itself in absolute conformity. The lack of visible dissent in small local communities should not be

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<sup>153</sup> Lockridge, *A New England Town*, 183; other works evaluating the phenomenon of localism in New England communities include: Timothy Breen, “Persistent Localism: English Social Change and the Shaping of New England Institutions,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, (January 1975); Edward M. Cook, Jr., *The Fathers of the Towns: Leadership and Community Structure in Eighteenth-Century New England*, (Baltimore, 1976); Philip Greven, *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts*, (Ithaca, 1970); Daniel Scott Smith, “The Demographic History of colonial New England,” *Journal of Economic History*, 32, (1972), 165-183; Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Commerce and Culture: The Maritown Communities of Colonial Massachusetts, 1690-1750*, (W.W. Norton and Co., New York, 1984).

<sup>154</sup> Lockridge, *A New England Town*, 190; James F. Cooper also holds this view arguing that “a spirit of individualism eroded the communitarian ideals in which Congregationalism was grounded,” Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties*.

interpreted as complete agreement among the inhabitants. Individualism may have reigned just as supreme in these early settlements with equally selfish motives; yet in small communities, conformity and lack of conflict simply served the best interest of the individual.<sup>155</sup> The cost of dissent and diversity in a small community came at too high a personal price for most colonists to consider.<sup>156</sup> The economic and social well-being of the individual in small towns rested largely on the strength of reputation. Gossip and secrets became powerful weapons against one's enemies.<sup>157</sup> In this setting, to be ostracized by the community jeopardized the individual's economic and social standing.<sup>158</sup> As civil and ecclesiastical leaders within small societies, clergy stood at the helm and gave direction to this mandatory conformity.

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<sup>155</sup> While the argument, which contends that "fecklessly competitive individualism" accounts for the increasing secularization of colonial America has received some degree of acceptance, it seems problematic to suggest that the next generation of colonists, as a group, somehow became more tragically egocentric. This argument insinuates that the first generation of colonists was by nature, more altruistic than their descendents. Rather, a more plausible theory would be that each generation sought to avoid certain painful choices in favor of those, which most benefited it. To the extent that these first-generation colonists consistently sought the good of the community, one might suppose that the good of the community translated into benefits felt by the individual, (or at least, less painful ramifications than more self-serving choices), Lockridge, *A New England Town*, 190.

<sup>156</sup> "Each individual was under strong peer group pressure to first give his loyalty to the town..."; Breen, *Persistent Localism*, 21; Although Breen's argument with this statement concerns the colonists' resistance to external intervention, his statement supports the motive of community pressure rather than simple altruism; Breen, *Persistent Localism*, 21.

<sup>157</sup> The phenomenon of the Salem Witch trials in the seventeenth century offers an extreme case regarding the cost of social dissent and the impact of gossip and secrets upon individual reputation. The power of gossip is discussed in the following works: John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England*, (New York, 1982), 246-251; Lyle Koehler, *A Search for Power: the "Weaker Sex" in Seventeenth-Century New England*, (Urbana, 1980); Mary Beth Norton, "Gender and Defamation in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 44, (1987), 3-39; Edith B. Gelles, "Gossip, an Eighteenth Century Case," *Journal of Social History*, 1989, 667-683.

<sup>158</sup> Clergy held the power of initiating and influencing censure and church discipline within the congregation. Early in the century when the constituency of the town and the church blurred into one entity, religious exclusion represented a powerful determinant in social conformity. For a seminal work on this subject, see Emil Oberholzer, *Delinquent Saints: Disciplinary Actions in the Early Congregational Churches of New England*, (New York, 1956). Also, David C. Brown, "The Keys of the Kingdom: Excommunication in Colonial Massachusetts," *The New England Quarterly*, 1994, 531-566.

The prominence of religion in colonial New England society gave added significance to one's participation level in the local church. Parents who desired baptism for their infants found themselves at the mercy and scrutiny of religious leaders.<sup>159</sup> Parents whose babies arrived earlier than nine months after their wedding faced public humiliation and public confession in order to regain their religious and social standing.<sup>160</sup> And those who chose to move to another community depended upon a letter of recommendation from their pastor attesting to their good standing in the community before they could gain membership elsewhere.<sup>161</sup> All of these social and cultural expectations contributed to the clergy's power and influence in colonial society.

The communal nature of colonial settlements reinforced ministerial authority. In small covenanted societies, church membership often mirrored the town membership. Although the pastor could not claim civil jurisdiction over the town and its proprietors, his ecclesiastical authority was formidable when the majority of the town also sat under his teaching on a weekly basis. The same forces, which produced social conformity within society served to reinforce religious discipline among the flock. Clergy considered the watchful care and strict discipline of their parishioners' spiritual state to be one of their primary tasks. Ordination candidates were urged to "*mark them which*

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<sup>159</sup> The Half-Way Covenant resulted from the demand for baptism even though parents could not relate a conversion experience.

<sup>160</sup> May 28, 1689, *Record-Book of the First Church in Charlestown* in *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, Vol. XXV, (Boston, 1871), 63; Of all sins, the sin of fornication seemed to carry the most social ramifications. When a young couple with two children moved to another church, their previous church found it necessary to alert the next congregation of their sin in a letter to be read publicly testifying to their "penitent confession" of fornication with one another before marriage.

<sup>161</sup> *Records of the First Church of Dorchester in New England 1636 - 1734*, (Harvard University, 1891), 10-13; listing of members who were dismissed to various churches, including their recommendation based on their full communion or lack thereof.

cause Divisions & Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which they had learned.”<sup>162</sup> The “Rule of Discipline” required clergy to give

Directions of Proceedure against any who walk disorderly, causing Divisions and Offences, first by way of *Rebuke* and *Reproof*; and in the case of *Obstinacy and Impenitency*, then *Excommunication*. I Tim. 5. 20. Mat. 18. 15, & Rom. 16. 17, Tit. 3. 10.<sup>163</sup>

Excommunication from the gathered body of believers carried weight to the degree that one valued participation in the group. In small, localized colonial communities where excommunication from the church entailed social exclusion from nearly every living person in town, the power of colonial excommunication was daunting.<sup>164</sup>

Colonists in these early colonial communities may have boasted significant church attendance records but parishioners had various motives for participating.<sup>165</sup> “Horseshed” Christians, who attended the service but perhaps never made it out of the horse shed where discussions of local commerce held their attention better than the sermon, may have attended worship for the commercial and social benefit of interacting with others in the community.<sup>166</sup> Some may have attended in order to display their social

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<sup>162</sup> Greenwood, *The Temple of God*, 15.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> December 8, 1706, In recognition of the power of excommunication even in the successful reconciliation of an errant member, the council at Woburn reported the “Restoration of Jacob Wyman, again unto Full Communion upon His Confession of Some Fault, & It was Declared by ye Council of 8 Churches that none ought to be excommunicated except in very weighty & very Clear Cases...,” *Records of the First Church of Dorchester in New England 1636 - 1734*, 112.

<sup>165</sup> Patricia Bonomi and others have pointed to the consistency of attendance records to deny the claim of religious declension during the colonial period, but she admits that she does not differentiate between those who attended out of a commitment to “serious religion” versus those who attended for the social benefits.

<sup>166</sup> Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, 138; Hall coined this term to describe the various motives for church attendance.

standing by arriving late to take their seats in preferred pews.<sup>167</sup> Where town and church membership blurred, excommunication represented nearly complete social isolation.

The authority of the clergy to pursue excommunication of an unrepentant member clearly contributed to the seventeenth-century ministerial hegemony but in reality, the effectiveness of church discipline relied on the support and participation of the entire congregation.<sup>168</sup> Shunning and excommunication held no significance if the flock did not carry out the details of ostracizing the offender. Excommunication and church discipline required group effort. A minister might initiate church discipline but he alone could not impose the power of community-wide excommunication without the consent and support of his flock. The power of church discipline would eventually suffer a loss of significance as communities outgrew the forces of localism; additional churches and an expanding economic network reduced the effect of social exclusion from a single body of worshippers. The effectiveness of church discipline and the power it rendered to the sole minister of a town rested in large part on the localism of colonial communities.

Colonial clergy recognized their intellectual, educational and financial superiority and they were well aware of their monopoly over the sacramental element of their office.

Their resistance to their loss of deference and ministerial influence in the eighteenth

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<sup>167</sup> Several New England town histories describe the seating arrangements of parishioners. In Windham the “Rules to be observed were: (1.) age; (2.) usefulness; (3.) estate-by which is understood present list and distribution of work about meeting-house; (4.) first planters,” April 19, 1703, Larned, *History of Windham County*, 86.

<sup>168</sup> Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, 133-134. Hall discusses the “social authority” of the clergy and the need for congregational participation in order for excommunication to be effective. He notes that “isolation lost some of its force when half the population of the town did not belong to the church, and the scattering of settlement may have meant that persons under sentence of discipline could escape its stigma by moving elsewhere.”

century suggests that the clergy justified their unique combination of ecclesiastical and civil authority. However, the clergy did not overtly claim nor would they have staked their authority on the basis of any of these social or economic factors. Yet, to a greater degree than they may have been wont to admit, their ministerial hegemony depended upon them. In the seventeenth century, ministers had enjoyed the social status of English gentry. Most of them dressed the part by wearing powdered wigs, clerical collars and divinity rings. Obituaries attest that most ministers attempted to adhere to their own concept of ministerial decorum and avoided frivolity at all costs.<sup>169</sup> Town children and sometimes their own children cowered in their presence suggesting that clergy also managed to induce fear in younger persons.

Yet, as powerful as these puritan divines may have appeared, seventeenth-century congregational ministers retained their positions of authority only through a complicated and often subtle process of negotiation with their flocks. The expectations of both the congregations and the clergy were filtered through those social and economic forces which buttressed ministerial authority in the seventeenth century. By the eighteenth century the lay-clerical relationship began to feel the strain of increasing population, geographic expansion, currency crises and warfare upon colonial society. These forces would shuffle the colonial populace in a manner, which would ultimately reshape America's religious landscape and diminish ministerial hegemony.

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<sup>169</sup> Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale*, 6 Vol., and Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard*, 15 Vol.; these collective biographies usually rely on obituaries notices or children's remembrances to provide physical descriptions and personal deportment of various ministers. While these accounts may carry a natural bias, surely the claim of wig and ring wearing is reliable.

## Section 3 The Negotiation of Authority

### 3.1 Clerical Tools of Negotiation

“The Minister and the People make a Bargain. The People make a Tender; and the Minister accepts...”<sup>170</sup>

While the civil and ecclesiastical authority of the earliest puritan divines has been long established and accepted among colonial historians, this authority existed and rested upon the rather tenuous social and economic conditions present in the seventeenth century.<sup>171</sup> Early colonial clergy did rule with noticeably more authority and received more deference than those later in the eighteenth century but even the most authoritarian ministers understood that their position depended in large part upon the consent of the governed and had to be managed with the expectations of their congregations firmly in mind. Although the conditions, which bolstered the first clerical generation’s status and influence were subject to change, the theme of negotiation between the shepherds and

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<sup>170</sup> A friend of the churches, *A plea for the ministers of the gospel...*, (Boston, 1706), 14.

<sup>171</sup> Many historians have noticed the authority of the clergy in the seventeenth century and its subsequent demise but they have neglected to emphasize the ongoing theme of negotiation between clergy and congregation necessary for ministerial authority. Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, (Harvard University Press, 1954); and *Errand into the Wilderness*, (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956); Edmond Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea*, (New York University Press, 1963); Daniel Calhoun, *Professional Lives in America*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1965); Richard Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765*, (Harvard University Press, 1967); Darrett B. Rutman, *Winthrop’s Boston: Portrait of a Puritan Town 1630-1649*, (University of North Carolina, 1965); David D. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century*, (New York, 1974); and *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England*, (Alfred A Knopf, 1989); Harry Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, (Oxford University Press, 1986); J. William T. Youngs, Jr., *God’s Messengers: Religious Leadership in Colonial New England, 1700-1750*, (Baltimore, Md., 1976).

their flocks remained a constant feature of their relationship throughout the colonial period.

Through the lives and personal diaries of New England clergy, lay-clerical negotiation is clearly visible.<sup>172</sup> The differing social and economic circumstances faced by Lyman Beecher at the end of the eighteenth century from those encountered by Cotton Mather at the beginning of the century offered both clergy and congregations ever changing tools of negotiation. Some points of leverage became obsolete while new ones presented themselves in the maturing colonies.<sup>173</sup> As America developed from a fledging set of colonies into a new and viable republic, the forces of localism, which had supported the heightened degrees of ministerial deference early in the century began to dissipate.<sup>174</sup> The educational, intellectual and financial superiority and monopoly over

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<sup>172</sup> Lyman Beecher, *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, Charles Beecher, ed., two volumes, (New York, 1865); William Bentley, D.D., *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts, Vol. 1-4, 1784 - 1819*, (Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1962); Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Volume I, 1681 – 1708, Vol. II, 1709-1724*, (Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York); Francis G. Walett, ed., *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782 First Part Three volumes in One, 1719-1755*, (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, 1974); Franklin Bowditch Dexter, ed., *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, ed. under the Authority of the Corporation of Yale University, Volume 1, January 1, 1769 – March 13, 1776, (New York, 1901); William Willis, ed., *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, (Portland, Me.: Joseph S. Bailey, 1849). These journals were specifically selected for their span over the entire eighteenth century in order to illustrate the variety of negotiation tools available at different times during the period.

<sup>173</sup> Early in the century, the forces of localism granted ministers more influence in their communities. By the end of the century, the populace had been scattered by the Revolutionary War and rendered an individual minister less power over his congregation. However, while localism detracted from a minister's ability to negotiate with his congregation, the increasing number of pastorless churches in the developing colonies combined with fewer ministerial recruits offered clergy more options. With less stigma attached to pastors who changed churches, late century ministers could negotiate with their opportunities to desert the flock. The social and economic forces will be discussed more fully in the final chapter.

<sup>174</sup> Calhoun denies the impact of localism on ministerial permanency. However, his definition of localism as "home-townism" seems a bit more circumscribed than my own. Calhoun relates localism to whether a pastor was "born in the same county as the church." Daniel Calhoun, *Professional Lives in America*, 128. My definition of localism involves the power of close-knit communities to produce conformity among its inhabitants regardless of the birthplace of the pastor or his lack of relatives in the community. Lockridge describes many of the dynamics of a small town in Kenneth Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years, Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636-1736*, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1970).

the sacramental elements of religious expression enjoyed by the previous generation of clergy lost significance, leaving eighteenth-century clergy lacking much of the basis for their ministerial hegemony.<sup>175</sup>

### 3.1.1 *Ministerial Candidacy*

Lay-clerical negotiation not only fell subject to these colonial economic and social forces, it also depended upon the age of a pastor's relationship to a given congregation.<sup>176</sup> Ministers negotiated their authority with varying degrees of subtlety throughout a clerical career but the process of negotiation between clergy and their congregations was most overt at the beginning of the relationship. By the very nature of the selection process, ministers initially held the upper hand in the negotiation process as the 'solicitee' rather than the solicitor. Quite simply, congregations and towns asked a minister to settle as their pastor; a minister never asked a congregation to be his flock.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Schmotter, James "The Irony of Clerical Professionalism: New England's Congregational Ministers and the Great Awakening," *WMQ 3<sup>rd</sup> Ser.*, Vol. 31, (1979) 148-168; "Ministerial Careers in Eighteenth-Century New England: The Social Context, 1700-1760," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Winter (1975), 249-267.

<sup>176</sup> In researching several diary accounts from various points in the century, a career timeline common to clergy emerges in the midst of the over-all decline of ministerial authority. This mutual clerical experience across generations complicates the view of the ministry's gradual decline in status and influence but remains an important lens through which to analyze declension of the office of the ministry.

<sup>177</sup> In 1724, Ebenezer Parkman was approached by a committee in order to "treat" him to consider being their minister, *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782*, 4; In 1733, John Seccomb received an invitation from "the subscribers being chosen by the Town (of Harvard) to treat with you about Settling with us in the Work of the Ministry," Henry S. Norse, *The History of the Town of Harvard, Massachusetts. 1732-1893*, (Harvard, 1894), 180; While town histories qualify as secondary sources and legitimately carry the biases of their authors, I have found these resources to be of great value in researching the social dynamics between a pastors and their congregations. In addition to valuable timelines for various locales, many New England town histories published in the nineteenth century contain primary documents no longer available for personal research. Taking effort to avoid the authors' personal interpretations, I have attempted to quote

As such, the period of candidacy provided the minister with the most autonomy and control over his own future that he would have during the course of his tenure.<sup>178</sup> If he was hesitant for any reason, he could pass on a congregation's invitation and entertain a different offer with little or no recourse to his personal reputation.<sup>179</sup>

New England Congregational clergy generally entered the field of pulpit ministry eager from their college experience and somewhat cognizant of what the office of the ministry entailed.<sup>180</sup> Nearly a third of the pastoral candidates in 1700 were sons of ministers, and even those from non-ministerial families often roomed with clergy while “reading theology” in preparation for the pastorate.<sup>181</sup> Yet, even this early exposure to the ministerial lifestyle could not ensure their own successful navigation of the lay-

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from these sources directly and locate them when possible. To the degree that town histories contain primary documents since destroyed or lost to historical research, they remain valid research tools.

<sup>178</sup> The candidacy period differed in length from one candidate to the next but refers to the period of interaction between a congregation and a potential ministerial candidate before they accepted a settlement offer from the congregation and were ordained to service in that particular congregation.

<sup>179</sup> Joseph Sewall reluctantly declined an invitation to settle at Peabody in 1712, in Clifford Kenyon Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...: with bibliographical and other notes, Vols. V-XVIII*, (Oxford University Press, 1937), Vol. V, 381; Samuel Fisk turned down Hingham in 1716 and New South in 1717, Solomon Lincoln, *History of Hingham* (Hingham, 1827), 25; Josiah Stearns, sought after by several congregations, turned down a formal offer from Danvers before setting in Epping in 1757, *Essex Institute, Historical Collections*, LXXXCII, 358-359 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College... Vols. XIII*, 131; Aaron Putnam declined calls to four different churches before settling in Pomfret in 1756, described in Putnam's diary in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College... Vols. XIII*, 281.

<sup>180</sup> Frederick Lewis Weis, *The Colonial Clergy and the Colonial Churches of New England*, (Lancaster, Mass., 1932), 18; Weis calculates that 95 percent of all Congregational clergy in the colonial period graduated from college; Scott gives an overview of eighteenth century educational preparation, Donald M. Scott, *From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry, 1750-1850*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), chap. 4.

<sup>181</sup> This number steadily declined throughout the century; Schmotter, “Ministerial Careers;” Schmotter offers helpful quantitative analyses on the collection of biographical sketches found in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College... Vols. V-XVIII*; Franklin Bowditch, Dexter, M. A., *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College with the Annals of the College History*, Volumes 1-6, (Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1885); and William Buell Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit, 9 Vol.*, (Robert Carter & Brothers, 1857). Collective biographies, also subject to author bias, provide a valuable tool for tracking career trends.

clerical relationship. Candidates entered the ministry with optimism but also wary of committing themselves to a given congregation. To commit to one church and community, particularly early in the century when resignation and resettlement occurred less frequently, was to bind the future of a pastor to that of his congregation. Once settled, a pastor might “rule” with ecclesiastical authority but to a large degree he still entrusted himself to the good favor of his congregation.

Wary of mistreatment from their flock, candidates looked to congregational history in order to predict their own chances for a successful settlement. Ebenezer Gay offered this advice to young candidates: “I warn you...because of what hath all along happen’d in this Church, viz, A Seperation between Pastor and People before, and otherwise than by Death...”<sup>182</sup> Gay’s warning seems to lay the blame for this separation solidly on the congregation and indicates the clergy’s judgment of congregations in which a pastor was less likely to enjoy a life-long tenure. Candidacy and the initial negotiation of settlement represented a critical moment in the life of colonial clergy.

Congregations generally offered their pastors an initial degree of deference out of respect for the office, but this respect and influence could only be retained through the minister’s careful management of both congregational and clerical expectations. Clergy journals attest to the naïve optimism of novice ministers at the beginning of their tenure.<sup>183</sup> Although pastoral candidates tended to approach the settlement process with humility as they tentatively offered self-deprecating letters of acceptance, the tone of

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<sup>182</sup> Ebenezer Gay, *The Levite*, (Boston, 1756), 26.

<sup>183</sup> *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.; The Diary of William Bentley, D.D.; The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles; Diary of Cotton Mather; The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman; Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith and the Rev. Samuel Deane.*

their diaries still expressed a hopeful confidence that they could fulfill the office of the ministry successfully.<sup>184</sup> But by the end of their tenure, many ministers seemed less than satisfied if not completely discouraged with their ministerial efforts.

Born into a long line of ministers, Cotton Mather enjoyed a first-hand view of a successful minister who gained the respect of his parishioners. Mather not only benefited from his close proximity to his father's career but he also served beside him as colleague at North Church in Boston. Graduating in 1678 from Harvard, Mather had more than one pulpit available to him. In November of 1681, New Haven invited him to leave his father's side and settle among them. Mather seemed flattered by the offer and even questioned his own pride in the matter.<sup>185</sup> By January, Mather still had not accepted; New Haven upped the ante with a renewed offer of 70 lb. annum.<sup>186</sup> However, Mather's loyalty to his father proved stronger than the flattery of this proposal or the allure of his own pulpit. He eventually turned down New Haven "because the Church of *North Boston* would have entertained uncomfortable Dissatisfactions at my Father, if after so many importunate Votes of theirs, for my Settlement here, hee had any way permitted my Removal from them."<sup>187</sup> Mather recognized the impact of his own actions upon his father's ministry and the power of a congregation to make his father's life miserable if he had accepted New Haven's invitation.

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<sup>184</sup> 1727, Thomas Smith's acceptance at Falmouth, *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, 61; 1747, Edward Pell's acceptance at Second Church of Harwich, Josiah Paine, *History of Harwich*, (Rutland, 1937), 227; 1736, James Bridgham's acceptance at Brimfield, Mass., Jason Morse, *Annals of the Church of Brimfield*, (Springfield, 1856), 18-19.

<sup>185</sup> 1682, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Volume I*, 42.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid*, 47.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*, 53.

In his journal, Mather detailed the high expectations he had for himself as a minister of the gospel. He optimistically made systematic plans to “visit all the families in (his) neighborhood... to bring all into an acquaintance with God.”<sup>188</sup> At the ripe young age of twenty-one, he already determined to use his influence with certain “merchants” and “businessmen” to be charitable to some “needy ministers.”<sup>189</sup> Nine months later, Mather noted the “improvements” of his “ministry” upon which he gauged his level of success. Indicative of his definition of success, he included his “acceptance” among the people; and the “happy Success of my labours...upon Hundreds of Souls.”<sup>190</sup>

Early in his tenure, Mather understood the importance of his flock’s approval in order to expend his labor successfully and to maintain influence with his parishioners. While his tone does not seem overly self-absorbed or self-promoting, he does exhibit a savvy comprehension of the importance of ministerial image. When a pastor carefully monitored the impact of his decisions upon his flock, he could usually count on both “acceptance” among the people as well as the power to sway influential members to good deeds.<sup>191</sup> Based on his spiritual heritage, Mather might easily have approached the pulpit with a sense of entitlement. Instead, even in the latter part of the seventeenth century, he understood the give and take involved in a successful ministerial career.

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>191</sup> Likewise, Stephen Williams recorded his desire to carry offenses “becomingly that so I may win upon the people...Abundance of discretion and prudence is required of a minister, he having many persons of different persuasions and tempers and dispositions to treat withal,” *Papers and Proceedings of the Connecticut Valley Historical Society, Vol. I*, (Springfield, Mass., 1881), 38-39.

Forty years later, a twenty-one-year-old Ebenezer Parkman experienced a rather typical process of candidacy. Although his father was not minister, Parkman received a pious upbringing. His family managed to send the young Ebenezer to study with John Barnard, former pastor at Andover, in preparation for Harvard College. He enrolled with the class of 1721. Following graduation, he read theology and quickly found opportunities to preach in Boston, Wrentham, Worcester, Westborough, and Hopkinton.<sup>192</sup>

By mid-August of 1723, Parkman was visited “At Night (by) Sundry Men of the Town” from the frontier town of Westborough, who “treated with me about Settling as their minister, etc.”<sup>193</sup> Having supplied the pulpit in the town from time to time, these men were familiar to Parkman; he listed them by name noting which ones were presently serving as deacons. Parkman’s journal entries do not indicate whether he was surprised by this invitation, but he was affronted by their inattention to their promises. The very next day Parkman recorded being “very much disturbed through the People’s not providing a Horse for me to ride down upon, according to agreement.”<sup>194</sup>

This omission turned out to be a sad omen for the future. While Parkman did not let this offense go unnoticed, he did not confront anyone over it, neither did it keep him from accepting Westborough’s call. Over the next fifty years, Parkman’s patience and attention to punctuality would be sorely tried by this lackadaisical community. This first oversight might have offered Parkman a clue into this society’s attention to their commitments. Similarly, Parkman’s reaction to Westborough’s negligence also indicated

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<sup>192</sup> *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782*, ix.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid*.

his typical response to future offenses. Parkman tended to avoid direct conflict at all costs. Although he regularly vented his frustrations with various parishioners in his journal, he rarely confronted anyone directly.<sup>195</sup>

After the town's first display of interest in Parkman's settlement, the process dragged on for nearly a year. The next step came five months later with a formal nomination by the town. A second committee arrived on Jan. 8, 1724, to inform Parkman that he and a second candidate had both been nominated. Parkman began to sense the "weightiness of the affair" at this point and fretted about his "incapacitie."<sup>196</sup> It is difficult to discern whether his anxiety stemmed from the competition of another candidate or if he sensed his own imminent call and quaked at the permanency of the decision. Whatever the case, he had little time to wonder. By the very next day, the news was traveling throughout the town. When Parkman and his traveling companions stopped at the local tavern, he found himself receiving premature congratulations on his selection as Westborough's minister. The gossip not only included "how the Affairs were carry'd on," but the townspeople freely shared the name of the particular parishioner who had offered the chief opposition to his settlement. In his journal, Parkman sensed future conflict and correctly predicted that on this issue "more may be said hereafter."<sup>197</sup> Regardless of his early awareness of his selection as minister,

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid; Jan. 16, 1726, Distressed over his flock's "tardiness" to meetings, 8; July 30, 1726, Neighbors refused to help him with farm work, 15; 1744, Town fell behind in his salary and wood supply but were unwilling to make up the difference, 92; Dec. 30, 1744, Wished he had reproved a parishioner and his wife for their "slothfulness," 109; April 29, 1745, Asked by proxy to come to meeting house raising and pray at 8am. Mentions that he was short a horse; his mare had just foaled but no one brought him a horse or offered him a ride. He is agitated but decided that it did not "warrant my proclaiming War against them as my refusing to go to Day would do," 116.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, 5.

Parkman did not receive official notice of the town vote until the end of February. He, in turn, did not give them the courtesy of a formal reply until June.

Like Parkman, many ministers had some first-hand knowledge of the congregation they were being asked to shepherd. Typically, a congregation extended a call to candidates who had already filled their pulpits. Early in the century, the availability of recent Harvard and Yale graduates to fill vacant pulpits throughout New England provided a welcome service to New England congregations. Some outlying towns sought interim ministers until they could afford to settle a permanent one while other congregations simply required pulpit supply during an extended illness of their pastor. Congregations with aging clergy sought candidates to serve as colleague ministers, and still others needed to fill their pulpits following a death or dismissal of the previous pastor.<sup>198</sup> Opportunities to preach in these various settings and circumstances not only benefited the congregations in question, they also offered new ministerial candidates valuable pulpit experience. Filling a pulpit with available candidates served a mutual function. While it met the immediate needs of a congregation, it also served as an audition for the pastorate.<sup>199</sup>

If a minister's gifts in the pulpit garnered more than one invitation, it added to his bargaining power. When Cotton Mather worried that one popular candidate might accept a different parish's invitation, he complained that some "Gentlemen clog all our Motions;

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<sup>198</sup> A colleague minister generally came on to serve alongside of an aging minister and to share the pastoral responsibility. Upon the death of the senior minister, the colleague minister would assume full pastoral duties.

<sup>199</sup> Most offers of settlement followed an extended period of pulpit supply by an unsettled candidate.

and Roxbury is like to seize upon him,”<sup>200</sup> Ebenezer Bridge noticed another candidate who exhibited strong pastoral qualities and had acquired several offers; “The eyes of many in different places were...fixed upon him as their intended pastor.”<sup>201</sup> Aaron Putnam preached in seven different places over a two-year period, received five invitations to settle, and turned four of them down for various reasons between the years 1754 and 1756.<sup>202</sup> A final and more vivid example is Joseph Howe who entertained three offers simultaneously; “If Mr. How consults his natural Inclination he would settle at Norwich – Money and Interest, at Weathersfield – Honor and Figure in public Life, Boston – Ease and Comfort, either indifferently – Doing good and Usefulness, all are so nearly equal that he can’t determine....”<sup>203</sup> Although the ratio of available pulpits to number of available candidates varied at points throughout the century, a particularly gifted and promising candidate could generally count on having a choice between several congregations.

For some clergy, settling on a particular congregation required too much commitment. The freedom ministers retained when they simply provided “pulpit supply” presented the ideal situation. The temporary status of filling a pulpit afforded the minister with all the initial deference due to the office of the ministry, remuneration for his services, the hospitality of parishioners who fed and lodged him, and opportunities to

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<sup>200</sup> *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. II, 519.*

<sup>201</sup> The candidate was Joseph Stearns, Aug. 1, 1753 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College..., Vols. XIII, 131.*

<sup>202</sup> Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College..., Vols. XIII, 281.*

<sup>203</sup> *Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. I, 295.*

preach without the limitations of a long-term relationship.<sup>204</sup> At any point of conflict or discomfort, the minister could choose not to return. A few candidates never did settle among a given congregation but merely preached in various places as needed.<sup>205</sup> There might be many reasons for their lack of settlement, but for men intimidated by the possibility of lay-clerical conflict, perpetual pulpit supply fit them well. Perhaps the disengagement from the congregational relationship inherent in these temporary arrangements suited them. Although the unattached minister did not gain the eventual influence and prestige of ordained ministers, unsettled ministers retained control over their own futures and escaped the ties that bound congregation and clergy together in a permanent settlement. At the very least, exposure to a congregation and town before committing to settlement served as a testing ground and gave the clergy some sense of what they might encounter in the course of their ministry.

Ministerial candidates could not only sense potential discord within their congregations, they were often privileged to know the source of the resistance. Rather than dealing with some unidentified opposition within the crowd, many colonial clergy benefited from a clear comprehension of the issues at stake or at least the individuals who opposed them. Based on the public method of voting and the desire many candidates had for unanimous calls, opposition was easily identified. As late as 1799, signatures were

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<sup>204</sup> Some candidates may have delayed settlement hoping for yet a better position. Mather warned that a candidate for ministry who has “waited for Settlements and Improvements, till he gott beyond Thirty; is at last like to be disappointed in his Expectation, to be invited by the new Church in this Neighborhood. I am in distress for him...” *Cotton Mather Diary, Vol. II*, 280.

<sup>205</sup> Josiah Deming, Yale Class of 1709; James Pierpont, Jr., Yale Class of 1718; John Curtiss, Yale Class of 1719; Samuel Arnold, Yale Class of 1724; Samuel Sherman, Yale Class of 1726; George McNish, Yale Class of 1736; Joseph Clark, Yale Class of 1745; Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College*, Vol. 1-6.

still required to indicate support and commitment. Lyman Beecher wrote to his prospective wife, “As to my call, it is the custom here to covenant to discharge the salary...Most have signed. Those who refuse, most of them wish me to stay, and declare their intention to pay.”<sup>206</sup> Joseph Champney received a unanimous call from the town of Beverly, but his unwillingness to agree to the “Platform of Church Discipline” raised a firestorm of protest from former classmate, Robert Hale.<sup>207</sup> Champney settled in Beverly well aware of his greatest antagonist and could gauge his ministry accordingly.<sup>208</sup>

John Brown’s call to the Second Church of Hingham included a lone dissenting vote. Brown decided to approach his opposition directly before he agreed to settle. The parishioner spoke frankly; “I like your person and manners...but your preaching, sir, I disapprove.” Brown responded with equal candor. “Then, we are agreed. My preaching I do not like very well myself; but how great the folly for you and I to set up our opinion against that of the whole parish.”<sup>209</sup> Thus settled, his ordination ceremony was scheduled without further dispute. Brown was not satisfied simply to know *who* opposed his settlement; he wanted to understand the issues at hand. At this crucial point of acceptance or rejection of a settlement invitation, a candidate needed as much information as he could ascertain before committing to a long-term relationship.

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<sup>206</sup> 1799, Letter to Roxanna, *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc. of Lyman Beecher, Vol. I*, 109; apparently some were reticent to bind themselves to the covenant but indicated their willingness to contribute to the salary. Perhaps they were attempting to avoid and potential legal responsibility were they to fall into arrears.

<sup>207</sup> 1729, *Hist. Coll. Essex Institute*, xxxvi, 303 and vi, 166-9 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. VI, 437-438.

<sup>208</sup> Mather’s trouble with Fisk, Parkman’s trouble with the Mays.

<sup>209</sup> 1747, *Mass. Hist. Soc., Collections*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ser., II, 94 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. XI, 12.

Some ministers were shrewd enough to barter with their own acceptance. When the town of Marblehead invited John Barnard to settle, he became aware that many would have preferred Edward Holyoke. With unparalleled diplomacy, Barnard asked if the population could support and accommodate a second meetinghouse. Barnard then suggested that Holyoke's friends might build him another meetinghouse while he settled with the existing church. He sealed the deal by issuing an ultimatum:

Gentlemen, if you can amicably agree that Mr. Holyoke shall settle among his friends, I will accept the offer of the church to settle with them; otherwise I know not how to comply with your request; for I do not care to fix in a town under the disadvantage of strife and contention.<sup>210</sup>

Holyoke concurred, "If Mr. Barnard will go to Marblehead, I will go also; else not." Together these two candidates assured themselves of less sectarian strife by accepting the presence of another minister within rather close proximity. The congregation was prepared to accept the candidate who received the largest number of votes even by a close margin, but Barnard wisely recognized that the submission of the losing faction was likely to last only briefly. He chose to eliminate strife from the start.

James Dana showed less interest in dispelling his opposition. Doctrinal differences between Old Light and New Light factions of the Church of Wallingford had complicated their attempts to find a successor to their previous pastor. After unsuccessfully considering "some twenty candidates,"<sup>211</sup> whose "Gifts of none of them were so suited to their Taste," the church opted "to enquire for some smart young

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<sup>210</sup> 1714, 3 Coll. M. H. S., 217-18, in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. V, 267.

<sup>211</sup> 1758, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. XIII, 306;

Gentleman from Cambridge.”<sup>212</sup> Dana came, Dana preached, and the church voted to negotiate his settlement on June 23, 1758. Meanwhile, a number of the New Light faction opted to question him on specific doctrine and sermon material. But this “smart young Gentleman” was not inclined to satisfy their inquiries. Perhaps he was unwilling to play into their hand or to be used as a pawn in a dispute that was clearly larger than his personal settlement among them. Surely, he was aware of his position in a long line of candidates who had already missed the mark with Wallingford parishioners. As such, he really had little to lose with this society. Rather than attempting to mollify the uneasiness of his questioners, he chose a brash stance. One of the petitioning faction complained that upon inquiry, Dana

Answered me very short, and in a loud, boisterous manner, and treated me with such appearing anger, and disdain, as I never met with from any gentleman before; declaring that he did not regard the opposition the value of a farthing, or words to that purpose; that if there were any objections against what he had deliver’d in preaching, he would answer them before the ordaining council. This conversation was before the society agreed upon terms of settlement and salary. Furthermore, Mr. *Dana*, said that he was too young to be examin’d.<sup>213</sup>

When questioned further regarding his position on specific platforms of the faith, Dana continued to be evasive. He sarcastically inquired why they had not also asked him “how he lik’d *John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress*, or *Esoph’s* fables.”<sup>214</sup> Despite his impertinent

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<sup>212</sup> Jonathan Todd, *A Faithful Narrative, of the Proceedings, of the...calling, and settling the Rev. Mr. James Dana*, (New Haven, 1759), 3-4.

<sup>213</sup> Edward Eells, *Some Serious Remarks upon...Jonathan Todd’s Faithful Narrative*, (New Haven, 1759), 9.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

demeanor, Dana must have come to terms with the congregation because Wallingford settled him within the year.

Dana's tactics in negotiating a settlement clearly do not reflect that of a candidate intent on impressing a congregation. However, unless one merely chalks up his behavior to a cranky disposition, it seems evident that Dana was quite cognizant of his role in a much larger church conflict as well as his bargaining position. As such, he was unwilling to play into either side's agenda. Dana refused to be manipulated by either faction. He was young, perhaps even cocky, but also not yet desperate to secure this particular settlement. He could still walk away with all his dignity intact. A rejection from this factious group of people who had already sent twenty others packing, could hardly damage his personal reputation.

However, if after all of this precursory wrangling, Wallingford still determined to settle him, Dana had already laid the groundwork for his position of ministerial authority and had made it known that he would not be subject to any particular faction in the church. *This* was his moment of negotiation. During the period of candidacy, he set the stage for all future interaction with this society.

Late in the century, Lyman Beecher also encountered a divisive congregation in East Hampton. After reaching a stalemate over a previous candidate, the congregation's invitation to Beecher managed to divert their conflict briefly. Beecher recorded that at his arrival, "the combatants recoil, suspend their strife to gaze at Mr. B[eecher]."<sup>215</sup> Undaunted by his role as the alternative candidate, Beecher busily

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<sup>215</sup> Feb, 9, 1799, in a letter to Roxanna, *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher*, 101.

attempted to connect with the people through home visits. But soon he was offended and deeply annoyed to discover a line of gossip circulating within the community that associated him with known Deists. Among other accusations, the gossip attested that Beecher had “lowered his character by twenty five percent, by going a hunting with Mr. H\_\_\_\_\_, also a Deist.”<sup>216</sup> Beecher astutely assessed the situation,

I don’t suppose anyone meant to injure me; but I stood between them and their object, and thus my every motion was eyed and every item circulated. Now Mr. K\_\_\_\_\_'s friends are numerous and violent; and, though they may not aim to injure my character, they will do it as certainly as if they did. I am young; my character as a minister is forming. I need the candor and friendly aid of Christians. I need them disposed to cover with a veil of charity youthful inadvertence, rather than magnifying it to a crime.

Shall I then, subject myself to such a scrutiny? Shall I hold my character up to the dagger, that in piercing that, religion may be wounded also?

I think not.<sup>217</sup>

In a valiant effort not to take the offense personally, Beecher predicted that no one was likely to unite East Hampton until they had resolved their dispute over Mr. K\_\_\_\_\_. Unwilling to encourage the power of this congregation’s scrutiny by exposing its influence upon his decisions, Beecher determined to stay only “long enough to convince them that [he did] not run away,” then he would “abscond.”<sup>218</sup> Beecher was correct to assess the congregation’s lack of personal motive. There was likely no evil conspiracy to

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid,102.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

attack his reputation and ministerial career. But with or without motive, the effect of their behavior remained the same. Before he ever settled into a pulpit, Beecher was learning the capacity of a congregation to impinge upon his reputation and character. It is interesting that even at his young age, he also sensed the danger of allowing the congregation to gain a sense of empowerment and influence over their pastor through their use of gossip.

To submit to ministerial candidacy was to submit to the unlimited scrutiny of a group. Although the examination by an entire community may have been an anticipated aspect of the clerical role, few enjoyed the process. No minister was beyond fault or misstep but the clergy expected that inexperienced ministers might receive the benefit of the doubt from their new flocks. Dana's claim that he was too young to be examined and Beecher's desire to have his "youthful inadvertence" covered with a "veil of charity" indicates that candidates expected to be evaluated differently than experienced clergy. If a congregation seemed disinclined to offer such charity, it was certainly within the candidate's purview to seek a different post.

Despite the unpleasant treatment he received, Beecher's position was strengthened by the relative brevity of his acquaintance with the community. Explaining his intention to decline their invitation to settle, he wrote home stating "the people I like very well, though not attached."<sup>219</sup> The lack of connection Beecher felt toward this congregation at this point in the relationship diminished the emotional component of the decision. Although he eventually accepted East Hampton's call, he settled with both eyes open to the affairs of the congregation and fully cognizant of their divisive tendencies.

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

Given the permanency of the lay-clerical relationship early in the century, the decision to settle in an unfamiliar locale gave most candidates great pause.<sup>220</sup> Wary lest they miss some indicator of potential discord or hardship, ministerial candidates rarely made this decision in isolation. They consulted their families, friends, and mentors before agreeing to accept a particular post.<sup>221</sup> John Cotton, the great-grandson of the Puritan divine of 1630, discussed his offers in a letter to his “Honoured Father” from Cambridge.

There were with me yesterday some men – to Invite me Bloudy point – a parish by the Bank – near Dover – I apply’d my self to the President & mr Brattle upon It for Advice, - mr Brattle would by no means hear of my going - & bid me (but handsomely) push ‘em of, & not keep ‘em in suspence [which I did (?)] agreeable to the Pres. Tho’t). – Which I accordingly Did; - notwithstanding the pressing Importunities to go with ‘em (coming down on purpose for me Directed by mr. N. Rogers [A.B. 1687]-) were it but for a month or 6 weeks...Last night I Received a Letter from Lawyer Turner, Desir’d by the Society at Swansey – to procure a minister & to make – known to you the Design of Obtaining my help – in Mr. Wilsons [John, A.B.1705] Room...In the morning I shall go Down to mr Brattle riding my horse Down to Boston - & Design to Let Him see the Letter... Mr Brattle is my Guide & father in everything...<sup>222</sup>

Despite these pressing and desperate offers from “poor and distant pulpits,” Cotton Mather recommended John Cotton to the more desirable station at Newtown; “The miserable Flock at Newtown, calls for abundance of Cares and Pains, to heal the

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<sup>220</sup> Schmotter offers helpful quantitative analyses of ministerial tenure in the eighteenth century. The figures vary among many factors, including whether tenures are tallied from their end or from their beginning. Yet the overall trend is indisputable that by the turn of the nineteenth century, ministers were much less likely to spend a lifetime in only one congregation. Whether this represents an improvement or a deterioration of the office of the ministry is certainly open to interpretation but it does coincide with a decline in the social authority of the colonial clergy. Schmotter, “Ministerial Careers.”

<sup>222</sup> Jan. 7, 1713, Joanna to Rowland Cotton, Letters and Papers, 1701-20 (M.H.S.), 79 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. V, 519.

Discomposures in it, and procure a good Settlement of a Minister. Their more particular Applications to me, lay me under more particular obligations to do for them.”<sup>223</sup>

Although stout competition for this particular post included Tutor Flynt, John Tufts, Ebenezer Williams and the future Harvard President Edward Holyoke, by November John Cotton was ordained to the position with the customary pomp and circumstance of such an occasion.<sup>224</sup> The network of congregational ministers who attended ordinations and commencements kept apprised of pulpit vacancies as well as the newest crop of promising young candidates. As such, they offered recommendations and sometimes served as matchmakers for congregations in search of a worthy candidate.

Not all recommendations were particularly helpful. The Reverend William Waldron of Boston gave the town of Portsmouth a less than glowing reference for John Hancock. “As for Mr. Hancock whom you have with you I know Little of Him. He has no great Character for his Abilities Either Naturale or Acquired.” In addition to the influence of their spiritual mentors, candidates also considered the opinions of their family and friends. Hancock still received a call from Portsmouth but he begged time to “consider of it, and confer with his friends.”<sup>225</sup> According to Cotton Mather, Hancock’s settlement was “in danger of being detained by the Humours of some foolish

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<sup>223</sup> Cotton Mather, *Diary* (7 Coll. M.H.S. VII-VIII), II, 226 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. V, 519; Mather’s relation to this “kinsmen” surely also played into his interest in his successful settlement.

<sup>224</sup> Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. V, 519.

<sup>225</sup> Nathaniel Adams, *Annals of Portsmouth*, (Portsmouth, 1825), 144 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VI, 316.

Relatives.”<sup>226</sup> Whatever the reason, Hancock did not get the position at Portsmouth and later settled in Braintree.

Joseph Stearns also depended upon the advisory role of veteran clergy. In 1753 at a regional ministerial association meeting he “asked advice of the Association, about the way and manner Of his setting out in the work of the ministry.” Unwilling to make this choice alone, Stearns looked to those older ministers to help him make this first crucial step into the ministry. By seeking the advice of seasoned clergy, new ministers attempted to minimize the risk of an unsuccessful placement. Other ministers listed “the best advice of friends” and “counsel” from “heaven” as the determining factors in settling in a particular locale.<sup>227</sup> Some who found the decision difficult resigned themselves to God’s call, “...why should I whom am not my own, choose? Let Christ choose for me. I would give more for a heart resigned to his will than for all the settlements on earth.”<sup>228</sup>

The importance of matching a specific candidate to a particular congregation can hardly be overstated. Colonial clergy recognized the pivotal nature of the decision to settle within a given community. While ministers retained the privilege of rejecting an invitation, once settled, they anticipated a lifelong tenure within the congregation. Under extenuating circumstances, the bond between the ordaining congregation and a clergyman could be broken but the Puritan divines had established a tradition of lengthy

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<sup>226</sup> Cotton Mather, *Diary (7 Coll. M.H.S. VII-VIII)*, II, 734 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. VI, 317.

<sup>227</sup> In 1727, Samuel Dunbar informed the First Church of Canton that “his friends had advised him to hold out for firewood and farm land,” Daniel T. V. Huntoon, *History of the Town of Canton* (Cambridge, 1893), 178; Jan. 22, 1727, letter of acceptance from Thomas Smith, *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, 61.

<sup>228</sup> *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, Vol. I*, 104.

tenures.<sup>229</sup> Throughout the eighteenth century, Congregational clergy would experience a gradual decline in term length, but most entered their settlement agreements under the auspices of their spiritual mentors with the tradition of permanency as their model. Without a ready or well-received method for the dissolution of the lay-clerical bond, the primary safeguard against a messy or public dispute with their congregation necessarily involved the importance of a wise match. Longevity remained the ideal.

### 3.1.2 *Settlement and Salary Negotiation*

One of the most important inducements toward swaying a candidate's decision to settle included their pecuniary arrangements. In the eighteenth century, the clergy turned increasingly toward contractual agreements. Colonial laws compelling inhabitants to contribute to ministerial maintenance appear as early as 1638 in Massachusetts but the abandonment of voluntary maintenance follows a gradual pattern.<sup>230</sup> However, the shift toward contracts retained some residual aspects of the previous generation's lay-clerical relationships. While settlement packages usually specified an annual salary in the form of currency, the packages often included extra benefits such as "strangers' money," a parsonage, the use of common lands, "a sufficient supply of firewood," or "labor for me on that part of the land that [the pastor] shall esteem most convenient."<sup>231</sup> Generally, a

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<sup>229</sup> Scott offers a valuable overview of the benefits of pastoral permanence and the bond between clergy and congregations, Scott, *Office to Profession*, Chap. 1.

<sup>230</sup> Hall gives a brief overview of the history of ministerial maintenance in the seventeenth-century, Hall, *Faithful Shepherd*, 145-149.

<sup>231</sup> From William Burnham's acceptance letter on June 5, 1709 to the society of Good Swamp which later became the parish of Kensington; David N. Camp, *History of New Britain* (New Britain, 1889), 93; the

tax on the community generated the specific cash portion of the salary package. But the additional elements of firewood and agricultural labor hinted at the legacy of voluntary maintenance.

Under voluntary maintenance, the clergy could never fully depend on any guaranteed amount of money; in large part they relied on the good favor of their flock. While clergy fully expected to receive some recompense for their ecclesiastical efforts, no one was forced to contribute to their maintenance. Those who were unable to give did not face tax delinquency. Those who were unwilling to give had every prerogative to withhold their funds. Those who felt particularly charitable could give in abundance. Under a voluntary system, clergy salaries represented more of a gratuity than a duty. While unforced contributions could certainly serve the selfish motives of a parishioner anxious to exhibit his wealth or perhaps simply reflect the disciplined behavior of a dutiful layman, for the most part, a pastor's salary received under voluntary maintenance retained a certain meaningful gesture of congregational appreciation and affirmation.<sup>232</sup> Free from the requirement of a specific contribution, monetary offerings took the form of a gift reflecting the goodwill or lack thereof from the flock.

While the specified cash agreement inherent in eighteenth-century contracts might have posed a measure of financial security for the clergy, the mandatory nature of parish taxes represented a more detached arrangement than the previous generations had

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term 'stranger's money' appears throughout the primary literature and appears to refer to travelers or visitors who were not local members and thus not obligated to contribute to the pastor's salary.

<sup>232</sup> Thomas Symmes listed several ulterior motives to ministerial maintenance, "to please Men, or to ingratiate themselves with Ministers, or because they would stop the Ministers Mouth, hating to hear themselves complained off or to: or from a Mercenary Spirit, vainly thinking to win the Heart of God, or oblige the Almighty..." Thomas Symmes, *The people's interest in one article consider'd & exhibit'd*. (Boston, 1724), 25.

held. An elected constable collected parish taxes and then delivered them to the pastor on a periodic basis. Under forced maintenance, parish taxes reduced much of clergy remuneration to a perfunctory exercise in civil responsibility.<sup>233</sup> Yet the additional duties of laymen to physically bring firewood to the parsonage door or contribute their own manual labor to their pastor's agricultural pursuits gave this portion of the pecuniary arrangement a familiar and personal touch. Gifts from Ebenezer Parkman's flock reflected both the mandatory allotment as well as voluntary gifts; "Mr. Jonathan Forbush brought some Wood we being in a straight, he brought also several Presents besides. Mr. Dodge Came with Money for a Token of Love to me."<sup>234</sup> For New England colonists, it may have seemed like the best of both options; the forced aspect of parish taxes theoretically guaranteed the clergy a set income while the voluntary 'expectations' permitted laymen a venue for offering gratitude through their personal contributions. Through this combination of payment methods, eighteenth-century colonists gradually eased the ministerial office toward a fee-for-service profession but continued to retain a sense of voluntary maintenance.<sup>235</sup>

Once again, it was during the candidacy period that clergy retained the most autonomy and control over their own financial futures. Despite their genteel eighteenth-century language, salary negotiations often reflected passive but pointed attempts by the clergy to secure the best financial agreements they could muster. Negotiations rarely occurred with great speed and one senses in the delay of some candidates' responses, that

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<sup>233</sup> Clergy warned against the dangers of becoming mere "hirelings" of the congregation.

<sup>234</sup> Nov. 9, 1754, *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 283.

<sup>235</sup> Calhoun, *Professional Lives in America*.

they were holding out for better offers.<sup>236</sup> Although Cotton Mather did not accept the invitation, New Haven had upped their offer to him in an attempt to sweeten the deal.<sup>237</sup> In July of 1707, the town of Billerica offered Samuel Ruggles a settlement of 80£, a plot of land and 40£ in salary if he would come as a colleague to their aging pastor. Ruggles did not consent to settle until they had increased the offer by 20£ for settlement and added 10£ for firewood. He was ordained a year later. When Windham invited Samuel Dunbar to settle, his friends encouraged him to “hold out for more firewood and farm land.”<sup>238</sup> He did and Windham enlarged the settlement.

Joseph Adams dickered with the parish of Newington who offered him 86£ per year and 60£ in settlement but 6£ would be withheld until he “had a familie.”<sup>239</sup> Six months later, Adams recorded the compromise in the church book,

1<sup>st</sup> That my sallary be Ninety Pounds: but as they pleaded The Poverty of the people: and the great charges they had been at in building the Meeting House: & I consented to accept 86 Pounds for Seven Years: & Withal I Promised on their Request That In Case I Lived a Batcheloer & had not a family I would Abate also the 6 Pounds....<sup>240</sup>

Before the candidate officially accepted a congregation’s offer, financial terms could be discussed with a fair amount of candor. But once a minister settled within a

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<sup>236</sup> The town of Norton called Joseph Avery in 1710 but could not come to “any certin Bargaine” until 1714. George F. Clark, *History of the Town of Norton*, (Boston, 1842), 61-66.

<sup>237</sup> 1682, *Cotton Mather Diary*, Vol. 1, 53.

<sup>238</sup> 1727, Daniel T. V. Huntoon, *History of the Town of Canton* (Cambridge, 1893), 178.

<sup>239</sup> Since most candidates tended to settle before choosing a wife, congregations often took advantage of this fact to secure their services at a reduced rate with a promise of additional salary when their minister married and began his family. Many salary arrangements included terms regarding their marital status.

<sup>240</sup> In 1715, New England Historical Gen. Register. LVIII, 250, 251 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. V, 503.

community, congregations tended to be less inclined to renegotiate terms at the request of their minister.<sup>241</sup> Clergy, who voiced dissatisfaction with the monetary contributions of their congregations, even when they were legitimately in arrears, risked appearing ungrateful. Peter Thatcher remarked that “Salaries are generally ticklish things, and the increase or diminution of them produce difficulties either on one side or the other, or both.”<sup>242</sup> Although some congregations voluntarily increased their minister’s salary in times of need, complaining clergy could raise the ire of their flock and cement their resistance to any additional remuneration.<sup>243</sup> Thus, the initial pecuniary arrangement carried great significance regarding future provisions. Beyond the initial agreement, many recognized and stated in their acceptance letters that hereafter they would need to depend on the charity of their congregation to increase compensation as the times required.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> On Mar. 29, 1746, John Martyn negotiated his terms in Westborough stating that “It is not for the sake of filthy lucre that I am moved hereunto; for I can see no prospect of any worldly advantage to be in the ministry, especially in country parishes; neither do I expect a life of ease and pleasure....” Joseph Allen, *Day of Small Things*, (Boston, 1846) 19-21; ship 1724, 378; But after several years of noncompliance, he rebuked the parish; “Your are not strangers to the terms or conditions upon which I settled in this place, neither need I tell you that they have never yet been complied with...If you have a laborer for the lowest, meanest sort of work, has he not at least his food from day to day? And why must a minister maintain himself, at least nine or ten months of the year, which has all along been the case here or suffer?Is the work of ministry less value than digging a ditch?”Dec. 22, 1747. in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. VII, 380.

<sup>242</sup> Peter Thatcher, The Belknap Papers, *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Vol. III, 5<sup>th</sup> ser. (Boston, 1877), 126.

<sup>243</sup> In 1738, Thomas Clap’s attempt to hold the town to his contract’s “proviso” promising inflationary salary adjustments not only failed but led to his subsequent dismissal, *Early Files in the Office of the Clerk of the Suffolk Supreme Court*, 22,276 and *Suffolk Files*, 46,559 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...: with bibliographical and other notes*, Vols. VII, 494-495.

<sup>244</sup> Marston Cabot chose to “trust” his congregation’s judgment of a minister’s “honorable maintenance,” A. Dunning, *A Historical Discourse*, (Worcester, n. d.) 17-18, 322; John Wadsworth considered his salary as “the stated sum, but not unalterable. Times are changeable, and we in time. If for my comfortable maintenance, 150£, 200£, or 300£ per annum is necessary,...I shall expect it be freely offered; on the contrary, if ten be sufficient, I remit the hundred.” Ellen Larned, *History of Windham County, Connecticut*, Vol. I, (Worcester, 1874).

John Seccomb realized that a good settlement offer in 1733 might not be sufficient in the years to come. In a lengthy response, he reminded the town of Harvard that although he considered their offer “generous and honourable considering your present circumstances,” in the future it might be less than generous “when things come to be differently Circumstanced.”<sup>245</sup> He invited them to “make some small Graduell Consideration for [his] future subsistence.”<sup>246</sup> Specifying that the “Cutting and Sledding” of his wood be added to the contract, he still insisted “what you Do must be and I think will be free, chearfull and voluntary.” Although Seccomb’s tone was gentle and he never issued a clear ultimatum, he also carefully avoided giving Harvard any assurance of his settlement until they responded to his suggestions. Instead, he ended his response with a shrewdly placed scripture reminding them “He that Soweth Sparing shall Reap Sparingly.”<sup>247</sup> Seccomb recognized that future negotiations were likely to be more complicated. He and many other eighteenth-century clergy found it necessary to haggle for the best contract possible from the beginning. Harvard was less than pleased with Seccomb’s response to their initial offer but after some dispute they opted to increase the offer by 20 pounds.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Letter to Town of Harvard, May 18, 1733, Norse, *History of Harvard*, 180.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid, 181.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> “After the Reading Mr Seccomb’s Answer to the Town, which was not so peremptory and full as was Expected and the Town being loth there shou’d be any Obstacle laid in the way by them...the Town voted they wou’d give it. This was accepted. [May 22, 1733],” *ibid*.

Clerical contracts not only secured the financial well-being of the ministers, it also carried great social significance in the colonial period.<sup>249</sup> The pecuniary agreement between clergy and congregations represented far more than a guaranteed adequate income. The New England clergy used salary negotiations to emphasize the sacred nature of their work and the deference due their position. Marston Cabot reminded his future congregation that “a minister of Christ ought to have an honorable maintenance, suitable to his sacred character and station, that he may not be forced to entangle himself with the affairs of life.”<sup>250</sup> Thomas Fessenden accepted Walpole’s invitation but asked that at least half of his salary be paid in cash lest the selling of the surplus commodities make a “*Marchant*” of him and “so Divert me from my Studies and Proper Calling and in the same Proportion Deprive you of my labor.”<sup>251</sup>

Samuel Willard accepted his offer only upon certain conditions: “First, that the house you build be a convenient commodious house, such as is suitable to a minister to live in, and to the same dimensions that most parsonage houses are...”<sup>252</sup> Furthermore Willard desired settlement land that would be “wholly” his, contending that ministers

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<sup>249</sup> Breen discusses the importance of education and wealth as magisterial attributes in Chapter 6. Ministers needed enough salary to permit time spent in study and to keep them from pursuing the ministry for its salary, Timothy Breen, *The Character of a Good Ruler*, (New Haven, 1970), Chapter 6.

<sup>250</sup> 1729, Dunning, *A Historical Discourse*, 17-18 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. VII, 322; from this limited quote, it is impossible to discern what Cabot considered to be “an honorable maintenance” for his time period but as ministers compared their wages to “common laborers” and “washer women,” it seems clear that they considered their position to be superior to such occupations and worthy of a significantly better income, *Journals of Smith and Deane*, 239.

<sup>251</sup> 1766, George Aldrich, *Walpole as it Was and as it Is*, (Claremont, 1880), 36-37.

<sup>252</sup> Thomas Paine, *Gospel-Light* (Boston, 1730) in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. VII, 283.

were just “as desirous as any other man to leave something of his own” to their heirs.<sup>253</sup>

The moment of settlement offered the perfect opportunity for the clergy to protect their image and the deference due the office of the ministry. Yet, Willard’s case also illustrates the irony of the clerical position with the Congregational system. Ministers sought to underscore their elevated ecclesiastical roles but at the same time, needed to appeal to the congregation’s view of them as “any other man.”<sup>254</sup> Willard pointed out the inconsistencies of the clerical system in which many clergy depended upon parsonage lands, which ultimately belonged to the town. The use of parsonages and clerical rights to parsonage land created a perpetual rental system, which diminished the clergy’s opportunity to accumulate personal equity. Like “any other man,” the clergy fretted about what they might have to leave to their families.<sup>255</sup> Furthermore, early in the century when separations were infrequent, displaced clergy had little recourse if for any reason the lay-clerical bond were to break. To illustrate these deficits, ministers needed to accentuate the commonality of their interests with the laymen. During the settlement negotiation, eighteenth-century clergy were forced take a long view of their potential success or failure within a congregation.

During the colonial period, physicians, attorneys and clergy possessed similar social status as educated professionals yet the process of remuneration was unique to

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Isaiah Dunster reminded a congregation during an ordination that “Ministers are Men of like Passion with others...” Isaiah Dunster, *Ministerial Authority and Watchfulness*, (Boston, 1763).

<sup>255</sup> October, 1713, Mather worried about children’s provision when he is “dead and gone; that the considerable Interest, (by this Time, it would have been many hundreds of Pounds,) which I should have laid up for them, has been employ’d in their Subsistence and Education, when I might have justly expected the Supplies for that, from the Flock; but have waved that Expectation, that so I might not be burdensome to them, or hinder the Success of my Ministry!” *Cotton Mather Diary, Vol. II*, 245.

clergy.<sup>256</sup> Unlike physicians and attorneys who set their own fees throughout their career, clergy possessed control only over their initial settlement agreement.<sup>257</sup> Early in the colonial period, clergy served multiple roles, often practicing medicine and law while also serving as the town minister. Even then, clergy could freely adjust their medical or legal fee structure at any time; clerical salaries, however, fell subject to town approval.<sup>258</sup> As periodic currency crises and inflation during the eighteenth century devalued clerical salaries, ministers suffered a concurrent decline in social deference. Whether or not the loss of ministerial authority could be attributed solely to diminishing salary values, eighteenth-century clergy connected the two and fretted about the over-all effect on the office of the ministry. In 1778, Thomas Smith remarked on the severity of the currency issues noting, “Common laborers have four dollars a day, while ministers have but a dollar, and washerwomen as much.”<sup>259</sup> Even physicians recognized the connection between salary and professional image. Fellow physicians complained that Dr. Holyoke practiced medicine too cheap; his low fees were barely “sufficient...to support the

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<sup>256</sup> Calhoun offers a valuable comparative study of these three professions during the years of 1750 and 1850 but he misses some of the texture of clerical life which affects his conclusions. Although he accurately notices the concern over “hireling” clergy, he attributes much of this to “attacks” from those not “far removed from social dependency” or those whose “ideas about social subordination either disturbed or defended them,” Calhoun, *Professional Lives in America*, 2. Concern over “hireling” clergy was not a class-driven issue; the clergy themselves provided the largest outcry against compulsory maintenance lest it compromise the purity of the ministers’ message.

<sup>257</sup> In the 1750s, Dr. James Lloyd happily served the “poorest class of society” and considered himself “amply paid by the esteem and affection of my patients.” Mass. Hist. Soc., *Proceedings*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ser., VII, 179. But he also served the wealthy charging them at a fairly high rate for the period, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. XII, 187.

<sup>258</sup> Clergy did not receive the annual privilege of renegotiating their pecuniary contracts. This privilege belonged to the town. At best, a minister might offer a report of his expenses for the past year or the current state of arrears in an effort to demonstrate the adequacy of his salary but ultimately, he was at the mercy of the town to comply with or adjust his present agreement. When inflation diminished the value of his clerical salary, Samuel Dunbar furnished the town with a “carefully itemized account of household expenses,” Huntoon, *History of the Town of Canton*, 181-182.

<sup>259</sup> *Journals of Smith and Deane*, 239.

Dignity of the Profession.”<sup>260</sup> Low salaries not only inconvenienced ministers, they had a derogatory effect on the social status of colonial clergy.

Despite the clergy’s attention to social standing, their concerns do not imply collective class conflict or even class consciousness in the strictest sense. Although individuals could anticipate greater social mobility in the American colonies than might have been available in England, colonial society remained stratified between those who received deference and those who were expected to render it. Early in the eighteenth century when clergy still held a monopoly on religious sacraments and enjoyed financial and educational superiority, ministers willingly accepted others into their ranks. While Harvard and Yale tended to be restricted to those with the means to attend, occasionally students from families without means attended college on the generosity of some wealthy individual or group of individuals who paid their tuition. Congregational clergy did not attempt to restrict others from joining their ranks; in fact, later in the century, they lamented the lack of interest among young men to enter the ministry.<sup>261</sup> But clergy did attempt to protect the social status they had once enjoyed and felt was necessary to retain the influence and deference due to the office of the ministry.

Clergy incomes truly occupied a unique and conflicted spot in colonial society. While ministers may have been correct to assume that a poorly paid pastor contributed to a poorly respected office, the opposite circumstance could create its own set of

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<sup>260</sup> J. C. Warren Mss. (Mass. Hist. Soc.), II, Jan. 29, 1775 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. XII, 32.

<sup>261</sup> 1747, John Blunt lamented fewer Harvard men entering ministry because of poor financial support, *Provincial Papers*, XXXIII, 286-287; in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College... Vol. VIII*, 115.

difficulties.<sup>262</sup> The well-paid pastor was sometimes resented for his fortune. Clergy who were suspected of “growing rich” may have retained the dignity of their profession but they risked agitating jealousy from their flocks.<sup>263</sup> Insufficient wages as well as wealth could hinder the effectiveness of a pastor’s ministry among his flock.

Colonial Congregationalists certainly did not seek to promote a popish clergy or recreate the “priest craft” that they associated with the Anglican Church but they did expect their clergy to exist in a different sphere than their own. The pomp and circumstance of ordination ceremonies and clergy funerals illustrated the deference and respect clergy received in colonial society. Many of these occasions rivaled civil ceremonies.<sup>264</sup> Although these ecclesiastical rites were largely orchestrated by the clergy themselves, the funds to support the elaborate celebrations were raised by the community.

It was not unusual for a town to spend as much or more on ordination expenses as they promised their candidate in a yearly salary.<sup>265</sup> Alexander Cumming’s elaborate ordination banquet reputedly drove up the prices of commodities in Boston. Cummings was ordained as a colleague to the wealthy Dr. Joseph Sewall in 1761 and the extravagant affair created a public controversy in the *Boston Gazette* for several weeks; “...the price

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<sup>262</sup> In 1774, when his congregation charged him with “poor preaching, very poor preaching” one minister retorted that he it was a result of “poor pay, very poor pay,” Lyman S. Hayes, *The Old Rockingham Meeting House*, (Bellows Falls, 1915), 46.

<sup>263</sup> In the 1760s after nine years at Roxbury, Amos Adams candidly defended his salary against the charge that he had been “growing rich and laying up money for [his] family,” Walter Eliot Thwing, *History of the First Church of Roxbury* (Boston, 1908), 156.

<sup>264</sup> Feb. 19, 1728, Parkman records his attendance at Cotton Mather’s funeral, “It look’d very Sad – almost as if it were the funerall of the Country...Vast Concourse Exceeding long Procession and numberless Spectators. Every heart Sad,” *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 30.

<sup>265</sup> In 1750, the town of Gorham spent the equivalent of two years’ salary on Solomon Lombard’s ordination dinner. An elaborate list of expenses can be found in Hugh E. McClellan, *History of Gorham* (Portland, 1903), 180-181.

of provisions was raised a quarter part in Boston for several days before the late instalment, by reason of the great preparations therefore, and the readiness of the ecclesiastical caterers to give almost any price that was demanded.”<sup>266</sup> Oddly enough, a town might willingly vote the funds necessary for an elaborate celebration of a pastor’s settlement but subsequently allow his annual salary to fall into arrears.<sup>267</sup> Granted, this phenomenon may represent a variety of motives. Perhaps towns merely reveled in their personal display of wealth during ceremonies. Perhaps they sought to display their generosity to new clergy. Perhaps they felt some civil responsibility to the office of the ministry. Whatever their reasoning, the effort and expense towns invested in clerical ordinations or funerals reflected the layman’s attitude toward the office of the ministry rather than the individual pastor.

Ostentatious ordinations might indicate a congregation’s respect for the office of the ministry but they do not necessarily qualify as an accurate representation of their affection for a given minister. At ordination, the relationship between shepherd and flock still remained in infancy and could not possibly reflect or predict the potential for his successful ministry. Similarly, the effort and expense of a clerical funeral did not necessarily indicate the town’s sentiment for an individual minister.<sup>268</sup> Pastors might receive a well-planned and meaningful funeral service regardless of his current

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<sup>266</sup> *Boston Gazette*, May 9, 1761.

<sup>267</sup> The First Church of Woburn put on a sumptuous affair for Edward Jackson’s ordination in 1729 but by 1740, they fallen into great financial dispute with their pastor, Samuel Sewall, (Boston, 1868), 263.

<sup>268</sup> Hampton generously voted 100 pounds toward the funeral expenses of Nathaniel Gookin, built a new house and barn for his widow and family when they vacated the parsonage, as well as a yearly stipend during her widowhood, *Boston News-Letter*, Sept. 26, 1734 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College... Vol. V*, 210.

relationship with his flock.<sup>269</sup> Although a congregation may have contended with their minister throughout his tenure, during formal occasions, they offered the clergy respect for their office through their financial commitments to religious rituals.

Regardless of the elevated social position congregations granted clergy at the onset and end of their careers, the day-to-day interaction between eighteenth-century clergy and their congregations often reveals a bit less respect. Some colonists resisted specified contributions to stated clerical salary. Although most delinquent salaries cannot be traced specifically to any particular clerical offense, one layman verbalized his noncompliance with utmost candor. When one of Ebenezer Parkman's neighbors attempted to solicit labor from a fellow parishioner to put up the pastor's hay, the parishioner retorted, "When my Grass and Corn will move into my Barn without hands, I'll leave it to Help Mr. Parkman – not before."<sup>270</sup> This gentleman's response may indicate his feelings for Parkman in general, or his pastor's lack of affinity for manual labor, or simply his own churlish nature. But at the very least, it implies the tendency of layman to compare their minister to themselves.

In Preston, Jabez Fitch listed several reasons for not "joining in the drawing the parsonage wood" which reveal a striking lack of deference for the clergy.

1<sup>st</sup> Because I have a Family of my own to support which I Judge need my Labour more than Mr. Wight & his Family does at present. (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 5<sup>th</sup> 8<sup>th</sup>)

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<sup>269</sup> For this reason I am suspect of the many eulogies printed in colonial newspapers as a basis of clerical character. They certainly can offer reliable evidence regarding physical characteristics and chronology but to determine the true relationship and tensions existing between a flock and their shepherd, daily diary accounts and personal correspondence seem to offer a more accurate portrayal.

<sup>270</sup> July 30, 1726, Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 15.

2<sup>nd</sup> Because there is several poor Families in the plais which are more perfect objects of Charity, therefore I Judge it my Duty to help them sooner (if I were able) than the Rev. Mr. Wight.

3<sup>rd</sup> Mr. Wight has got one Idle Son at least, to maintain, & has also got a Teem of his own, which together might get his wood, and be more Honourary to his Family and the Society, and les prejudisial to some perticular Family, in the plais who have more Pride and Ambition, than welth Judgment and good Consideration.

Therefore I conclude from the foregoing Reasons (and many others which might be colected) that tis better for such poor men as myself and some others in the Neighbourhood to stay at home and do their own work, than to neglect their own Business to procure the Esteem of the Clergy etc.<sup>271</sup>

Fitch's reasoning reflects his view of the labor element in clerical salaries. For him, it represented "charity" (and thus purely a voluntary service) which should have been directed in a more equitable manner throughout the community. Furthermore, parish labor became necessary only when the pastor exhibited more need than his parishioners could demonstrate. Finally, and most significantly, Fitch objected to the underlying motive he sensed in the obligation to draw his pastor's firewood. To Fitch, the aspect of expected "volunteer labor" merely served as a means of enhancing clerical status and "esteem." Colonial clergy occupied an elevated social position but when the salaries and labor packages became a specified expectation upon the individual layman as opposed to a voluntary display of gratitude, deference from parishioners flowed less freely.

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<sup>271</sup> This complaint was lodged against Jabez Wight who was ordained in 1726 in the society of Norwich, later to become the town of Preston, from a diary of Jabaz Fitch printed in serially in the *Mayflower Descendant* and the *Pilgrim Notes and Queries*, III, 59, in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VI, 583.

### 3.1.3 *The Middle Years of Ministry*

Settlement agreements certainly represented the most overt manner of negotiation between New England clergy and their congregations, but even after an initial contract agreement had been reached, successful ministries required continued understanding and careful attention to congregational expectations. Once settled into a particular community, clergy necessarily negotiated their authority in a less direct manner. Through their faithful exercise of personal piety, religious instruction, and performance of ecclesiastical rites, ministers fulfilled the explicit nature of their ministerial contract. Yet, the astute pastor also recognized that ministerial authority rested on much more than the simple fulfillment of contractual pastoral duties. A minister needed to stay apprised of his congregation's implicit expectations. In a phenomenon which escaped other colonial professionals such as physicians and attorneys, clerical behavior remained under extraordinary scrutiny throughout their tenure even in areas over which the congregation held no official jurisdiction.

Cotton Mather serves as a prime example of an authoritarian figure who considered the implicit expectations laid upon the clergy and the power of his actions upon his ministry. Merely two months following the death of his first wife, Mather found himself sought out by a 20-year-old "young Gentlewoman" of "polite education," "rare Witt and Sense", and "comely Aspect" who propositioned him for marriage.<sup>272</sup> Although

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<sup>272</sup> February 1703, "This young Gentlewoman first Addresses me with diverse Letters, and then makes me a Visit at my House; wherein she gives me to understand, that she has long had a more than ordinary Value for my Ministry; and that my present Condition has given her more of Liberty to think of me, she must confess herself charmed with my Person, to such a Degree, that she could not but break in upon me, with her most importunate Requests, that I would make her mine; and that the highest Consideration she had in it, was her eternal Salvation, for it she were mine, she could not but hope the Effect of it would be, that she should also be Christ's", *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. I, 457.*

clearly flattered by her attentions, Mather agonized over the decision to court her. She confessed to Mather that she was “charmed” by him but also expressed that at least part of her motive “was her eternal Salvation, for if she were mine, she could not but hope the Effect of it would be, that she should also be Christ’s.”<sup>273</sup> Mather readily secured the latter part of her request by leading her into “the Covenant of Grace” and then began to consider courtship. However, Mather’s relatives and parishioners disapproved. Creating a “Storm of Reproach” and “a mighty Noise...about the Town,” they objected to her character, which they considered “disagreeable” to his, and furthermore protested the “Earliness” of his courtship following his wife’s death.<sup>274</sup>

For a clergyman of Mather’s stature and station, well established in his ministerial career, it is curious that he gave any opposition to his romantic aspirations much more than a passing glance.<sup>275</sup> Given the emphasis among historians on the authoritarian nature of the early generations of colonial clergy, one might expect him to have behaved with less regard for public opinion. In light of his clerical status, his careful attention to personal image is revealing. In a rather humble fashion, Mather chose not to dwell on the potential injury to his personal esteem. Rather, he wrestled with the ultimate effect upon his ministry. His image and ministry were inextricably connected. Early in the eighteenth century, colonial clergy retained a social status which in modern terms could

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Mather notes her tainted reputation stating that “I have had much ado to steer clear of great Inconveniencies, hath by the Disadvantages of the Company which has continually resorted unto her unhappy Father’s House, gott but a bad Name among the Generality of the People; and there appears no Possibility of her speedy Recovery of it, be her Carriage never so virtuous, and her Conversion never so notorious.” Ibid, 470.

<sup>275</sup> At 38 years old, Mather was fully 20 years into what would be a 45-year-career in one location.

be accurately described as “local celebrity.”<sup>276</sup> While their public prominence certainly enhanced ministerial authority as long as community opinion remained positive, that same local fame could deteriorate a minister’s influence when community opinion turned negative. Celebrity status functioned as a negotiable commodity for these early colonial ministers. As a public figure, who also held the sacred role of God’s messenger and recognized the effect of public notoriety upon his ministerial efforts, Mather necessarily managed his celebrity status with care.

After much deliberation, Mather made the difficult decision to reject the “gentlewoman” lest his “Usefulness be horribly Ruined, by the Clamour of the rash People on this Occasion.”<sup>277</sup> This turned out to be more complicated than he may have anticipated. Tongues continued to wag in the town regarding the affair. And for months, Mather lamented his “broken” and “sore” spirit. The scorned “gentlewoman” was no happier. Unwilling to accept his rejection or unconvinced of it, she continued her pursuit and renewed her proposition three months later. But Mather’s “Apprehension of Damage to arise therefrom unto the holy Interests of Religion, fixes me still in an unalterable Resolution, that I must never hearken to her Proposals, whatever may be the Consequence of my being so resolved.”<sup>278</sup>

Nothing in Mather’s journals suggests that he rejected his pursuer on any other grounds than concern for his ministerial effectiveness. In fact, the tenor of his entries

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<sup>276</sup> During Mather’s courtship of the “Young Gentlewoman” as well as his courtship of his third wife, he found his local prominence as a minister to be a hindrance.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid, 484-485.

reflects a man sorely tempted and torn by a possible love match. It appears that Mather calculated the significance of his flocks' opinion of his personal courtship behavior and marital selection and he consciously negotiated his own personal desires in exchange for their continued favor and deference. Neither the congregation nor the town had any civil or ecclesiastical right to dictate clerical romance, yet the respect and influence of the office of the ministry rested in great part upon the pleasure of the governed.<sup>279</sup> Ministerial authority could not be demanded by even the likes of Cotton Mather; it required constant maintenance. Mather eventually chose a 30-year-old widow with one child to be his second wife. His congregation raised no opposition. Interestingly, this wife warranted virtually no references to her character or appearance in Mather's journal.

Ebenezer Parkman served with equal longevity during the middle of the eighteenth century but he struggled to negotiate his ministerial authority as effectively as Mather. A mere four years into his ministry, his town fell into several protracted quarrels which Parkman struggled to mediate; "I See my Self unable to manage a Quarrell and very much indipos'd towards it; but especially I would be afraid of the Interests of Religion Suffering."<sup>280</sup>

Like Mather, Parkman's ultimate concern lay with the hindrance of ministry rather than his own personal esteem; however, his personal esteem was very much at stake. Although none of the disputes personally involved Parkman, his position as the town minister drew him into the fray. Before long, one of the disputants claimed that

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<sup>279</sup> Cooper emphasizes the congregational involvement and their check on the clergy through his analysis of church records, Cooper, *Tenacious at their Liberties*.

<sup>280</sup> Feb. 1, 1728, *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 29.

“Mr. Newton (a known close friend of Parkman’s) bragg’d he had got Mr. Parkman and Mr. Bradish of his Side and he car’d not for all the Church besides.”<sup>281</sup> Mr. Newton denied such boasting. But try as he might to disavow such a claim, the damage had been done. Parkman insisted upon his impartiality and the two disputants eventually reconciled under Parkman’s council, yet public opinion remained unchanged. Weeks later Parkman noted that still “It was suspected that I favour’d Mr. Newton which...I acted against.”<sup>282</sup>

Throughout his 50-year tenure in Westborough, Parkman battled various members in his parish. Mather, Parkman, and many other ministers could usually count on one or two notable parishioners to antagonize them with regularity, but Parkman seemed to attract criticism from multiple corners of his parish.<sup>283</sup> Members felt free to stop by the parsonage during the week to express their dissatisfaction with his sermons, doctrine, and other ecclesiastical duties.<sup>284</sup> Although he recorded his private indignation with these charges, Parkman usually apologized publicly and then privately renewed his determination to avoid his flock’s disapproval. In a dispute with the precinct over his pew, Parkman “spake of my just dues only when forc’d to it, and with all Meekness in

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<sup>281</sup> March 11, 1728, *ibid*, 31.

<sup>282</sup> Mar. 28, 1728, *ibid*.

<sup>283</sup> The manner in which a minister dealt with his opposition in the congregation could deeply impact his effectiveness and even his longevity in a given parish. William Bentley sought advice for how to handle his greatest antagonist and considered his “existence as a Parish Minister depending upon my resolution,” May 21, 1789, *Diary of William Bentley, Vol. 1*, 123. Mather’s primary antagonist was a man named Fisk, and Parkman could always expect opposition from the Fays, and Thomas Forbush.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid*; Jan. 31, 1728; Nov. 6, 1737; May 3, 1744; May 28, 1744; Feb. 11, 1746; Feb. 13, 1746; Feb 26, 1746; Paine Wingate’s diary tells of a woman who barged into her pastor’s bedroom one morning before he was even up in order to “berate him for his doctrine,” Charles E. L. Wingate, *Life and Letters of Paine Wingate*, (Medford, 1930), 18 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, VII, 288.

my just Defence. But I soon retire'd from them and would not stay to contend with them."<sup>285</sup>

On a separate occasion, Parkman inadvertently forgot to mention a bill of prayer during the Sunday service, which had been submitted by one of his members. The parishioner flew into a "Rage" and Parkman "could not Suffer him to go away in Such a Frame." Despite a violent thunderstorm, Parkman followed the angry man to the stables and then back to the meetinghouse where the controversy had gained steam with additional parishioners. As he began to comprehend the gravity of the situation, Parkman "then conceiv'd it best for the prevention of further Mischief to declare that it was thro my Infirmity and no otherwise that his Case was Neglected:...though I did all in my Power to Compose and Satisfie him; and that he assur'd me he would never bring me any Papers (to desire Prayers) any more," Parkman eventually conceded that all his efforts were in vain and opted to accept the situation as "just Chastizement from God...for my own Sloth and Negligence!"<sup>286</sup>

Parkman's willingness to absorb his flock's anger may have contributed to the longevity of his tenure by averting a career-ending controversy but it certainly did not breed additional respect and influence toward Parkman or the clergy in general.<sup>287</sup> The negotiation of Parkman's personal self-respect and long-suffering for the favor of the congregation did not achieve the same deference toward Parkman that Cotton Mather

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<sup>285</sup> June 17, 1754, *ibid*, 276.

<sup>286</sup> June 22, 1755, *ibid*, 290.

<sup>287</sup> On April 29, 1745, Parkman was asked by proxy to come to meeting house raising and pray at 8am. Parkman mentions that he was without a horse since his own mare has just foaled but no one brought him a horse or offered a ride. He was irritated at their thoughtlessness but was not willing to "warrant my proclaiming War against them as my refusing to go to Day would do," *ibid*, 116.

received. By mid-century, deference toward the office of the clergy showed signs of decline as conditions within the local community felt the effects of a maturing colonial society. During Parkman's tenure, increasing population allowed Westborough to split into two congregations and he faced the competition of revivalist preachers. Parkman may have evaluated the waning influence of his position and consciously opted to accommodate his congregations' disrespectful behavior.

On Oct. 22, 1760, William Lawrence described the present state of the colonial clergy as thus: "In the present Age of Licentiousness and prevalent Vice, wherein the great Doctrines and Duties of our holy Religion are become amongst many, the Object of Ridicule and Banter, it cannot be thought very strange or surprizing, that the Preachers of them, are so unhappy, as to be contemned, and their sacred Office and Employment too lightly esteemed."<sup>288</sup> Ministerial authority continued to require a careful negotiation within the limits of clerical and congregational expectations, but as the eighteenth century wore on, the increasing autonomy of congregations altered ministerial bargaining power.

Parkman often caved to his parishioners' desires even when he had reservations.<sup>289</sup> Reluctant to antagonize his flock, he resisted anything that might unsettle them. When Mr. Prentice urged him to "come out – boldly for the Cause of God" in support of specific doctrine from the pulpit, he "told him it was necessary to regard my people...and I know well that my people would be greatly disgusted and I did not think it

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<sup>288</sup> These trends will be discussed more fully in the final chapter. William Lawrence, *A Sermon Preached at the Ordination of...Stephen Farrar* (Boston, 1761), 1.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid; Parkman reluctantly allowed Mr Prentice into the pulpit only when "I saw so much of the extra fervency of many of the people to have Mr. Prentice preach that I gave way," Feb. 15, 1744, 91-92; Granting another request for a specific preacher, Parkman recorded, "I did not sett myself against it, but permitted it, but did not give much encouragement...", Dec. 25, 1745, 129.

wise or prudent to give way to it.”<sup>290</sup> Colonial clergy walked a fine line between accommodating their congregations’ every whim and sensing the invisible but very real limits beyond which the clergy refused to be stretched. Pushing a flock past their comfort zone could cost a minister his pulpit or at the very least create enough resistance to hinder future ministerial efforts. Clergy dared not overestimate their powers of persuasion. Judicious ministers gauged their people carefully and recognized the limits of their own authority and influence upon their congregation.

#### 3.1.4 *The Final Years of Ministry*

By the end of their tenure in a given church, colonial clergy frequently reached yet another stage of more overt negotiation. Over the course of their tenure, many ministers battled greater bouts of discouragement. Small offenses from their parishioners accumulated and became more difficult to ignore. Toward the end of their careers, many clerical diaries began to take on a more melancholy tone.<sup>291</sup> Ironically, the accumulation of experience and expertise from years of successful ministry, which might have buffered them with ever more competence to avoid further clergy-congregational conflict, instead served to increase their agitation. Later journal entries from the clergy reveal a particular vulnerability to their current issues of contention. Oddly, increasing competence did not

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid, 129; Dec. 25, 1745, Caleb Barnum refused to let a guest preacher in the pulpit because of “the difficulty in his church, and the dangerous consequences he was afraid would ensue,” Reuben A. Guild, *Chaplain Smith and the Baptists* (Philadelphia, 1885), 48, in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. XIV, 133.

<sup>291</sup> *Diary of Cotton Mather, The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith and the Rev. Samuel Deane*. These diaries contain numerous examples.

breed increasing patience. Many clergy became steadily more critical of their flock and despaired of their own ability to serve them, which in turn produced a combination of discouragement and resentment. Peter Thatcher became so discouraged “on Account of the Unsuccessfulness of his Ministry...that he thought he should have taken Leave of his People...but ...he cou’d not satisfy himself with a suitable Text for his farewell Sermon.”<sup>292</sup> Rather than growing accustomed or calloused to the behavior of disgruntled parishioners, clergy grew less tolerant of their conduct over time.

Cotton Mather’s discouragement became acute a few years before his death.<sup>293</sup> By 1721, he regretted describing his flock in “too bitter terms,” but went on to call them an “absurd and wicked people” living in a “miserable and detestable Town.”<sup>294</sup> Later in the same entry, he depicted Boston as an “abominable town.” Although pastors frequently exchanged pulpits and asked each other to preach in their stead, his invitation to Thomas Prince reveals the depth of Mather’s despair. Citing his own lack of courage, Mather begged Prince to come and preach his lecture in February of 1722.<sup>295</sup> By March of 1724, Mather even entertained the idea of stepping down from his ministry within the month.<sup>296</sup>

These were undeniably tough years for Mather. He struggled with the madness of his third wife, financial difficulties which threatened to bankrupt him, competition from

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<sup>292</sup> *Christian History*, II, 79 as quoted in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...: with bibliographical and other notes*, Vol.VI, 320.

<sup>293</sup> Cotton Mather died in 1728.

<sup>294</sup> *Cotton Mather Diary*, Vol.II, 655.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid*, 681.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid*, 712.

the new Brick meetinghouse, and the petty but serious contentions of his parishioners over pew assignments.<sup>297</sup> Mather fretted over “impertinencies” and pride, which threatened congregational unity remarking that North Church “seems to be ripe for something little short of a miserable Dissolution.”<sup>298</sup>

As serious as these issues may have been, the inoculation crisis in 1721 punctuated Mather’s ministerial trials with a violent confrontation. Mather’s support of small pox inoculation had drawn a wide array of criticism from the community. Provoked by the “vile abuse” he received “for nothing but...instructing our base Physicians, how to save many precious Lives,” Mather, in multiple journal entries, referred to Boston as a town possessed by Satan.<sup>299</sup> The issue became intensely personal when Mather agonized over whether to inoculate his son, Samuel. The public nature of Mather’s position caused him to hesitate in this critical decision. If Samuel did not survive inoculation, the future of Mather’s ministry was at stake. But if he opted not to inoculate and Samuel succumbed to Small Pox, Mather wondered “how can I answer it?”<sup>300</sup> In order to sidestep the controversy, Mather’s father recommended that he administer inoculation in secret. Eventually Samuel was successfully inoculated but

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<sup>297</sup> Mather complained that several of his regular attenders were flocking to the newly built brick meetinghouse in Boston. He seemed to believe that they were merely drawn by the novelty of a new building.

<sup>298</sup> *Cotton Mather Diary, Vol.II*, 194.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid*, 634.

<sup>300</sup> In 1721, Mather considered the possibility of Samuel dying with or without inoculation. “Full of Distress about Sammy; He begs to have his life saved, by receiving the Small-Pox, in the way of Inoculation , whereof our Neighbourhood has had no less than ten remarkable Experiments; and if he should after all dy by receiving it in the common Way, how can I answer it? On the other Side, our People, who have Satan remarkably filling their Hearts and their Tongues, will go on with infinite Prejudices against me and my Ministry, if I suffer this Operation upon the Child: and be sure, if he should happen to miscarry under it, my condition would be insupportable. His Grand father advises that I keep the whole Proceeding private, and that I bring the Lad into this Method of Safety. My Condition would be insupportable....With infinite Prejudices against me and my Ministry,” *ibid*, 635.

Mather charged the newspapers with attempting to “blacken the Ministers of the Town” and “render their Ministry ineffectual.”<sup>301</sup> Illustrating the intensity of the inoculation crisis, someone threw a “fired Granado” (iron ball) through a window into Mather’s home on November 14, 1721. Fortunately, through a malfunction which caused it not to light, no one was injured. The attached note revealed the level of hatred present in the community; “Cotton Mather, You Dog, Dam you; I’ll inoculate you with this, with a Pox to you.”<sup>302</sup>

Mather continued to pastor North Church until his death in 1728 but his final journal entries reflect a cynical approach to the ministerial role. Wearing by congregational opposition while attempting to manage his financial need and marital strife, Mather had lost his ability to shrug off criticism from his congregation. As he succumbed to bitter thoughts and occasional confrontations, guilt over his lack of restraint compounded his personal discouragement. In Mather’s career as well as those of other colonial ministers, years of experience did not necessarily translate into a peaceful and serene completion of their ministerial assignments.

Well into their careers, Ebenezer Parkman and Thomas Smith dealt with similar bouts of discouragement.<sup>303</sup> On the twentieth anniversary of his ordination, Parkman felt only failure.<sup>304</sup> The next year, Parkman stayed up until 2 a.m. one night agonizing over

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid, 663, Mather was particularly angry with the New England Courant. When the congregation at Marble-head opposed the inoculation of their minister, Mather angrily remarked that the minister was “likely to be murdered by an abominable People,” *ibid*, 670.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid*, 657.

<sup>303</sup> *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*,

<sup>304</sup> Oct. 28, 1744, *ibid*, 106.

an upcoming town meeting at which he expected the town to divide into two precincts thereby dissolving his contract with them. His worries were not in vain.<sup>305</sup> Parkman was often “tired and discouraged” and recorded that “Such Contention fills me with Trouble – but the Lord preserve and restrain me.”<sup>306</sup>

The constant thorn in his clerical flesh was a member named Stephen Fay. The Fays were rarely satisfied with anything Parkman did but in October of 1745, they came to the parsonage demanding to see Parkman’s journal for a particular day when they suspected that he had recorded an unpleasant encounter between them. Irritated but always accommodating, Parkman graciously read the entry to them. Still dissatisfied, the Fays returned several months later to further demand that he “blott out” Mrs. Fay’s name from his journal. Parkman offered a compromise; he would blot out her name if she would verbally agree and admit to what he had written. This she would not do.<sup>307</sup> The accumulation of such petty concerns tended to wear down the exuberance ministers initially brought to the office of the ministry.

Thomas Smith made little effort to conceal his discouragement from his flock, “People think I am in earnest about leaving them and I think so too. I am quite discouraged, my voice is gone.”<sup>308</sup> By the next month, his congregation increased his salary and began commending him on his sermons. Smith noticed the “surprising turn to the people’s countenances, thoughts, words, and actions towards me” but it was not

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<sup>305</sup> Jan. 1745, *ibid*, 110.

<sup>306</sup> Mar. 3, 1745, *ibid*, 112; April 9, 1745, 115.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid*, Sept. 3, 1745, 123; Oct. 26, 1745, 124 and Jan. 27, 1746, 124.

<sup>308</sup> *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith, and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, Feb.12, 1747, 126-127.

enough to stave off his ensuing despair.<sup>309</sup> A few years later, he was lamenting the lack of attendance, critiquing his own sermons and fretting, “the people slighted me much, though my wife does not think so.”<sup>310</sup> In his next decade, he fussed over the town’s efforts to get him a colleague minister and by 1777 his entries reflect near paranoia over his people “slighting him.”<sup>311</sup>

For Smith and others, their discouragement may seem a bit contrived; it is likely that their circumstances were not quite as dire as they imagined. But clerical discouragement may represent their feelings of powerlessness and failure at this juncture of their career. Having settled into a community, clergy lost the autonomy they had enjoyed as candidates. The primary negotiation tool of a candidate was his prerogative to refuse a congregation’s offer, but for settled clergy the anticipated permanency of the ministerial office robbed them of this option.<sup>312</sup> Instead, many settled clergy exerted their continued authority by withholding various aspects of their ministerial role. If the middle years of a clerical career could be characterized by the ministers’ valiant attempt to accommodate his flock and endure their offenses, the final years reflected a more despondent and defiant attitude of clergy with little left to lose.

Negotiation at this stage in their tenure often involved refusing to cooperate and depriving their flock of ministerial services. The Congregational system clearly vested

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid, Mar. 9, 16, 1747.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid, Oct. 28, 1753, 152.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid, April 1764, 198; Nov. 2, 9, 30, 1777, 237.

<sup>312</sup> At the height of their discouragement, Mather and Smith both contemplated surrendering their pulpit, but they recorded no aspirations to transfer to another congregation. Rather, it seems that they dallied with the notion of leaving ministry altogether. Later in the century, transfers to a different congregation became more acceptable and once again became a tool of negotiation.

the colonial minister with ecclesiastical authority but it also bound him to certain protocol. One article in the Cambridge platform gave the pastor the right of veto or non-concurrence over a church vote.<sup>313</sup> Although, late in the century, “the general opinion of the Ministers” continued to maintain “that a Pastor has a negative on Church votes, at least so far as to suspend them till the Advice of a Council,” the wise pastor recognized the prudence of using it rarely.<sup>314</sup> John Mellon, however, invoked the power with abandon and lost his pulpit in the process.<sup>315</sup>

Pastors also carried the duty of calling formal meetings. When a parishioner brought a grievance to the pastor or asked for a corporate meeting in order to resolve a dispute publicly, a minister was obliged to schedule a meeting.<sup>316</sup> Some testy ministers simply ignored complaining members by walking out on their conversation or by flatly denying them a public venue for their concerns. In 1735, when members of his congregation attempted to discuss their grievances with him regarding suspected forgeries in the church book, Samuel Fisk retreated out the back door of his house calling “I can’t hear you.”<sup>317</sup> Likewise, Israel Loring in the 1740s, “steadfastly refused to call church meetings for the particular purpose of permitting the minority to air their

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<sup>313</sup> Williston Walker, ed., *Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism*, (New York, 1893); James F. Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties: the Congregationalists in Colonial Massachusetts*, (Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>314</sup> December 7, 1774, *Diary of Ezra Stiles*, 499.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid, Ezra Stiles recognized the futility of trying to maintain a pastorate where one was unwanted. He counseled Mellon on the affair and concluded that he “dies a Martyr to the Negative on the Votes of the Brethren.”

<sup>316</sup> In 1748, Norton sought Daniel Baker’s dismissal citing among other charges that the pastor had “neglected to call church meetings when requested”; George Faber Clark, *History of the town of Norton*, (Boston, 1842), 113; In a lengthy dispute with his congregation, John Mellon claimed his right to pastoral veto of church votes, refused to put motions to vote, and declined to call meetings, 1770s, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XI, 42-47.

<sup>317</sup> *A Faithful Narrative*, (Boston, 1735), 52-53.

grievances.” Similarly, he “refused to listen and stalked out” when his opposition attempted to air their complaints against him in a public setting.

Furthermore, ministers operated as de facto scribes for church history and record keeping of baptisms, marriages, communion, and other forms of church business. On various occasions, perturbed clergy refused to relinquish these records. Some claimed personal ownership.<sup>318</sup> Others held church records ransom for their own salaries, which remained in arrears.<sup>319</sup> Even possession of the parsonage could become a sticking point. John Rogers should have surrendered the parsonage upon his dismissal but he refused to leave until the congregation settled his 1268£ salary delinquency.<sup>320</sup> Another minister “abruptly took leave of his Parish” in a dispute over his parsonage thus depriving the congregation of any clerical services.<sup>321</sup>

Some colonial clergy exercised their authority over congregational members by withholding various sacraments from their members. Samuel Deane refused to marry various members who petitioned him to officiate at their weddings.<sup>322</sup> Although his

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<sup>318</sup> Jan. 1787, Parson Dinman refused to give a list of parishioners to his colleague, Thomas Smith, telling him to get his own book. *Diary of William Bentley, Vol. I, 49.*

<sup>319</sup> Israel Loring took his church books with him to the new meetinghouse when the court set up another parish because his accounts remained in arrears, 1723, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College..., Vol. V, 77*; Struck by palsy in his latter years and unprotected by any pension plan, Richard Jaques refused to surrender the church books. Neighboring ministers pressured his church by refusing to help them secure another minister until they agreed to pay Jaques a small stipend for the remainder of his lifetime, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College..., Vol. V, 388.*

<sup>320</sup> Early Files in the Office of the Clerk of the Supreme Court of Suffolk County, passim in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...: with bibliographical and other notes, Vol. V, 294.*

<sup>321</sup> 1790, Despite the congregation’s pleas for him to continue to supply the pulpit until a replacement could be found, he “utterly refused & the house was shut up.” *Diary of William Bentley, Vol. I, 142.*

journals entries do not reveal the reason for his refusal, his power was occasionally subverted by the senior pastor who willingly performed the ceremony instead.<sup>323</sup> In these cases, a minister not only sought to maintain his authority with a congregation, he contested his own personal ministerial authority against a retiring pastor.

In one notorious case, a petty but unresolved dispute over dead chickens led a pastor to withhold baptism from the offending member's newborn baby. The member admittedly shot and killed the pastor's "fowls" that were trespassing on his land. The pastor was affronted but did not approach his neighbor over the incident. His refusal to baptize the member's baby was his first outward reaction to the affair, which eventually led to his dismissal.<sup>324</sup> Colonial clergy retained the privilege of determining who could receive baptism, but in this case, the pastor over-estimated his influence in the congregation. The uproar that followed his refusal not only caught him off-guard but eventually led to his dismissal. He remarked to his flock that if he had known how much they would care about the issue, he would not have refused this member.<sup>325</sup> However, the damage to his ministerial role was irreparable. Congregational sympathies lay with the member and as a result of the ensuing loss of congregational respect, the pastor also lost both his authority and his position. Settled clergy were not without any recourse during

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<sup>322</sup> Deane recorded many of the weddings he performed as well as those he refused. Jan. 3, 1775, "I refused to marry Michael Lunt," *Journals of Smith and Deane*, 336; On June 29, 1767, "I was repeatedly applied to marry R. Godson to Betty Ilsley, and repeatedly refused." Later in the same entry he recorded that "Mr. Smith married Betty Ilsley to Richard Godson," *Journals of Smith and Deane*, 322.

<sup>323</sup> If Deane withheld marital rites in an effort to solicit some measure of public repentance from the couple, his efforts were totally undermined by his colleague.

<sup>324</sup> "Remarks on the Result of an Ecclesiastical Council, Which met at Dorchester, on November 16, 1773," (Boston, 1774), [anonymous?].

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*

their ministerial tenure, but even the privileges offered them by the Congregational system had to be handled delicately with a good sense of their effectiveness.

### 3.1.5 Exit Strategies

Exit strategies for colonial clergy in the eighteenth century expose a fair amount of bargaining and conscious negotiation procedures between ministers and their flocks.<sup>326</sup> In the previous century, clergy generally lived out their lifetime in one congregation and when a pastor became too feeble to minister, a younger colleague minister was selected to serve alongside the veteran pastor.<sup>327</sup> The colleague system offered mutual benefit: if the two men got along well, the colleague gained the wisdom of an experienced minister while the older man received relief from carrying the sole responsibility for ecclesiastical duties without forfeiting the prestige of the office.<sup>328</sup> One newly installed colleague was

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<sup>326</sup> In 1767, when Joseph Dorr became too infirm to continue, “the parish sent a committee to ask the old minister on what terms he would retire,” Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College... Vol. V*, 578; Eliab Stone, the oldest congregational member in Eastern Massachusetts at the time, encouraged his flock to determine when he was no longer useful to them. Although he was “willing to be worn out in [their] service,” he also recognized that old men were not the most “competent judges” of their effectiveness, Eliab Stone, *A Discourse Delivered at Reading, North Parish, May 19, 1811*, 9.

<sup>327</sup> Sherburne needed a colleague pastor in 1713 when their pastor became “a Crazie and infirm man well stricken in years,” William Biglow, *History of Sherburne*, (Milford, 1830), 54.

<sup>328</sup> However, the senior pastor often gave up half of his salary in order to accommodate a colleague. Some clergy volunteered this salary reduction while others had it forced upon them. Smith and Deane served well together and even shared communion duties. In 1766, Deane recorded, “Mr. Smith administered the bread, and made two prayers; I the cup, and made one prayer.” *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, 318; Of course, some older ministers took offense to a new colleague’s doctrine, personality, or merely the fact that he was being replaced. William Bentley dealt with a former pastor who subverted his efforts. Parson Dimon proceeded to baptize in Bentley’s absence against [his] sentiments, refused to attend a public meeting to deal with the offense, felt free to stop Bentley in the street to charge him with the “deficiency of his salary”, and flatly refused to surrender the “List of the Church” from the Church Book, May, 1785, Feb. 26, 1786, Jan. 1787, *Diary of Rev. William Bentley, Vol. I*, 20, 28, 49; David Osgood accepted a call to Medford but the senior minister “flatly refused to listen to any of the young man’s sermons,” Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College... Vol. XVII*, 570.

encouraged that “You have, for a little time, this our aged Father to be with you in the Pastoral Office; to assist you in the beginning of your work with his prudent Advice, and comfort you under the difficulties of it by the experience which he has had.”<sup>329</sup> Ideally, the concept of colleague pastors served well to transition from one respected and influential leader to another.

But not all pastoral transitions occurred smoothly. Under the Cambridge Platform, both clergy and congregations could call an ecclesiastical counsel to hear and settle disputes between them. While the primary aim of this Congregational procedure may have been reconciliation, for many it came to represent a subtle threat of dismissal by the congregation or resignation by the pastor. Counsels may have served the seventeenth-century clergy well, but they gradually lost their effectiveness throughout the following century.<sup>330</sup> As the pool of ministers and general population steadily grew, one pastor contended that the integrity of a council had become compromised by the ability of each side to handpick their representatives to sit in judgment.<sup>331</sup> Many councils continued to be called in the eighteenth century, but more and more of their resolutions fell on deaf ears. A panel of ministers could offer their recommendation to a given congregation and its ministers, but the autonomous nature of Congregationalism did not empower the counsel to enforce their advice.

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<sup>329</sup> Samuel Langdon, *The Excellency of the Word* (Portsmouth, 1756), 41.

<sup>330</sup> Hall finds several cases as early as 1660 in which a council failed to resolve a dispute when a congregation refused to heed their advice, Hall, *Faithful Shepherd*, 219.

<sup>331</sup> “If there be one scheming Minister, or scheming Delegate more than half, you’ll get the Case. And if there be one more opposing Minister or opposing Delegate we shall get it,” *A Brief Narrative of Some of the Brethren of the Second Church in Bradford*, (Boston, 1746), 7.

Generally, councils were reserved for serious disputes and could include messy attacks upon personal character. In order to justify the calling of a council, congregations compiled extensive lists of offences, some more valid than others.<sup>332</sup> A few ministers refused to endure the procedure and simply tendered their resignation.<sup>333</sup> At times, ministers ignored the council's recommendation and at other times, congregations obstinately refused to heed their advice.<sup>334</sup> Some clergy rejected the recommendation of a council as well as the subsequent vote of dismissal. After a long dispute with his flock, Thomas Frink not only refused to accept his formal dismissal; "the following Sunday he attempted to force his way into the pulpit and was ejected from the building by the collar."<sup>335</sup>

The decline in the ecclesiastical authority of ministerial councils coincided with the over-all diminishing deference shown to the office of the ministry. Clerical deference, bolstered in the seventeenth century by the forces of localism, suffered from the social and economic effects of the expanding colonies. Frontier colonists, desperate to find a minister willing to settle among them, expressed little inclination to defer to

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<sup>332</sup> Despite the more serious offense over the pastor's refusal to baptize a member's infant, the congregation drew up an additional list of charges complaining that he preached short sermons, repeated old sermons and had not disciplined certain members to the satisfaction of the flock, *Sundry Vote Passes by the Church of Christ in Dorchester*, (Boston, 1774) in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VII, 315; Theophilus Pickering was charged with not explaining doctrine, insisting upon the Letter of the Word, not rightly dividing the work and delivering "God's Word with so much Coldness, unconcernedness and Indifferency," *The Pretended Plain Narrative Convicted of Fraud* (Boston, 1748), 33.

<sup>333</sup> Aug. 29, 1774, Joseph Currier resigned from Goffstown rather than be interviewed by an ecclesiastical council, George Plummer Hadley, *History of the Town of Goffstown*, Vol. I, (Goffstown, 1922), 381.

<sup>334</sup> 1747, A council of neighboring churches "found that the church & town had done the things proposed an agreement & issue of the difficulty, but Mr. A. absolutely refused to comply with them," Stephen Williams, *Diary* (Mass. Hist. Soc.), 75 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VII, 293.

<sup>335</sup> July 1766, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VII, 74.

some far-removed council who seemed unsympathetic to their needs.<sup>336</sup> Theoretically, ministerial council recommendations and resolutions continued to carry ecclesiastical weight but throughout the eighteenth century, they increasingly functioned as a “rubber stamp” for one side of a dispute. Ezra Stiles described Dr. Wheelock’s dismissal in 1770,

...This is a second Instance at least of a new Method. When a pastor wants to be dismissed, he gets his chh. to put the power of dismissal out of their hands & vesting it in a council of pastors. Whereas the Chh. & pastor ought to call in a *Council* not a *judicature*, to *advise* the Chh., and the Chh. should by *Vote ratify* or *reject* the Advice. Mr. Hopkins operated in the same manner with his Chh. at Great Barrington. And Mr. Fish is now negotiating a similar Dismission. All this is most foreign from Consoc. Power and Authority.<sup>337</sup>

The decisions rendered by councils, in reality, could only exercise authority in direct relation to their constituents’ willingness to submit to them. Winning a judgment with a ministerial council provided no guarantee of justice but it definitely added ecclesiastical weight to one’s cause.

For many eighteenth-century clergy, tenure-ending conflicts involved compliance with their salaries.<sup>338</sup> Instances of unpaid clerical salaries had become a worrisome trend

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<sup>336</sup> In 1756, the people at Canterbury unanimously invited Robert Cutler to settle among them, despite his unpleasant dismissal from Epping the year before. However, no ecclesiastical council would install him based on the dissatisfaction of his repentance; “it would be more Satisfactory to Ministers and Christians in general, if he would betake himself to Some other Employment,” New Hampshire Hist. Soc., *Collections*, IX, 30-31 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XI, 23. Undeterred, Canterbury continued to employ him for several more years without a formal installment.

<sup>337</sup> *Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. I*, 51.

<sup>338</sup> According to Schmotter, “Inadequate maintenance...represented the largest single cause of controversy” between clergy and congregations in the years 1730, 1750, and 1760. Schmotter provides valuable quantitative data on the types of disputes likely to trouble the clergy, Schmotter, “Ministerial Careers,” 257.

by 1748.<sup>339</sup> Even ministers who served in relative harmony with their flocks occasionally reflected on delinquent wages. Benjamin Ruggles explained in his old age that

My salary has never been paid with due. Not only for one year, but for the twenty years I have been here it has been six and seven month overdue, so that I have been straightened for money to buy the necessaries of life, and often obliged to borrow so small a sum as half a dollar of the Treasurer, who, out of his own money, would give me a dollar, or if I asked one dollar he would give me two...In those days I kept these things much to myself, careful that neither by word or deed might get abroad to the discredit of the town.<sup>340</sup>

When Lyman Beecher entertained better salary offers from other congregations, he also considered the social impact of leaving a congregation fearing that he could not “leave without hindering them and own reputation.”<sup>341</sup> Although the idea of a minister courting offers from other congregations before legally dismissed from one’s present pulpit had become more common toward the end of the century, Beecher recognized that his removal would not be well received.<sup>342</sup>

Other ministers were less stoic. In 1750, John Carnes sent a message to the annual town meeting relating the state of his financial affairs. “Whatever you think of it,

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<sup>339</sup> Parkman and several friends discussed “with some Earnestness about the Backwardness of people throughout the Land to Support their Ministers,” May 4, 1748, *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 175; While this issue was of concern to the current crop of placed ministers, this pattern would begin to affect the subsequent crop of ministerial recruits as fewer men entered the ministry, Schmotter, “Ministerial Careers.”

<sup>340</sup> George K. Tufts, *Account of the Observance of the One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Town of New Braintree*, (Worcester, 1902), 30.

<sup>341</sup> *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, 340.

<sup>342</sup> Stiles lists several cases of clergy leaving their congregations for better pay in 1770, “Mr. Sprout rent from his Chh. At Guilford without their consent, to get a better settlement at Philidel<sup>a</sup> – D<sup>f</sup> Whitaker from his Chh. At Chelsea for a better Living at Salem – Mr. Hopkins, &c., &c.,” *Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. I*, 49; Scott describes this trend as a “prestige ladder” and contends that it “set up patterns of achievement and esteem which ran directly counter to the eighteenth-century ideal of pastoral permanence.” Scott argues that between 1750 and 1850 clergy transitioned from a “pastor to a particular devotional community” to “a guardian of public order,” Scott, *Office to Profession*, 71-72,110. While Scott correctly traces the trend, he neglects the impact of delinquent salaries which contributed to clerical discouragement and dissatisfaction.

gentlemen, you have been guilty of great Injustice and oppression... You have never made good your contract with your minister, and was it not for some of his good Friends in this Town and other Places, he must have suffered.” He went on to delineate all the deficits he had endured and objected that he had

been obliged to live by borrowing. What I desire now is that you would at this meeting act like honest men and make good your contract... I desire nothing that is unreasonable, make good what you first voted me and I shall be easy. I remain your friend and servant, John Carnes. P.S. Gentlemen – Please to send me word before your meeting is over what you have done, yt I may send you a line or two in order to let you know I am easy with what you have done or not; for if I can’t get a support by the ministry I must pursue something else; must betake myself to some other business and will immediately do it.<sup>343</sup>

The town reacted harshly by cutting his salary further and rejected the findings of an ecclesiastical council who favored the pastor. Carnes preached a bitter farewell sermon and published his version of the conflict in a Boston newspaper.<sup>344</sup>

Some ministers may have absorbed the lack of salary compliance out of goodwill toward their people. But other factors contributed to ministerial long-suffering over salary concerns. Salary arrears undoubtedly created less stress on financially independent clergy.<sup>345</sup> Perhaps some clergy naively hoped that the first instance of delinquent wages represented an anomaly and bore the inconvenience in silence. Others held strong

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<sup>343</sup> William B. Stevens, *History of Stoneham*, (Stoneham, 1891), 46-47.

<sup>344</sup> *Boston Gazette*, Aug. 22, 1757, 4/1-2.

<sup>345</sup> Several clergy enjoyed the inheritances left to their wives, others supplemented their salaries by preparing boys for college, farming, and practicing law or medicine. Ezra Stiles ran a profitable silk farm as supplementary income and recorded little financial dispute with his congregation, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*.

opinions on the propriety of asking for their salaries.<sup>346</sup> But as arrearages accumulated, pastors possessed few favorable options.

To mention or complain about his financial condition to his flock placed colonial clergy in the uncomfortable position of petitioning for his due wages. Such behavior could provoke resentment as easily as it might motivate the congregation to compliance.<sup>347</sup> One minister maintained that “Compulsion of Men to their Duty in this Point is a very Tender thing, and sometimes Disaffects Men to their Ministers so, as they never afterward Profit by them. Our Business is with the Hearts of Men; and if they are at once Prejudiced against us our Success may be all over.”<sup>348</sup> Furthermore, the entire system of forced maintenance created a relationship of dependence upon the flock that contradicted the ministerial authority colonial clergy struggled to maintain over that flock. Although clergy had every right to expect their contracts to be honored, issues of financial debt between flock and shepherd could cast a cloud over their relationship.<sup>349</sup> For that matter, the process of rendering individual parish taxes to a constable possibly

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<sup>346</sup> Feb., 1702, A Minister “shall never once in his Life, ask a *Salary*, from his Flock, nor agree with them about a *Salary*, nor have his Dependence on the *Lord’s-Day Collections* for a *Salary*, nor be in any Likelihood of seeing the *Lord’s-Day Collections* to fail, and yett they shall flout at him, as one *afraid of losing his Contribution*,” *Cotton Mather Diary, Vol. 1*, 412-413.

<sup>347</sup> Lyman Beecher’s request for salary arrears and increased wages fell on deaf ears. Eventually the Prebytery dissolved his bond to the congregation stating the “simple difference of opinion” as to the “sum necessary to render adequate support for the Gospel,” Scott, *Office to Profession*, 71; A minority in New Ipswich protested their pastor’s plea for a raise in 1779 “Because his estate is subject to no tax for the support of the present war, which war defends his estate and person as well as ours...Because, that as he shared with us in prosperity, we think he ought to share with us now in adversity... Because we think a minister...and his people...ought to rise or fall together, and that a minister ought to take his lot with the people,” Augustus A. Gould, *History of New Ipswich* (Boston, 1852), 117.

<sup>348</sup> Timothy Cutler, *The firm union of a people represented...*, (New London, 1717), 52.

<sup>349</sup> “Of the ministers in New England and Northern Long Island between 1680 and 1740, 12 per cent were involved in serious financial disputes with their congregations, and 5 per cent of them left their pulpits as a result,” Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, 157.

left the majority of the congregation unaware of anything other than their own delinquency or compliance. Prior to the annual town meeting, any shortages to the minister's salary may have escaped the consciousness of many parishioners.

In reality, various currency crises of the eighteenth century legitimately affected a town's means for paying a pastor's stated salaries.<sup>350</sup> As the population grew and more churches formed, parish divisions robbed the original town of taxpayers.<sup>351</sup> For a minister who served a lengthy tenure, the congregation he preached to late in life rarely reflected the original members who initially invited him to settle and offered him his original salary.<sup>352</sup> During the Revolution, many fragmented congregations lacked the means to comply with their pastor's salaries. In light of the collective economic crisis, ministers commonly forfeited their salaries during the war years.<sup>353</sup> The effects of

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<sup>350</sup> Ibid, 107-143, colonists struggled with intermittent period of inflation throughout the eighteenth century particularly during periods of warfare with France and England. Bushman discusses the impact of military campaigns, expanding markets and paper currency upon the colonial economy.

<sup>351</sup> Bushman dedicates an entire chapter to "Outliviers" who tended to instigate eventual parish divisions, *ibid*, 54-72.

<sup>352</sup> Parkman was irritated that the town used this excuse to not settle with him for his salary in 1744. They claimed that parishioners who had moved on to another church were still responsible for the wages in that year. But this left Parkman with no recourse in order to collect these arrearages. Not only did they refuse to make up his lost wages for that year, they approached him for a "Receipt in full," One neighbor offered to pay him the entire amount if he would grant the neighbor the power to pursue the debt in a Court of Law, *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, Apr. 18, 1748; Apr. 5, 1748; Mar. 23, 1748; 173-174.

<sup>353</sup> 1776, September "16. I gave up the whole of my last year's salary to the parish, and accepted £76 for this year," *Journals of Smith and Deane*, 234; although "The Town...unanimously Voted to make good the Salary of the Rev. Whitney, during the War, according to their original Contract...At the same time the Minister being firmly attached to his Country's Cause, desired his People to make a deduction during the War from his Salary (then made good) the proportion of Taxes that would be laid on his Estate in the Town if owned by any other Person. Upon which the Town voted him their Thanks for his generous offer," *Boston Gazette*, July 12, 1779, 3/2; James Pike voluntarily surrendered his salary during a difficult war year, *5 Coll. Mass. Hist. Soc. III*, 126 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VII, 552; William Wheeler remarked on the generosity of his pastor on March 27, 1780 "When the town was burnt, some were for dismissing their Pastor that they could not pay him, but he courageously told them that he would continue with them even if they gave him nothing," Cornelia Lathrop, *Black Rock: Seaport of Old Fairfield, Connecticut 1644-1870, including the Journal of William Wheeler*, (New Haven, Conn., 1930), 33.

Revolutionary inflation touched everyone, “it is a melancholy time upon many accounts. Lawful money is reduced to be worth no more than old tenor. Creditors don’t receive an eighth part of their old debts, nor ministers of their salaries.”<sup>354</sup> Through the *Massachusetts Spy* parishioners were encouraged “in these days of too general declension and oppression”...to remember “the sacred obligations they are under to give such a portion to the suffering clergy.”<sup>355</sup>

But others suspected that some congregations’ perceived poverty amounted to a ruse. “Sirs, Take Care how you make a pretended Poverty your Excuse for neglecting a known duty which you are able to do; lest you there by provoke the Righteous God...”<sup>356</sup> After Lyman Beecher had accrued a debt greater than his yearly salary, he approached his congregation for the arrears. His flock was nonresponsive. During his travels to other pulpits he had received other offers, including a call from another congregation willing to double his current salary. Surmising that he could scarcely do much worse elsewhere, he determined that “...if I must make sacrifices, make them to the poor and not to the rich.”<sup>357</sup> Clearly, Beecher failed to believe that his financial deficit resulted from his flock’s personal hardship.

Donald Scott’s interpretation of Beecher’s move places more emphasis on the different kind of ministry Beecher hoped to accomplish in Litchfield. Scott argues that

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<sup>354</sup> Nov. 30, 1778, *Journals of Smith and Deane*, 239.

<sup>355</sup> *Massachusetts Spy*, June 24, 1779, 3/1.

<sup>356</sup> Thomas Paine, *Paine Mss. I*, 49 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VI, 204.

<sup>357</sup> Beecher was willing to stay if East Hampton would cover his debt and raise his \$400 salary to \$500. They chose not to meet his request, so Beecher moved on to an \$800 salary at Litchfield. *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, Vol. I, 191.

Beecher's emerging leadership in the "larger evangelical and professional community" required a more cosmopolitan pastorate and that the financial dispute merely masked "deeper antagonisms." Scott may be correct to argue that Beecher was anxious to spread his wings but it is also clear that the congregation's delinquency did not reflect poverty but rather unwillingness neither to meet his debt nor raise his salary.<sup>358</sup>

Regardless of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of unpaid clerical salaries, the most drastic measures to recover salary arrears involved appealing to the General Assembly for relief, which essentially amounted to suing one's own flock. This option generally represented a final desperate attempt for justice; for at the point of legal action, a minister's effectiveness with a particular congregation became compromised.<sup>359</sup> For this reason, clergy often refrained from this option until they knew they could no longer continue in the pastoral relationship with the delinquent flock. Occasionally, a pastor left the inconvenience of suing for arrears to his surviving family.<sup>360</sup> Threats of civil action against a congregation remained the final and most drastic bargaining chip available to the clergy. However, while a civil suit may have achieved some measure of financial justice, it rarely restored or maintained ministerial authority. The ramifications of filing suit against his flock sometimes secured a pecuniary judgment from the Assembly, but it

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<sup>358</sup> Scott, *From Office to Profession*, 71-72.

<sup>359</sup> Samuel Woodbridge against East Hartford, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. V, 134; Paine Wingate against Amesbury, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VII, 288-289.

<sup>360</sup> John Roger's widow fought for back salary until her death in 1757 after which her children picked up the issue and eventually won 210£, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. V, 294; After his death in 1807, John Willard's children "sued the parish and won \$1000, which was regarded as five years' back pay," Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XIII, 161.

generally closed further negotiations with a congregation and forfeited the relationship.<sup>361</sup> Stiles reflected on John Mellen's conflict with his congregation and the futility of his further ministry among them. Even though Mellen had a right to his salary until he had been legally dismissed by a mutually chosen ecclesiastical council, his ultimate dismissal or resignation was inevitable. "It will be to but little & invidious purpose to litigate his Salary, when he can serve them no more in comfort...He may perhaps get his Salary a year or two, but must finally seek a dismissal."<sup>362</sup>

Later in the century, innovative colonial clergy found ways to utilize the delinquency of their congregations. When wartime inflation reduced the chances of prompt and full payment of clerical salaries, one minister offered discounts to those who paid punctually.<sup>363</sup> Another pastor reflected on his past salary explaining that in 1777 he had given the "whole of his salary for one sucking Calf – the next year he gave the whole for a small store pig." Then in 1779, he had "offered the town one years' salary

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<sup>361</sup> After slow payments and no provision at all in 1743, Samuel Woodbridge appealed to the General Assembly who "ordered the town to pay him 150£ for the year." Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. V, 134; Joseph Metcalf forgave the town's debt to him in 1711 but 3 years later he appealed to the General Assembly for relief on the grounds that his flock's crops had been ruined by "Worms and Drought." They voted him 20£ "towards Retrieving his present low Circumstances," *Acts and Resolves of Province of Massachusetts Bay* (Boston, 1869-1922), IX, 356 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. V, 222; In 1751, Benjamin Prescott won a suit against his congregation of 600£ which the congregation did not pay, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. V, 488; Samuel Allis' dispute over salary arrears in 1747 ended in a vote for his dismissal when an ecclesiastical council decided that the "church & town...proposed an agreement & issue of the difficulty, but Mr. A. absolutely refused to comply with them," Stephen Williams Diary (Mass. Hist. Society), 75 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VII, 293.

<sup>362</sup> Dec. 7, 1774, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, 499.

<sup>363</sup> 1770s, Abraham Wood "made the following proposals: That he will throw in a penny upon every shilling to all who settle their rates between this day and the first of March next, whether it be in hard money or species," Oran E. Randall, *History of Chesterfield* (Brattleboro, 1882), 63 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XVI, 552.

provided the town would glaze [the windows of the meetinghouse.]”<sup>364</sup> This clergyman negotiated his own salary for the benefit of the entire congregation and enticed them into action with his own sacrifice.

William Fessenden worked a different angle with his congregation. Sensing that his full salary might be difficult to collect, he proposed “to give up my civil contract with the town and proprietors as far as respects my annual salary.”<sup>365</sup> He did not relinquish his “pastoral relations” to the church but merely sought the “liberty to preach the word and administer the ordinances of the gospel when, where, and at such seasons as to him shall be thought best.”<sup>366</sup> Another pastor, in light of his congregation’s inability to meet his stated salary, sought the privilege of preaching to neighboring inhabitants for his own profit. George Daman relinquished half of his salary for a given year in exchange for the “liberty to preach” six months of the year to other struggling congregations.<sup>367</sup> However, the congregation retained the right to restrict him from preaching in other pulpits as soon as they paid the salary in full. Samuel West also negotiated for similar privileges; he released his congregation from their debt to him if they would agree to let him leave whenever he might choose.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> “...a copy of a statement made to the town by Mr. Barnes respecting his salary;” Robert F. Lawrence, *The New Hampshire Churches* (Claremont, 1856), 183-184.

<sup>365</sup> Apr. 8, 1800, John Stuart Barrows, *Fryeburg, Maine* (Fryeburg, 1938), 87-88.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>367</sup> *Records of the Town of Tisbury, 1669-1864* (Boston, 1903), 230 and *Vineyard Gazette*, Mar. 17, 1876 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XIV, 6-7.

<sup>368</sup> 1786, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XV, 126.

If a congregation could breach the clerical contract by neglecting to pay their ministers, colonial clergy determined to negotiate for some corresponding relief from their own contractual commitments. Bargaining with a sum of money they were unlikely to ever collect anyway, ministers avoided contentious salary litigation and gained more autonomy and control over their own futures and ministerial careers. Unfortunately, increasing independence and self-determination did not restore ministerial influence and deference. If anything, the weakening of the clergy-congregational bond accelerated the already waning influence of the ministerial office.

Colonial clergy may have gravitated toward clerical contracts in an effort to protect the status and influence of the ministry but ironically, the trend toward forced maintenance contributed to the decline of ministerial authority.<sup>369</sup> In an insightful discussion of clerical authority, Richard Bushman notes the effort to “fix” flagging ministers’ salaries “by law” and contends “legal reinforcement...could not compensate for the decline of voluntary loyalty.”<sup>370</sup> I am taking his argument further to suggest that legal reinforcement *accelerated* the decline in ministerial authority by presenting the laymen with a demand that they could easily defy and reduce the clergy to de facto employees of the congregation.

Clerical salaries became a powerful weapon in the hands of a delinquent congregation. In the absence of specified contributions, a congregation’s negligence of pastoral maintenance created less impact. But once the lay-clerical agreement included explicit rates, the specificity of congregation responsibility provided a cranky

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<sup>369</sup> Bushman, Chapter X, *From Puritan to Yankee*, 163. Clerical salaries generally were discussed annually at the town meeting and collections were enforced.

congregation with a point of defiance. Salary compliance offered congregations an annual opportunity to express their contentment or discontentment with their pastor's performance. Delinquency of the pastor's salary and contractual labor or firewood could imply a lack of deference. While most congregations may not have chosen to withhold their monetary commitments out of spite or manipulation, nevertheless, noncompliance to salary agreements represented a significant tool of negotiation for the congregation.<sup>371</sup>

Filtered through social and economic conditions of the maturing colonies as well as the stages of a minister's tenure within a given congregation, ministerial authority remained a negotiable concept throughout the eighteenth century. Each of these factors played into the level of influence and respect the clergy could command within his congregation and community. Yet clergy only represented half of the equation. Congregations also negotiated the limits of ministerial authority. Their corresponding tools of negotiation would differ from those of the clergy but they remained subject to the evolving social and economic conditions as the colonies experienced exponential population growth and currency crises.

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<sup>371</sup> Bushman describes "popular control over wages [as] the congregation's restraint on its pastor," Bushman, *Puritan to Yankee*, 156.

### 3.2 Congregational Tools of Negotiation

“As all Covenants, so Church Covenants, suppose two Parties, each of which has something to perform as a Condition dependent on each other.”<sup>372</sup>

Although seventeenth-century Congregational clergy have been described as a “speaking aristocracy in the face of a silent democracy,”<sup>373</sup> the ministerial authority of clergy throughout the colonial period actually rested on a complex process of negotiation between congregations and their ministers. Ministerial authority noticeably declined during the eighteenth century as the social and economic forces of increased population, currency crises, competition from invading itinerants, and the loss of localism eroded the clergy’s hegemony. But while these forces certainly altered the tools of negotiation, an explicit and implicit process of negotiation remained a constant theme in the lay-clerical relationship. Throughout the colonial period, congregations circumscribed the role of colonial clergy more than historians have previously noted.

Puritans historically held a view of an “authoritarian church, pyramidally organized” from the ecclesiastical leaders down to the “lowly communicant.”<sup>374</sup> Yet even the name “Congregationalism” implies lay initiative. Congregational theory held that while ministerial authority ultimately emanated from God, local empowerment of that

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<sup>372</sup> *A Plain narrative of the proceedings which caused the separation of a number of aggrieved brethren from the Second Church in Ipswich*, (Boston, 1747), 3.

<sup>373</sup> Perry Miller maintained that ministers ultimately controlled their congregations and quotes the seventeenth-century minister, Samuel Stone, who described Congregationalism as a “speaking aristocracy in the face of a silent democracy;” Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, (Harvard University Press, 1954), 441, 452.

<sup>374</sup> Darrett Rutman, *Winthrop’s Boston: Portrait of a Puritan Town 1630-1649*, (University of North Carolina, 1965), 15.

authority rested in the congregation.<sup>375</sup> Puritan studies from the mid-nineteenth century emphasizing the authoritarian powers of first and second-generation colonial clergy, presented valuable examinations of Congregationalism and fed an increasing interest among historians in the “democratic stirrings” which might have informed Revolutionary thought,<sup>376</sup> but recently this interpretation of colonial religious history has received some long overdue revisions.<sup>377</sup>

To describe an authoritarian ecclesiastical leadership in a free society is to propose a proportionately equal set of submissive communicants willing to sit under such authority. However, many colonists displayed less than submissive temperaments toward their religious leaders. Recent scholarship depicts laymen taking an active role in church government.<sup>378</sup> Contrary to popular conflict studies highlighting lay-clerical contention,

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<sup>375</sup> Williston Walker, ed., *Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism*, (New York, 1893).

<sup>376</sup> Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, (Harvard University Press, 1954), *Errand into the Wilderness*, (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956); Edmond Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea*, (New York University Press, 1963); David D. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century*, (New York, 1974), *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England*, (Alfred A Knopf, 1989); Rutman, *Winthrop's Boston*. Works which investigate the political implications of Congregationalism include: Sidney E. Meade, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America*, (Harper & Row, 1963); Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution*, (Harvard University Press, 1966); Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society and Politics in Colonial America*, (Oxford University Press, 1986); Edmund Morgan, “The American Revolution Considered as an Intellectual Movement,” in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., and Morton White, eds., *Paths of American Thought*, (Boston, 1963); Nathan Hatch, “The Origins of Civil Millennialism in America: New England Clergymen, War with France, and the Revolution,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 31 (1974); *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (Yale University Press, 1989); *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England*, (Yale University Press, 1977). I have no quarrel with the interpretation of an authoritarian colonial ministry in the seventeenth century. However, I am suggesting that congregational submission to such authority rested on many social and economic conditions as well as their intellectual and theological commitment to the doctrines of congregationalism.

<sup>377</sup> James F. Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties: the Congregationalists in Colonial Massachusetts*, (Oxford University Press, 1999), 5; Cooper's argument comes closest to my own in suggesting that the interaction between clergy and congregations has been largely overlooked in the interest of political and theological interpretations which have dominated eighteenth-century religious studies. Yet, Cooper also applies his findings to the unending search for the seedbed of democracy in the American political tradition.

James Cooper discovered a surprising level of “cooperation and sympathy between clergy and a well-informed laity” in his examination of church records.<sup>379</sup> This interchange between pastor and parishioner revealed a significant degree of parishioner participation in the affairs of the church. Cooper denies that Congregational church government divided the New England culture “along lay-clerical lines” and contends that congregations rarely unified themselves against the clergy.<sup>380</sup> Cooper’s interpretation balances the traditional view of the authoritarian clergy through his portrayal of lay involvement within the ecclesiastical structure of Congregationalism.

Cooper is correct to notice that lay-clerical conflict rarely left a pastor without any supporters within his flock. But the presence of sympathizers in the congregation did not minimize the impact of tenure-ending congregational disputes. While church records may demonstrate a collaborative method of congregational governance, the day-to-day social interactions between clergy and congregations display a vivid view of ministerial authority carefully negotiated between flock and shepherd throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>381</sup> Often the process remained quite visible and fell within the carefully

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid, 6, “historians have overestimated the strength of clerical unity on issues of church government (particularly in the eighteenth century), and they have underestimated the significance of the lay right to consent.” Cooper attempts to correct the overemphasis on clergy by examining “the lay and clerical interchanges on the important subject of church order.” While Cooper’s research in manuscript church records discovered a cooperative laity willing to learn the lessons of Congregationalism from the clergy, my research finds an ongoing theme of negotiation present in the lay-clerical relationship, which evolved with the social and economic development of the colonies.

<sup>379</sup> David D. Hall, untitled review of *Tenacious at Their Liberties* by James F. Cooper, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 31, No. 1, (Summer 2000), 124-125; Zuckerman also emphasized the lack of conflict in puritan towns, Michael Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century*, (Knopf, 1970). While my work does not fall directly into a ‘conflict model’ by suggesting that discord dominated the lay-clerical relationship, much of the negotiation process is visible in disputes between pastor and parishioner.

<sup>380</sup> Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties*, 8; rather, he sees congregations as co-participants in church government and a “shared political ideology.”

described protocol of Congregational Platforms and practice. But other forms of negotiation occurring on a much more subtle level still carefully circumscribed the role of the colonial clergy.

Unlike the clergy, whose negotiation efforts revolved around a single individual's personal interest and future, congregations represented a group interest and their bargaining techniques and tools reflected this dynamic.<sup>382</sup> Their collective action, individual behavior, and the impact of their factional interests all worked to restrain ministerial authority.<sup>383</sup> As such, their activities tend to represent less of a conscious attempt to coerce ministerial behavior than simply an innocent series of parishioner reactions, which often affected their pastors more acutely than the flock ever realized. Ministers often absorbed their hardship in an effort to protect their flock from a poor reputation, which resulted in even less awareness by the congregation of their pastor's despair. One minister confided to another in a letter,

It has appeared to me very probable, my dear sir, for four years past, that I should not long continue in this place. The probability has been increasing every year especially at this time of the year, which is the usual season for settling my annual accounts....This I am determined upon, - not to have any controversy with the people; and, if possible, not to say any thing which might have a tendency to discourage another person from settling with them, for I really wish them well, and they have at present no suspicion of my intentions.<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> Various Congregational platforms delineate various lay-clerical responsibilities and privileges but I am particularly interested in the impact of the undefined interchange between clergy and congregation.

<sup>382</sup> This is not to suggest that the clergy are merely self-serving, but to juxtapose the differences between negotiation between 'one' and 'many.'

<sup>383</sup> Collectively a congregation voted to settle a pastor among them, individually they could register their discontent through verbal criticism, and various factions within a congregation could draw a pastor into their own disputes or diminish ministerial authority through a church split.

Lyman Beecher noted, although “they may not aim to injure my character, they will do it as certainly as if they did.”<sup>385</sup> The intentionality of a congregation’s conduct, while important for assigning motive, did not necessarily limit the impact of their behavior upon the clergy. Regardless of motive, the authority of the ministry was restricted by the lay-clerical interchange and subject to social and economic forces.

### 3.2.1 *Candidacy and Settlement Negotiations*

Because Congregational flocks chose their shepherds out of a marketplace of potential candidates, congregations necessarily competed with other flocks in their search for a “suitable” minister.<sup>386</sup> Besides the obvious pecuniary concerns, a congregation brought numerous bargaining chips to the table. The location, longevity and harmony of a parish contributed to its ability to attract a promising ministerial candidate. Frontier parishes held less appeal for candidates in the early part of the century when permanent tenure remained the norm. Distant from the colonial centers of commerce and education, these settlements carried a greater risk of Indian conflict and generally offered less potential for an adequate salary. Later in the eighteenth-century, however, these destinations provided missionary opportunities for dissatisfied clergy locked in

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<sup>384</sup> Belknap to Hazard. (Belknap served as minister in Dover, N.H. from 1767 to 1786 but the date on this letter is listed as “Secret”), *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Vol. II – Fifth Series*, (Boston), 428-429.

<sup>385</sup> Feb 9, 1799, in a letter to Roxanna, Charles Beecher, ed., *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher*, Vol. I, (New York, 1864), 101.

<sup>386</sup> Frank Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America*, (Princeton University Press, 2003), Lambert explores the “marketplace of religion” in this work.

ministerial contracts with contrary congregations.<sup>387</sup> But a newly organized parish seeking its first pastor might be initially free from interpersonal strife. Furthermore, their desperation for a settled pastor might render them more willing to submit to ministerial leadership. Other newly organized congregations originated from church splits and possessed people *unwilling* to submit to their previous leadership. Or perhaps a new parish simply emerged from population growth and the desire to form a church nearer to their homes. The circumstances of a congregation represented a significant consideration in their effort to settle a potential candidate.

Well-established congregations in more settled areas of New England could offer the appeal of longevity and the financial stability which usually accompanied it, but a minister also had to consider the potentially intractable nature of a flock whose internal solidarity rendered them more difficult to govern. Later in the century when permanency of tenure began to decline, a congregation's commitment to the group could supersede a commitment to a pastor who tended not to be a native to the community.<sup>388</sup> Ministers could come and go, but congregations generally stayed rooted in their geographical location.<sup>389</sup> In other words, solid congregations might provide stability but that same stability could render them less inclined to submit to a new pastor's authority.

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<sup>387</sup> Jeremy Belknap wrote to a friend about the opportunities out west, particularly in Ohio country. In another letter, he inquires again on behalf of a clerical friend whose support was "small."<sup>387</sup> 1786, Belknap to Hazard, *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Vol. II – Fifth Series*, (Boston), 428-430.

<sup>388</sup> Ezra Stiles lamented that congregations had begun to exchange pastors at will, "Is it the will of Christ that the Brethren have the power of Electing & Rejecting their Pastors at pleasure?" Franklin Bowditch Dexter, ed., *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, ed. under the Authority of the Corporation of Yale University, Volume 1*, January 1, 1769 – March 13, 1776, (New York, 1901), 168.

<sup>389</sup> This explains the power shift when the Revolutionary War dispersed the population out of their communities. Congregations lost their connectivity, which gave them an edge over their ministers' authority.

Congregations filled with wealthy, influential members of a stratified colonial society presented a formidable challenge to a newly inducted member of the clergy.<sup>390</sup> These groups tended to follow the pattern of settling colleague ministers before the elder pastor could no longer lead but occasionally, due to an untimely death, novice ministerial candidates landed these positions. Some candidates recognized and weighed the risk of settling in these pulpits, but were lured by the prestige and influence accompanying prominent positions.<sup>391</sup>

Donald Scott contends that late in the century a “prestige ladder” had been introduced into colonial ministry. Ministers purposely skipped from lesser to greater pulpits in a manner that “undercut the sanctity of ordination bonds and eroded the tradition of pastoral permanence.”<sup>392</sup> This argument supports his thesis that the office of the ministry became a profession when “clergyman’s local ties and commitments” became “strained by the emergence of a translocal ministry with the national community as its constituency.”<sup>393</sup> However, Scott’s research begins in 1750, which perhaps

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<sup>390</sup> Early in the century, Boston’s Old South Church provides a prime example. Increase and Cotton Mather were well suited to their positions but even the strength of their leadership was often tried by the will of this powerful congregation who were unafraid to challenge their pastors. Less confident and established ministers might have buckled under the pressure they faced during the witchcraft trials and the inoculation crisis. Old South took their time ordaining Cotton and even under his able leadership, and were less than pleased when Increase took a position at Cambridge. Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Volume I, 1681 – 1708, Vol. II, 1709-1724*, (Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York).

<sup>391</sup> In 1772, Joseph Howe entertained 3 offers considering the benefits of each one: “He has in effect three Calls now under Consideration – At Norwich to be Colleague with aged Mr. Lord; but this he will not accept being 2/3 for him and one Third against him; -at Weathersfield one of the largest Congregations in Connecticut...At Boston; here Mr. How preached 3 sermons, besides twice for Dr. Appleton at Cambridge. If Mr. How consults his natural Inclination he would settle at Norwich – Money and Interest, at Weathersfield – Honor and Figure in public Life, Boston – Ease and Comfort, either indifferently – Doing good and Usefulness, all are so nearly equal that he can’t determine...,” *Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. I, 295*.

<sup>392</sup> Donald M. Scott, *From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry, 1750-1850* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), 71.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid*, 67.

explains why he neglected to notice those who moved from pulpit to pulpit much earlier in the century. The concept of ‘pulpit hopping’ may have been less common or acceptable before 1750, but it was certainly accomplished and even advocated by permanently situated clergy such as Cotton Mather. In July 1715, Mather addressed New Haven’s failure to secure a suitable candidate by suggesting that they look for a

Person of Eminency, already station’d in some lesser Charge, he might with the Advice of a Council from the Neighboring Churches, be translated from his present Station, and the Church whereof he is now the Servant, may do well to hearken unto the Direction so given them, that a general Interest may be accommodated.<sup>394</sup>

Even in 1715, Mather’s emphasis is upon the “general Interest” of religion, not personal status or prestige.<sup>395</sup> Perhaps he believed that greater talents should be placed in the most prominent pulpits where their ministry might reach a greater number of people.

A congregation’s reputation for harmony or strife also affected their ability to attract “suitable” candidates. Throughout the eighteenth century, reputation not only haunted the minister seeking a pulpit; congregations also became known for their treatment of their pastors. Experienced clergy warned candidates against specific congregations with a reputation for abusing their ministers.<sup>396</sup> William Bentley remarked on one particular controversy between clergy and congregation “which tended to render

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<sup>394</sup> *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. II, 320.*

<sup>395</sup> Furthermore, the impulse of Congregationalism usually included a broader scope than the local constituency as indicated by their continued outreach to Native Americans.

<sup>396</sup> Oct. 19, 1736, Before Mr. Sparhawk accepted the invitation to settle in Salem, he first visited the recently unseated Mr. Fisk as well as other ministers in the area familiar with the churches dismissal of their pastor. Mr. Barnard “questioned him how he could settle under the difficulties and divisions at Salem Church – hard questions,” Benjamin Lynde, *The Diaries of Benjamin Lynde and Benjamin Lynde, Jr.*, (Cambridge, 1880), 90.

the Parish & The Proprietors Minister odious in the world.”<sup>397</sup> Conversely, congregations boasting a lack of conflict among its parishioners held great appeal. Often, candidates judged the level of strife present within the community by the unanimity of the vote to settle a new minister. Unanimity portrayed a congregation as a peaceable and agreeable people inclined to respond to a candidate’s ministerial efforts. Many candidates settled with less than unanimous decisions but if the vote turned out to be close, some would decline in hopes of a more definitive call elsewhere. In an effort to present unanimity, congregations sometimes took extreme measures to swing a winning vote to a larger margin.

In 1770, Samuel Hopkins initially turned down a call from the first Congregational Church “alleging for a reason that the Congreg<sup>a</sup> was about equally divided for and against him.”<sup>398</sup> But his supporters set out to alter the 33 to 36 vote. By visiting individually with members, discouraging through intimidation some from attending meetings and others from speaking out in meetings, Hopkins’ supporters boasted that “all but two Families were now come about...This discouraged those who remained really against him from appearing at the meeting.”<sup>399</sup> Within ten days, they anticipated unanimity. The final vote was conclusive enough to secure an acceptance letter from Hopkins but Ezra Stiles, armed with the perspective of a seasoned minister, remained concerned for Hopkins.

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<sup>397</sup> Oct. 19, 1785, William Bentley, D.D., *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts, Vol. 1, 1784 - 1819*, (Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1962), 23.

<sup>398</sup> 1770, *Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. I*, 42.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid*, 43.

Hence the state much the same as before; only so brought about that there don't seem to be but three against, and the rest for him; whereas in Truth there is more than one-half against, many of the others don't like him, & not above 30 Families or one quarter of the Society that are sufficiently engaged & desirous of his Settlement. Were three quarters as desirous as these, it would be a clear Call. Mrs. Osborn & the Sorority of her Meeting are violently engaged and had great Influence.<sup>400</sup>

Congregations thus recognized the value of presenting a united front in order to secure a minister and occasionally worked overtime to do so.<sup>401</sup> During the search for a minister, factions struggled for control over the choice of a pastor and took great pains to squelch the opposition.

A good deal of congregational leverage in procuring a minister depended upon the current supply and demand for ministerial candidates.<sup>402</sup> Early in the century, Harvard and Yale produced a significant number of ministerial prospects and flocks sometimes competed for the most promising recruits. In 1736, the "aggrieved brethren" of the Salem church attempted to land John Sparhawk as a replacement to the recently ousted Samuel Fisk. As head of the committee, Benjamin Lynde, kept careful track of Sparhawk's other offers; Lynde's sources regularly informed him of Sparhawk's negotiations.<sup>403</sup> Sparhawk had to choose between the Salem congregation, which had recently dismissed their pastor in a rather messy dispute, and another congregation

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<sup>400</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>401</sup> The public manner of voting in Congregational churches likely played a great role in securing unanimous votes. In 1718, "Mr. Fisk was chosen by the members of the First Parish Church of Salem to be their minister (by the usual and ancient sign of holding up the right hand)...there being near fourty of the members present, voting all for him, *nemine contradicente*." *The Diaries of Benjamin Lynde and Benjamin Lynde, Jr.*, 4.

<sup>402</sup> Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America*; Scott, *From Office to Profession*; James Schmotter, "Ministerial Careers in Eighteenth-Century New England: The Social Context, 1700-1760," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Winter (1975), 249-267; these authors discuss the factor of supply and demand of ministerial recruits.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid, 85.

seeking a colleague minister to assist an aging pastor. He eventually accepted Salem's invitation. After the warfare of the Revolutionary years had scattered the populace and westward expansion had gained momentum, congregations far outnumbered the Congregational clergy necessary to fill their pulpits.<sup>404</sup> At this point, congregations found themselves at the mercy of pastors who insisted on part-time positions, which allowed them to travel around ministering to destitute areas.

Financial consideration played a significant role in settling a minister.<sup>405</sup> During the candidacy period, a congregation could dicker with a candidate over his salary and settlement package at will, offering little proof of their ability to meet that offer.<sup>406</sup> Other than the initial settlement package and first year's salary, the actual commitment to their agreement lay solidly in the future and depended upon the goodwill of the members, the condition of the economy, and the continued static boundaries of the parish. Unfortunately for the clergy, these factors would prove to be highly volatile throughout the eighteenth century. The initial offer not only functioned as a negotiating tool for

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<sup>404</sup> The availability of pulpits also affected the colleges who competed for able ministers. Stiles records on Sept. 13, 1781 that Mr. Baldwin declined a Yale professorship offer of £150 p ann. Silver, "He has Colonels pay as Chaplain in the Army & lays up £350 a year, & expects Captains half pay £72 during Life: and has prospect of settling at any time among the numerous vacancies in the Chh. upon £300 settlemt & £100 saly & Wood. All these prospects induced him to decline our Call." *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. II*, 556.

<sup>405</sup> After several refusals, the Church in Brimfield secured a pastor only when they raised the offer. In 1735, Noah Mirick declined a £300 settlement and £100 in salary. Later in the year, Sampson Stoddard "utterly Refused to accept" the same offer. James Bridgham eventually accepted the position when the salary was increased to £120 with additional increases provided in the future, Jason Morse, *Annals of the Church of Brimfield*, (Springfield, 1856), 17-18.

<sup>406</sup> A minority from the First Church of Hampton objected to the salary offered to Ebenezer Thayer in 1766. Contending that the town was on the "Verge of Ruin", the argued "those Gentlemen have brought it about to vote Mr. Thayer So Large a salery [£100], we can never pay it, which will Soon cause those that have voted it to Grumble when they are forced to pay it themselves;" Joseph Dow, *History of the Town of Hampton* (Salem, 1893), I, 408.

wary clergy deciding whether to accept an offer, the initial salary package also remained one of the congregation's most powerful negotiating tools.<sup>407</sup>

One account vividly displays a congregation's anticipation of dickering over salary with a candidate. The town records of Ashford detailed a couple offers the town was willing to make to a prospective minister. On July 9, 1703, they gave a committee the following authorization: "That James Hale be offered thirty-five pounds for one year and if that don't content him, offer him forty pounds: one-third money, two-thirds provision pay."<sup>408</sup> Apparently, thirty-five pounds did not content him. By November, he was issued a formal call to settlement and the final agreement amounted to nothing less than

forty pounds a year for three years; forty-five pounds the fourth year, fifty the fifth, then to add two pounds a year till it reached sixty pounds; one-fourth money; the remainder in other supplies at money price...Also to give him his fire wood and a hundred acres of land, upon choice of land that is not taken up, in case he settle here...Also, to build him a house two stories high with a twenty-foot room in it.<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> New Braintree only gave Benjamin Ruggles one fourth of the settlement a younger man might have secured because they determined that he "had only about ten more years of service in him," Clifford Kenyon Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...: with bibliographical and other notes, Vols. VII*, (Oxford University Press, 1937), 648; Even then they failed to keep his modest salary current. Twenty years later he stated that "My salary has never been paid when due. Not only for one year, but for the twenty years I have been here it has been six and seven month overdue, so that I have been straightened for money to buy the necessaries of life, and often obliged to borrow so small a sum as half a dollar or the Treasurer, who, out of his own money, would give me a dollar, or if I asked one dollar he would give me two...In those days I kept these things much to myself, careful that neither by word or deed might get abroad to the discredit of the town." George K. Tufts, *Account of the Observance of the One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Town of New Braintree*, (Worcester, 1902), 30.

<sup>408</sup> Ellen Larned, *History of Windham County, Connecticut, Vol. I*, (Worcester, 1874), 219-220.

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*

Haggling with prospective clergy was clearly not for the faint of heart. A congregation not only negotiated with their present circumstances, but they committed their future endeavors and labor as well.

### 3.2.2 Maintenance of Clerical Image

Once settled, congregations affirmed or resisted their minister's authority in a less tangible manner. Through lavish ordination ceremonies and their hospitality toward a newly settled candidate, congregations expressed their respect for the office of the ministry but the individual pastor needed to maintain deference through his careful navigation of congregational expectations.<sup>410</sup> One of the most basic but unwritten congregational expectations involved ministerial image. As ecclesiastical and civil leaders, clergy were held both to elevated religious and social standards. Although the American colonies may have been noted for their less rigid class structure in comparison to England, the colonies remained a stratified society.<sup>411</sup> The fluidity of socio-economic status in colonial society may have allowed easier migration up the social ladder, but

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<sup>410</sup> An aging minister took the opportunity to warn the new candidate of his congregation's fickle nature, "Mr. Rogerson, I rejoice to find that the people are so well pleased with you and your preaching, but you must remember that, though it is 'Hosanna! Hosanna!' to-day, it will be 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' tomorrow," George H. Tilton, *A History of Rehoboth, Massachusetts*, (Boston, 1918), 174.

<sup>411</sup> For a discussion on social stratification in eighteenth-century England see Douglas Hay, and Nicholas Rogers, *Eighteenth-Century English Society: Shuttles and Swords*, (Oxford University Press, 1997); Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, (Penguin Books, 1984); Lawrence Stone and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880*, (Oxford, 1984); Neal McKendrick, J. H. Plumb, and John Brewer, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, (Indiana University Press, 1983); John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination, English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, (Farrar Straus Giroux, 1997); J. M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820*, (Cambridge University Press, 1996); Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political & Social History 1688-1832*, (Arnold, 1977); Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman 1689-1789*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991).

markers of status and influence distinguished various groups. Ironically, congregations tended to expect and demand that their ministers reflect many of those markers of status and influence.

Congregations expected ministers to demonstrate their social position by wearing the apparel of a colonial gentleman. Early in the century, ministerial attire included wigs and ministers often referred to having new wigs made.<sup>412</sup> Although Cotton Mather wore a wig, he expressed his annoyance at the congregation's preoccupation with such trifles.<sup>413</sup> As late as the 1770s, Abiel Leonard referred to "a very tasty wig" which "fits me admirably well and my own people are pleased with it, and say it becomes me the best of any I ever wore..."<sup>414</sup> In 1768, the Third Parish of Mendon used their image expectations to justify a rather meager salary package to Benjamin Balch.

As to outward good Things, he appeared much lower according to his Station than we as a Parish; and therefore we hoped, that being used to Hardship, he could the more readily bear the Want of that Lucre, which we knew we were unable to bestow upon him; for when he came here the Cloaths he appeared in were really not looked upon Decent for a Man in that Station, and very scarcely for

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<sup>412</sup> Samuel Sewall, a devout man of immense wealth and social stature as a judge refused to wear a wig even at the encouragement of the woman he intended to marry. Unlike the clergy with which he regularly socialized, public opinion of his personal image created little effect on his occupation, M. Halsey Thomas, *The Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674-1729, Vol. I and II*, (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York, 1973), 963-964.

<sup>413</sup> Sewall commented on Mather's sermon in his journal on Mar. 19, 1690. Apparently, wig wearing had become a divisive issue among his flock so Mather used Matthew 24 to teach that "Hypocrites" tended to "strain at a Gnat and swallow a Camel." He challenged those who were "zealous against an innocent fashion, taken up and used by the best of men; and yet make no Conscience of being guilty of great Immoralities." Regardless of their support for or against "Perriwigs," this passage displays the attention congregations gave to their minister's appearance. *The Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674-1729, Vol. I and II*, 276.

<sup>414</sup> Abiel Leonard to Col. Webb, Aug. 22, 1775; James Watson Webb, Silas Deane, John Austin Stevens, *Reminiscences of Gen'l Samuel B. Webb of the Revolutionary Army*, (New York, 1880), 234.

any common Man, and his Horse and Furniture were accordingly;  
which also he said he Borrowed.<sup>415</sup>

The parish clothed his entire family for their journey to their community. The church then “furnished [Balch] Gratis with an Ordination Suit from Head to Foot” for his ordination ceremony.<sup>416</sup> Without belittling the generosity of the Mendon parish in any way, their first impression of Balch indicates the expectations they held for clergy.

In addition to the physical appearance of their ministers, congregations kept a close eye on their personal relationships. Although clergy wives held no specified role in Congregational churches, their presence and behavior reflected heavily upon their husbands’ ministry. The drunkenness of one pastor’s wife detracted from his ministry just as surely as the polished manners of another minister’s wife were said to have contributed to his success.<sup>417</sup> In a fairly vivid example, Cotton Mather submitted to his congregation’s criticism of his romantic intentions lest his marriage to an unacceptable woman prove “ruinous” to his ministry.”<sup>418</sup> Following the death of his second wife, Mather again faced the watchful eye of his flock that once again, monitored his courtship activity. Having long grown accustomed to his local celebrity, Mather even attempted to

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<sup>415</sup> *A Short Account of the State of Mendon Third Parish*, (Boston, 1773), 4.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

<sup>417</sup> Archibald Campbell’s wife was a notorious alcoholic who never joined the church, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XV, 27; In the 1780s, Samuel West was “greatly aided in intercourse with his people by the excellent properties of his wife...He was blessed with a partner every way suited to him; and though born and educated in a country town, Medfield, yet she possessed good sense. Her manners were pleasing, and she found no difficulty in adapting herself to the most polished of the husband’s parishioners,” *Mass. Hist. Soc., Proceedings*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ser., XIX, 438.

<sup>418</sup> March 1703, *Cotton Mather Diary*, Vol. I, 470.

sway the young woman's affections with the force of public opinion.<sup>419</sup> He described himself thus: “the Gentlemen is one, whom the Eyes of all the Countrey, and many more, are much upon, so the General Vote and voice of the country has been that way, which he is now agoing. His purposes ...are already a common subject of Discourse; but with universal satisfaction.”<sup>420</sup> Yet this modest woman had no desire to submit to that level of public scrutiny and nearly rebuffed him over the “Reproach that she had suffered in the Talk of the people, about that affair.”<sup>421</sup> She eventually did marry Mather but the marriage was less than pleasant. Late in life, the influence of congregational opinion over Mather’s behavior proved even more poignant as he desperately attempted to conceal the erratic behavior of his third wife. “I have lived for near a Year in a continual Anguish of Expectation,” he lamented,

that my poor Wife, by exposing her Madness, would bring a Ruine on my Ministry. But now it is exposed, my Reputation is marvelously praeserved among the People of GOD, and there is come such a general and violent Blast upon her own, as I cannot but be greatly troubled at. I will now go on.<sup>422</sup>

It is interesting that Mather fretted about the impact of his wife’s behavior upon his ministry but during the very same period, one of his sons fathered a child out of wedlock and another son got caught up in a “night riot.”<sup>423</sup> Mather grieved over his sons’

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<sup>419</sup> I use the term ‘local celebrity’ to describe the dichotomy of public acclaim and public scrutiny which accompanied the ministerial position in society.

<sup>420</sup> *Cotton Mather Diary, Vol. II*, 304-305.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, 586. Mather was uncertain whether to characterize her behavior as a “distraction” or a “Possession.” She intermittently raged, stole his journals out of paranoia that he had written about her, and even stormed out of the house in the middle of the night to lodge with a neighbor. At other times, she would become quite lucid, beg his forgiveness, and ask him to pray with her.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*, 611-612.

many public indiscretions but he never related them to the success or failure of his ministry. Perhaps congregations were more understanding of wayward children, while holding high expectations of clergy wives. For most congregations, marital image took preeminence over parental image. It seems plausible that clergy wives served as an extension of the minister's image in a way that their children did not.

### 3.2.3 *Negotiating Through Sermon Responses*

Congregations could not compel their pastors to preach what they wanted hear, nor could congregations keep a minister from promoting controversial doctrine. Rather, they had to use the candidacy period to sift out those whose doctrines might be suspect. Candidacy generally offered a congregation an opportunity to find a candidate whose theological leanings best matched its own. But occasionally, the match was less compatible than either congregation or clergy anticipated. In these cases, parishioners could vote (or at least threaten to vote) with their feet.

In addition to the social pressure congregations could apply to their pastors, flocks found other creative ways to manifest their dissatisfaction to the clergy. Just as the sermon represented the primary responsibility flocks expected from their pastors, it also served as a pivotal point around which to express their disrespect. Regardless of a minister's eloquence or depth of study, a sermon could only qualify as effective if it fell upon a receptive audience.<sup>424</sup> Ranging from indifference to outright defiance,

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<sup>424</sup> Clergy usually recorded attendance and commented its rise and fall. William Willis ed., *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith, and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, 79, 94, 128, 132, 176 ; *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*,

congregations registered immediate approval or disapproval through their response to the message. Some merely slept through the sermon, others pointedly walked out during sermons, and one woman reputedly defied her minister by purposely carrying her howling infant nearer to the pulpit in order to disrupt the service after the minister had directed her to take it home.<sup>425</sup> John Treadwell complained during his sermon, “I should guess that as many as two thirds of you are asleep!”<sup>426</sup> John Martyn’s parishioners were known to leave in the middle of his sermons.<sup>427</sup> Gad Hitchcock joked about the number who walked out during his sermon, suggesting that it must have been a “moving sermon.”<sup>428</sup> While each of these actions reflects a degree of nonparticipation in the reception of the sermon, a congregational member could ultimately negotiate a minister’s authority with his attendance. Without a congregation to hear his messages and submit to his leadership, the ministerial authority of a pastor respectively dissipated.

Members recognized their half of the lay-clerical equation and occasionally used that understanding against their ministers. Parishioners threatened not to attend services for a variety of reasons. Mr. Lord had planned to participate in a local ordination ceremony for a Presbyterian minister until “some of his people had said they would not

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*Vol. I.*, 28, 33, 57, 208, 611, 625, *Vol. II*, 12; *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, Vol. I*, 165; Cotton Mather fretted about his members attending at another church, Apr. 5, 1685, “Our *Congregation*, happening this Afternoon to be *thinner* than ordinary, my Heart began to sink under some foolish Discouragements hereupon...tis possible the Hearers that went from *mee*, found their *Edification* to bee promoted Elsewhere; and it is not impossible, some of that Number that staid with *mee*, did also reap some little Benefit,” *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. I*, 92.

<sup>425</sup> It is related that the woman defied her pastor, Israel Loring, *N. E. Hist. Gen. Reg.* VII, 326.

<sup>426</sup> Alonzo Lewis and James R. Newhall, *History of Lynn*, (Boston, 1865), 346-347.

<sup>427</sup> Francis G., Walett, ed., *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782 First Part Three volumes in One, 1719-1755* (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, 1974).

<sup>428</sup> Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, *Vol. XI*, 234.

hear him any more if he did.”<sup>429</sup> After a parish meeting, Thomas Smith recorded “much concerted opposition, made by the out families who threatened never to come to meeting.”<sup>430</sup> A couple of Parkman’s parishioners resented the clerical “examination” for membership and retorted that if their answers “did not Satisfy” the pastor, they “should go other where.”<sup>431</sup> Beecher was only eight years into his ministry when his flock attempted to pressure him regarding his sermon material. After a series of sermons on the doctrine of election, several of his members threatened not to return.<sup>432</sup>

Congregations also circumscribed ministerial behavior through the power of the parishioners’ own words. Perhaps the most common and effective method of limiting a minister’ authority lay simply in verbal or written criticism.<sup>433</sup> Clergy frequently recorded incidents of parishioner criticism and gossip.<sup>434</sup> Even allowing for the paranoia

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<sup>429</sup>Oct. 23, 1723, Larned, *History of Windham County, Vol. I*, 251.

<sup>430</sup> June 16, 1758, *Journals of Smith and Deane*, 176.

<sup>431</sup> July 31, 1749, *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 200. The implications of these threats depended largely on the availability of alternative places to worship. If the population could only support one congregation, then the threat of nonattendance required a greater commitment from the offended member; he not only deprived the minister of his presence and jurisdiction over his religious life, he forfeited all the social benefits of worshipping with the entire community. Hall discusses the social benefits of “horse shed” Christians who maintained the traditions of worship in order to interact with the community, Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment*.

<sup>432</sup> It appears that this tactic might have found initial success in that Beecher only mentioned preaching on this topic for eight Sundays. He recorded his subsequent discouragement from this episode and the prayers of a Deacon who comes to pray for him during this difficult time, *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, Vol. I*, 164. Mr. Lord’s congregation achieved their goal with the threat of non-attendance; Lord was dissuaded from attending the ordination.

<sup>433</sup> In discussing the viciousness of colonial polemics, Gordon Wood contends to attack someone’s reputation was to “question both their social authority and the legitimacy of their arguments,” Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, (Knopf, 1992), 39.

<sup>434</sup> The power of community gossip during the colonial period has been well established by historians. Beecher nearly turned down his congregation’s invitation to settle over their gossip during his candidacy, *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, Vol. I*, 101-104; Parkman recorded numerous parishioner criticisms and verbal confrontations during his fifty-year tenure, *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*; Mather also recorded frequent condemnations from his flock, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. I*.

of Thomas Smith whose own wife disagreed with his perception of being “slighted” by his flock, actual instances of freely spoken discontent abound.<sup>435</sup> Layman complained from time to time in their own journals and correspondence on the character, behavior, or sermons of their pastors but such observations usually served as private observations with little effect on the pastor.<sup>436</sup> However, when the verbal criticism reached their leader’s awareness, it affected his confidence and attitude toward the flock. William Bentley wondered if his experience with a difficult flock was unique, “If I do not hear more of the reproaches of the people than other ministers, & see more of human depravity, then I hope ministers are endued with superior fortitude to any I possess. It is a trying time with me.”<sup>437</sup> Stephen Williams “heard of some that have spoken meanly and reproachfully” of him and vowed to do all he could to limit their displeasure.<sup>438</sup>

Cotton Mather faced criticism on many levels even in the early part of the century when clergy still maintained a fair degree of ministerial authority. He not only dealt with verbal condemnation, his critics took to the presses.<sup>439</sup> The newspapers, newsletters and

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<sup>435</sup> Late in his ministerial career, Smith’s discouragement is depicted in his journals. Following a Sunday sermon, he often records he felt “slighted” by his congregation. “Not a full meeting P. M. was earnest and blundered in reading my notes, and was, perhaps, vapory, and thought the people slighted me much, though my wife does not think so.” *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, 152, 237.

<sup>436</sup> Benjamin Lynde, *The Diaries of Benjamin Lynde and Benjamin Lynde, Jr.; The Diary of Samuel Sewall, Vol. I and II*.

<sup>437</sup> Sept. 4, 1799, *Diary of William Bentley, Vol. 1*, 193.

<sup>438</sup> *Papers and Proceedings of the Connecticut Valley Historical Society, Vol. I*, (Springfield, Mass., 1881), 38-39.

<sup>439</sup> May 1686, Mather believes that some people have a “very low and mean Opinion of me”; Oct. 1693, Mather complained of a “wicked man” who “wrote a most lying *Libel* to revile my Conduct”; Jan. 1693, a ‘possessed’ woman accused him of molestation which he immediately understands could destroy his ministry; June 1698, A man is writing a book “railing” against him, and Mather decided it was “high time for me to look about me.”; April 1701, “more...filthy scribbles, to hurt my precious Opportunities of

various other forms of print became an additional medium for negotiating ministerial authority throughout the eighteenth century. Through the newspapers, one could argue one's case with near impunity. Public print served as a powerful negotiation tool for a congregation and could offer them the upper hand in a dispute. The battle to maintain one's reputation lay in the court of public opinion. Clergy generally had the benefit of education, articulation and comfort with a public forum on their side. But in order to vindicate their personal characters, clergy necessarily signed their name to most of their arguments. On the other hand, congregations, who may have been less educated and articulate, could offer their version of a conflict with near impunity. In order to vilify their pastor, a parishioner needed only to identify with a particular congregation.<sup>440</sup> This anonymity provided angry members free rein to accuse their pastors without personal recourse. While a printed opinion might represent the perspective of a single individual, the author benefited from the power of the group dynamic by maintaining anonymity.<sup>441</sup>

Congregations wielded much power through print, but pastors occasionally won the war of rogue accusations and criticisms. Samuel Dunbar faced charges of "profane Swearing," "lying before the Church," and preaching "Damnable Doctrine encouraging and justifying the Sin of Fornication."<sup>442</sup> But when the church tried their pastor on these

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glorifying my Lord Jesus Christ."; rumors fly when he courts subsequent wives and during the inoculation crisis, *Cotton Mather Diary*, Vol. I, 126, 172-173, 178-179, 264-265, 396-397.

<sup>440</sup> *A Faithful Narrative*, (Boston, 1735); Jonathan Todd, *A Faithful Narrative, of the Proceedings, of the...calling, and settling the Rev. Mr. James Dana* (New Haven, 1759); Edward Eells, *Some Serious Remarks upon...Jonathan Todd's Faithful Narrative*, (New Haven, 1759).

<sup>441</sup> Mather took these attacks personally. "Warnings are to be given unto the wicked Printer, and his Accomplices who every week publish a vile Paper to lesson and blacken the Ministers of the Town, and render their Ministry ineffectual." (New England Courant was the likely offender printed by Ben Franklin's brother, James) *Cotton Mather Diary*, Vol. II, 663.

<sup>442</sup> 1743, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VII, 170.

accusations, they found the charges “absolutely false.”<sup>443</sup> Dunbar was cleared of misconduct and the accuser was excommunicated.<sup>444</sup> In another instance, at a Harvard town meeting on Jan. 1, 1739, John Seccomb offered “Christian satisfaction” for some undisclosed offence. Most of his flock readily forgave and welcomed him back “into their charity.” Ten freeholders, however, remained unsatisfied and attempted to have Seccomb dismissed claiming the “facts alledged against him to be more criminal than they were then thought.”<sup>445</sup> But the town disagreed with the naysayers, and voted Seccomb a raise instead.

When congregations became dissatisfied with their pastor, they often created a laundry list of offences ranging from serious to petty infractions. Although the final irritation may have been minor, they collectively expanded the list for the benefit of a formal accusation. In Dunbar’s case, the charges might have been exaggerated and/or falsified. There is no record of admission from Dunbar and apparently not enough evidence to verify the claim. Perhaps a minority of the congregation felt at odds with their minister and attempted to oust him. But to their chagrin, either the majority of the church or even the intervention of a neighboring council mediated in the pastor’s favor. In Seccomb’s case, the pastor admitted his fault and offered some sort of genuine repentance for the undisclosed offense. However, he did not manage to convince the entire church. Those who found his repentance unsatisfactory maintained their claims. However, the majority of the town overrode their dissatisfaction and restored their pastor.

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<sup>443</sup> Ibid, *Canton Church Records*, Apr. 29, 1743, May 4, 1744.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

<sup>445</sup> Henry S. Norse, *The History of the Town of Harvard, Massachusetts, 1732-1893*, (Harvard, 1894), 189.

Just as petty gossip and libel might damage a minister's reputation and his ministerial authority, congregations could also use the force of their words to empower their ministers. While ministers' journal entries attest that they felt parishioners' criticism more keenly than their affirmation, it is apparent that congregational affirmation existed. Following a service, members occasionally offered words of praise for sermons. Thomas Smith, for example, not only noted that several members commended his sermon, he wondered about their ulterior motives. For Smith, their affirmation represented "a surprising turn" in his congregation's behavior.<sup>446</sup>

When a minister delivered a particularly well-received sermon, it was also not uncommon for parishioners to verbally encourage their pastors by suggesting that he get it published. Occasionally those members even subsidized the publication of certain sermons.<sup>447</sup> Cotton Mather even confessed that his own concern for missing members might involve the "temptation" of "seeking popular applause."<sup>448</sup> Although it is difficult

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<sup>446</sup> Mar. 16, 1747, "Mr. Waite with several others were to see me, commending my sermon, &c. There is a surprising turn to the people's countenances, thoughts, words and actions toward me"; Aug. 25, 1775, Smith preached to much "acceptance." *Journals of Smith and Deane*, 126-127, 230.

<sup>447</sup> William Bentley received a "very polite Letter from gentlemen of the Chapel Church, certifying that a subscription had been filled for my *sermon last Sunday* & desiring a copy for the press," Sept 15, 1790, *The Diary of William Bentley, Vol. I*, 195; Feb, 1718, Cotton Mather reports that one of his sermons was so acceptable to several widows of his flock that they joined to "bear the Expense of the Publication," *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. II*, 516-517; Samuel Sewall often subsidized the printing of sermons delivered by nearby ministers, *The Diary of Samuel Sewall, Vol. I and II*. Subscriptions to sermons offered other clergy and laymen with reading material for personal study. Printed sermons also dispensed current theological developments in the colonies. This flow of information served both to unify areas of the colonies by perpetuating various trends, but it also managed to incite factions, which used this forum to highlight current controversy. Several historians have investigated religious use of public communications in the colonies, Timothy D. Hall, *Contested Boundaries: Itinerancy and the Reshaping of the Colonial American Religious World*, (Duke University, 1994); Harry Stout, "Religion, Communications, and the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 34 (1977), 519-41; Harry Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism*, (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1991); Frank Lambert, *Inventing the Great Awakening*, (Princeton University Press, 1999), *Pedlar in Divinity: George Whitfield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1745*, (Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>448</sup> April 1684, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. I*, 92-93.

to determine how he measured his flock's "popular applause" and "acceptance," it is clear that he carefully gauged their responses to his ministry. In his journal, Mather recorded his determination to deny his interest in popularity. But in spite of his desire to minister objectively and above the temporal trappings of social acclaim, his continued attention to his flock's approval indicates the power of congregational affirmation.

### 3.2.4 *Congregational Factional Disputes*

Throughout the eighteenth century, another significant force in negotiating the behavior of the clergy involved disputes between congregational factions. Congregations could certainly act in concert, voting at town and parish meetings, in order to gain leverage over a minister and a congregation unified against their minister represented a formidable force. But division within a congregation also provided a significant check on ministerial authority and behavior. Factions could influence whether a minister even settled in a particular location.<sup>449</sup> The power of just a few influential parishioners could "clog the ...Motions" of the remaining flock.<sup>450</sup> Most clergy recognized the dynamics of factions within their congregations but still occasionally found their ministries at the

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<sup>449</sup> Lyman Beecher nearly refused his call to East Hampton over the factions who were split for a favorite candidate, *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*; Robert Rogerson accepted Brookline's invitation to settle among them but his birthplace in England created difficulty. His stay was shortened by "parties arising among the people, on the ground, that he was a foreigner, whose early life they had not personally known," John Pierce, *Reminiscences* (Boston, 1837), 9. A minority from The First Church of Hampton complained that "it never appeared to us that those that wear for Mr. John Ma[r]sh had an regard for Mr. Thayer until there was the Largest Vote for Mr. Belknap...so we have no Reason to think it out of Love they have done it, but to keep Mr. Belknap from Settling among us," Dow, *History of the Town of Hampton*, I, 408.

<sup>450</sup> At Old South in 1718, "All the Brethren of the Church, except four or five Gentlemen, who must always be the Rulers of all are fond of Inviting Mr. *Walter* unto the Assistance and Succession in the Ministry. Last *October*, an excellent Gift...who was tendered unto the Church, and much desired by the most of our People, was thrown away to please these Gentlemen," *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. II*, 519.

mercy of bitter disputes and “caballing parties.”<sup>451</sup> Sometimes competing factions attempted to curry favor with their pastor while at other times, congregations sought to keep the minister from any involvement.<sup>452</sup> Unlike interpretations of an equitable democracy emerging within early colonial government, the behavior of congregational factions reveals that a select few could continue to rule the many even within a democratic structure.<sup>453</sup>

Generally, factions confined their disputes to a war of words, published and verbal. But on occasion throughout the eighteenth century, the passion parishioners felt toward their ministers erupted into violence. In the 1720s, Josiah Oakes found himself legally dismissed from his pulpit, but still waiting for his flock to pay for his past services. Meanwhile the anti-Oakes faction hired another minister to supply the pulpit. Defending his position, Oakes arrived early one Sunday with his followers and “barricaded” the pulpit. When the newly hired minister arrived, Oakes was pulled out of the pulpit in the middle of his prayer. In response, according to one observer, “the Oakes party yelled abuse and threw benches.”<sup>454</sup> The following Sunday was no better – this time

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<sup>451</sup> Mar. 26, 1728, “Annual town meeting. *The caballing party carried all before them, and got all the officers of their party,*” *Journals of Smith and Deane*, 67.

<sup>452</sup> When Joseph Palmer settled in 1753, Judge George Leonard and Captain Stone each approached him secretly to offer their sentiments of approval but charged the minister not to let the other man know of their leanings in the matter, George Faber Clark, *History of the Town of Norton*, (Boston, 1859), 150-151. During a hymnbook dispute in Wrentham West, both factions determined to keep the pastor from weighing in on the decision, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XIV, 133.

<sup>453</sup> Lockridge offers a worthy discussion of a how New England towns could be structured for democracy but still be ruled by a select few. Kenneth Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years, Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636-1736*, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1970).

<sup>454</sup> Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. V, 430.

the hired preacher arrived first so Oakes attempted to physically remove his competitor from his pulpit.

Salem's conflict with Samuel Fisk was equally disruptive. Salem also physically protected the pulpit from Fisk and his friends. Their lengthy dispute captured public attention newspapers for months in 1735. In 1745, after being "ejected from the Salem meeting house," a New Light ordination committee carried out its ceremony in an orchard.<sup>455</sup> In other towns as well, factions fought for control of the meetinghouse late into the eighteenth century.<sup>456</sup>

Occasionally protests could become extreme. Although more rare, some unhappy parishioners burnt down meetinghouses and even attempted to poison their pastors. At least two different poisoning attempts are mentioned in Shipton's biographical sketches of Harvard graduates. Nathan Bucknam combated the strife in his flock, which resulted in the meetinghouse being burned and an attempt to poison him and his family. The poison was discovered by a slave who first offered the food to a cat.<sup>457</sup> In the 1750s, Thomas Smith records an episode concerning Ephraim Clark, who many of Smith's people helped "install" in an orchard. Clark seems to have been previously ordained but presently under church censure. The tumult surrounding Clark reached astounding proportions;

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<sup>455</sup> Oct. 1734, *The Diaries of Benjamin Lynde and Benjamin Lynde, Jr.*, 166.

<sup>456</sup> John Ellis battled unsuccessfully for several years to occupy his given pulpit while his opposers "violently" obstructed his path, James Ellis, *A narrative...of the late Law-Suit...in Rehoboth*, (Warren, 1795), 22-32; The town of Bedford locked the meeting house door against Joseph Penniman in 1793, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XVI, 201.

<sup>457</sup> E. O. Jameson, *Historical Discourse preached on the one hundred and sixty-second anniversary of the First Church of Christ, Medway, Mass.*, (Boston, 1877), 43.

twenty-four members of the parish served jail time rather than pay their rates to Clark and someone attempted to poison him.<sup>458</sup>

The extreme reaction of John Hovey's congregation seems to have stemmed from differences over his criticism of the excesses of the Awakening and a dispute over meetinghouse location. For years, his congregation expressed their dissatisfaction with him in petty ways, refusing to give him the deed to his house and turning his cows loose. But in 1763, the meetinghouse burned. At first, this was assumed to be the result of an accident, but then parishioners "openly boasted that they had burned the meetinghouse in order to have a new one built at Kennebunkport."<sup>459</sup> While these cases perhaps display the most extreme measures congregations or individual members were willing to take against their ministers, they do depict the depth of passion colonists possessed regarding their religious expression.

The inoculation crisis of the 1720s also created a firestorm of protest among Bostonians toward ministers who also advocated inoculation against the current small pox outbreak, which was claiming numerous lives. Cotton Mather fiercely resisted the opposition, continuing to encourage and secure inoculation for friends and family. While providing inoculation for the minister of Roxbury, one of Mather's enemies displayed the depths of his hatred. An account of the affair appeared in the *Boston Newsletter*.

At the house of the Reverend Dr. *Cotton Mather*, there lodged his Kinsmen, a worthy Minister under the *Small-pox*, received and managed in the way of *Inoculation*. Towards Three of the Clock in the Night, as it grew towards the morning of Tuesday the Fourteenth of this *Instant*

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<sup>458</sup> *Journals of Smith and Deane*, 166-167.

<sup>459</sup> Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VII, 540.

November, some unknown Hands threw a Fired Granado into the Chamber of the Sick Gentleman...but the merciful Providence of God so ordered it, that the Granado passing through the Window, had by the Iron in the middle of the casement, such a Turn given to it, that in falling on the floor, the Fired Wild-Fire in the Fuse was violently shaken out some Distance from the Shell, and burnt out upon the Floor, without firing the Granado. When the Granado was taken up, there was found a Paper so tied with a Thread around the Fuse, that it might outlive the breaking of the Shell, wherein were these Words: *Cotton Mather, I was once a member of your Meeting; but the Cursed Lye you told of \_\_\_\_\_ You know who; made me leave You, You Dog, And Damn You, I will enoculate You with this, with a Pox to You.* This is the Sum of the matter without any Remarks toward it.<sup>460</sup>

In addition to the protest against inoculation, the member appears to be nursing a long-standing grievance over some previous statement of Mather's, which he believed to be a "lye." It is possible that the inoculation crisis merely provided a mechanism for displaying his disgruntlement with Mather.<sup>461</sup> The inability to control his minister or coerce his behavior erupted into violence.

The level of feeling accompanying congregational dissatisfaction attests to the authority congregations continued to attribute to the office of the ministry. The pulpit and the meetinghouse represented both ecclesiastical and civil authority. If this were a less important post, little regard might have been given to a man whose sermons colonists could freely ignore. However, in colonial New England, the position carried great significance and members desperately sought not only to supply their pulpits but to fill them with men whose doctrines, behavior and piety fell under their corporate approval. The colonial pulpit carried great authority throughout the eighteenth century but only under the supervision and consent of the congregation.

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<sup>460</sup> Nov. 13, 1721, *Boston-Newsletter*.

<sup>461</sup> Mather offers a similar but less complete account in his journal, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. II*, 657-658.

### 3.2.5 Salary Compliance

Throughout the eighteenth century, congregations failed to meet the terms of their salary agreements for various reasons. Legitimate poverty, doctrinal opposition, currency depreciation, stress of warfare and parish divisions all contributed to the noncompliance of many clerical salaries. The level of power congregations held over their ministers becomes increasingly vivid through the financial arrangements between clergy and their flocks. Beyond the overt negotiation during the candidacy period, once a candidate settled on a contract, compliance became the issue at hand. A town might promise a particular salary and settlement package but the actual collection and settlement of the pastor's salary escaped all guarantee.<sup>462</sup> Once again, the congregation held the upper hand. On the clergy side, the lay-clerical financial agreement required compliance from one person. The congregations' half of the agreement required compliance from each and every member.<sup>463</sup> Clergy learned quickly that the delinquency of just a couple parishioners could derail the timely compliance of the clerical contract.

The pressure of taxation seemingly should have provided more surety to the arrangement but the high incidence of delinquency for ministerial rates indicates that in

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<sup>462</sup> June 15, 1790, William Bentley lamented settling "with the Treasurer after a neglect for almost three years. The receipts did not easily explain themselves, & a little greater age might have involved them in endless dispute, arising from the receipts being included in each other, & and not specifying that circumstance." He then optimistically determined to "settle once in every three months." *The Diary of William Bentley, Vol. I*, 178.

<sup>463</sup> Congregations employed various methods and varying degrees of diligence to the issue of minister tax collection. Bentley describes one particularly innovative congregation in Marblehead who annually chose a committee of thirteen persons to dine with the minister. "Monthly they meet at each others' houses, & sup, & spend an evening together, & on such occasion the minister is always to be invited. At these meetings they pay the minister what they have collected, & then having examined the Books, they divide the delinquencies among the members, assigning to each his part in order to collect, as he should be able against the next meeting." Feb. 4, 1790, *The Diary of William Bentley, Vol. I*, 140.

general, the long arm of the law was less than persuasive. In fact, the general assembly occasionally used their privilege to exempt towns from taxation as a bribe to get them to compensate their ministers more faithfully.<sup>464</sup> Although much of parish tax delinquency may have originated from legitimate hardship, colonists proved to be a stubborn lot even willing to serve jail time when they disapproved of their minister or felt that rates had been calculated unfairly.<sup>465</sup>

Colonial clergy frequently found themselves at the mercy of sometimes contrite, sometimes contrary congregations who resorted to creative means of satisfying their ministers' wages. In 1703, Josiah Dwight settled for ten acres of land in lieu of arrearages accumulated over the last thirteen years, "that we may have quiet."<sup>466</sup> While the congregation's delinquency might have been justified by Woodstock's frontier circumstances, currency crises, and the difficulty of collecting rates from members on the fringes of the parish; the church's continued approach to their minister's salary belied

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<sup>464</sup> The town of Ashford received a two-year exemption from the payment of colony rates in 1725 if they raise their pastor's salary. Shipton records that two years later, the exemption was renewed "with the proviso that if the constable could not reduce the parson's receipt for his salary, the colony Treasurer should collect from the constable." Following this legislation, the congregation managed to raise Hale's rates to £100 even during inflation years. *Conn. Archives, Ecclesiastical Records, III*, 126 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College..., Vol. V*, 218; colonial resistance to taxation certainly did not emerge in the Revolutionary period, it shows up much earlier. The difficulty in the new Republic to exact each state's share of the financial burden merely perpetuates a deep seeded defiance to all authoritative demands upon their finances. In this light, it would be difficult to argue that tax delinquency to ministers carried any particular motive of angst toward individual ministers but when ministerial rates fell behind, while other tax obligations remained current, personal or collective motive cannot be dismissed. In Ashford's case, the Assembly must have suspected motive because they removed any excuse of hardship through an exemption of colony rates.

<sup>465</sup> *Journals of Smith and Deane*, 166-167; In general, dissenters or those who disagreed with the doctrine of the parish minister resisted mandatory taxation for his support. In the southern precinct of Harwich, three New-Lights were jailed for refusing to pay their rates toward their Old-Light parish minister. In this case, as in others, their refusal coincided with a petition to the general assembly for recognition as a separate parish whose taxes would support a minister of their own choosing and doctrinal leanings, Josiah Paine *History of Harwich*, (Rutland, 1937), 230; Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College..., Vol. VIII*, 766-767.

<sup>466</sup> As quoted in Larned, *History of Windham County, Vol. I*, 51.

their ability to pay.<sup>467</sup> On occasion, when he petitioned for increased pay, they granted more land and extra voluntary contributions. After thirty-three years of service, Dwight again petitioned for an increase on the grounds of the current insufficiency of his salary and the distraction of tending his own farm in order to provide for this family. The town acquiesced to his proposal, but interjected an interesting caveat. The selectmen were to “instruct him moreover to devote himself more especially to his sacred functions that they may be encouraged by his vigorous performance for the future, either to continue this said sum or to enlarge it.”<sup>468</sup> One parishioner dissented, rightly noting that the original thirty-three-year-old contract legitimately remained in effect and on those grounds he refused to exceed its provisions regardless of the current economy.

In effect, the Woodstock congregation subtly placed a carrot before their pastor. *If* he exhibited increased devotion to his office, they *might* be inclined to give him a raise. This amounted to merit pay. While justifying their delinquency with complaints of poverty and hardship,<sup>469</sup> this statement suggests that the ability to raise his salary lay completely within their grasp and indicates that their reluctance to either notice his need or initiate a thirty-three-year cost-of-living increase to his salary carried some deliberate motive. Furthermore, their admonition to Dwight carried a subtle threat. Couched in the language of a possible “enlarge[ment]” of his salary, they were also suggesting that the

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<sup>467</sup> Ibid, 45-46; in 1708, inhabitants complained at the town meeting “that the Borderers neglect to pay a suitable proportion of Mr. Dwight’s salary, though they frequent the house of God and have nowhere else to repair unto for the same.” The next year, the town selected two men to “go to the Borderers and see what they will subscribe for Mr. Dwight’s salary.”

<sup>468</sup> Ibid, 56-57, in 1723.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid, 56, in 1719, the town did respond to Dwight’s request for an increase but still claimed their “great poverty and being affected with the common calamity in the general time of scarcity.” In 1722, they still complained of “great poverty, straitness and scarcity.”

“contine[nce]” of this salary adjustment was conditional upon his *future* “performance.”<sup>470</sup> Perhaps the congregation was reserving the right to reduce the newly adjusted salary upon some future unfavorable review. Or were they implying that this newly adopted raise might become even more difficult to collect if the parishioners remained unimpressed with Dwight’s ministerial efforts?

Whatever the case or however obvious the negotiation, Dwight did not appear to quibble over their conditions. He accepted the terms but clearly did not satisfy his flock. Within three years time, he was formally and with near unanimity dismissed from his post.<sup>471</sup> As with many other clergy who when finally driven to address their delinquent or inadequate salaries, found that their plea for justice irreparably damaged their ministry to their congregation, the initiation of salary issues cost Dwight his pulpit.<sup>472</sup> It seems nearly impossible and at best, inaccurate, to isolate the salary issues at Woodstock, and attribute them to any particular cause. Over several decades, the reasons for a flock’s non-compliance could originate from a variety of circumstances.<sup>473</sup> Without implying any grand congregational conspiracy or any impeccable clerical performance, it still

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<sup>470</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid, 61, In his final statement to his flock, Dwight expressed an accumulation of hardship. “I have...stood it out with you in wants, wars and diversities of words these thirty-six years...and now am so much dis-spirited and dis-fitted to go on with my calling among you, and so much has been laid on me tending to defeat the end of my ministry, and my family so burden and broken, that this was the result of my thoughts, to ask at once my dismissal from you in pursuit of a sedate and quiet life.”

<sup>472</sup> As Peter Thatcher commented, pastor’s “Salaries are generally ticklish things.” Peter Thatcher, *The Belknap Papers, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Vol. III, 5<sup>th</sup> ser.* (Boston, 1877), 126.

<sup>473</sup> Congregations were known to offer ample settlements but then to withhold maintenance later, “they are kind at a Ministers first Settlement, and do their Duty then, or, when they’re in a good Humour...But if they’re a little affronted or disaffected, why then, if it be in their power, the Minister shall suffer in his Maintenance; his Salary shall be abridg’d, his Present of Gratitude withheld, and all the Efforts of Spite, Malice, and Revenge be practis’d against him.” Thomas Symmes, *The people’s interest in one article consider’d & exhibit’d.* (Boston, 1724), 26.

seems clear that ministerial contracts inadvertently offered congregations an immense amount of power over colonial clergy. While this power rarely rendered the clergy impotent in their pulpits, it did require the minister to carefully negotiate the terms of his authority.

Another important aspect of Dwight's controversy with his congregation involves the legalism of the single dissenter. The currency crises of the fledgling colonies were a real and present danger to eighteenth-century colonists. The uncertainty of specie created an unsettling economy for clergy and congregations alike, who attempted to negotiate life-long salaries at the outset of a minister's tenure. The tentative acceptance letters from ministerial candidates reflect their apprehension of trusting their financial security to a group of people who they perhaps did not really yet trust.<sup>474</sup> They often claimed trust in God's call, but even the most novice minister recognized that he was actually depending upon the flock hearing and obeying God's admonition to care for their pastor's needs. Frequently, they attempted to peg their salaries to terms of silver, some other specie or even a standard value of certain commodities.<sup>475</sup> But even this was not enough to spare the clergy from the effects of a fixed salary during inflationary times.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> In 1747, Edward Pell accepted his call to "humbly trusting it is a call of God. I do accept what you have given me for my support and encouragement, and if the same should not be sufficient for my support, I trust that you will afford such farther supplies from year to year, as that I may be enabled to perform the Ministerial office in some measure free from worldly incumbences," Paine, *History of Harwich*, 227; In 1736, Caleb Rice accepted the call to Sturbridge esteeming the salary "to be handsome and generous,...yet, not being so thoroughly acquainted with the charge and expenses of living, if in process of time my circumstances should require and call for more, I should depend and rely upon it...", Joseph S. Clark, *An Historical Sketch of Sturbridge*, (Brookfield, 1838), 31.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid, Rice's salary was defined in current terms of silver.

<sup>476</sup> According to Shipton, for forty years John Moody presented detailed lists of his living expenses to the town in an effort to get his salary back to its initial purchasing power, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VIII, 233; Samuel Dunbar also demonstrated his living costs to the town in order to justify his salary during inflationary times. In this case, he effectively convinced the

Periodic inflation from a series of currency crises greatly reduced the purchasing power of those in salaried positions. Congregations were the big winners in these years as inflation deflated the actual value of the clerical salary. Generous or thoughtful congregations voluntarily offered cost of living increases and attempted to compensate for the actual losses absorbed by their pastor.<sup>477</sup> But for flocks disinclined to offer their ministers any more than they were forced to pay, the initial contract created a perfect shield. Savvy parishioners could avoid any hint of delinquency and hide behind their technical compliance to the original contract.

The motive of noncompliance could be complex and remains difficult for the present day scholar to ascertain with confidence. But as the lone dissenter against Dwight in the Woodstock congregation demonstrated, the technicalities of ministerial contracts, while intended for the protection of clerical salaries and thus the deference shown to their social class, actually rendered the clergy particularly vulnerable to the whims of their flock. There was more than one way to restrict the authority of the clergy. One could overtly defy the clerical contract and risk a lawsuit from a disgruntled minister. But the volatility of colonial currency presented a lawful method of defiance directly into the hands of a dissatisfied congregation.

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town that his purchasing power had decreased by half and they graciously adjusted his salary. This fascinating budget appears in Daniel T. V. Huntoon, *History of the Town of Canton* (Cambridge, 1893), 181-182.

<sup>477</sup> The town of Falmouth voted Samuel Palmer a bonus of £200 during the height of inflation, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VIII, 245; Likewise, Wrentham voluntarily voted Joseph Bean £1000 during the war inflation of 1779 when they were only contractually obligated to pay him £66 a year, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XII, 241.

In reality, the failure of individual members to pay parish rates probably did not represent a congregational conspiracy. The shortage of even one member could be enough to throw the entire ministerial contract into arrears if no one was willing to step up to compensate for a delinquent member. Conspiracies and deliberate refusals to meet contract obligations or votes concerning the minister's salary tended to appear in town meetings where the town acted in force. But regardless of motive, the pastor who consistently received less than he bargained for in his salary agreement could easily interpret the delinquency as a deliberate lack of respect. Even when a congregation, as a whole, did not intend ill will toward their pastor, it should come as no surprise that for many clergy, delinquent salaries could discourage a minister to the point of resignation.<sup>478</sup>

The power of the group dynamic predisposed the clergy to receive greater personal offense from a breach of the lay-clerical contract than congregations were likely to receive when their ministers failed to perform expected duties. In journal entries written during times of discouragement, ministers often referred to their congregation in mass.<sup>479</sup> Clergy often attributed specific incidents to the individuals who perpetrated an affront, but when discouragement became acute, ministers tended to lump their greatest

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<sup>478</sup> July 7, 1790, William Bentley reported that "The deficiency in the payments of my Salary, threw me into all those perplexities which often terminate in daring adventures. I had nearly resolved to ask a dismissal, & again trust myself to the World," *The Diary of William Bentley, Vol. I*, 183.

<sup>479</sup> Cotton Mather offers several examples of this phenomenon. He lists generous and thoughtful people by name but holds the offenses of his congregation against the group. It is possible that this tendency in pastors represents a valiant effort to avoid any temptation toward personal vindication against individuals. Perhaps spreading the fault among the group allowed ministers to process their umbrage with more discretion. But I interpret this to be more than a pastoral device, it reflects the gravity of personal criticism when it was received from one among the many. Criticism and offence from individuals toward the pastor rendered more power to the congregation than even they may have suspected.

antagonists in with those who may have contributed little to the state of affairs.<sup>480</sup> Clergy were inclined to exaggerate the offense of individuals by pessimistically attributing it to the entire congregation. Interestingly, the actions of a congregation discourage a minister to the point of forsaking his ministerial career, but the actions of a minister, while undeniably significant to individuals, could not collapse the desire of a congregation for continued ministry under another pastor. The clergy did not discourage their congregations to the point of forsaking the faith. Whether congregations realized this dynamic or not, it offered congregations a great degree of influence over the confidence and attitude their pastors held toward ministry and represented a form of power congregations held over their pastors. Therefore, while perhaps only an individual or a fraction of the congregation remained obstinately delinquent in salary compliance, the effect of their non-compliance carried great significance.

Closely related to the currency crises of the eighteenth century, geographic expansion as the colonial population swelled and surged toward the frontier created additional stress on ministerial contracts. At the outset, additional parishioners within parish boundaries represented a benefit to the community by dispersing the burden of ministerial maintenance over a larger group of people. But the addition of more people often created a less harmonious dynamic. Not only did those who moved in late possess less ownership in and loyalty to the ministerial contract, the “outliers” and “borderers” who lived on the fringes of the community tended to anticipate a place of worship closer to their homes. As parishes split and gained authorization from the general assembly to

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<sup>480</sup> Jan. 17, 1714, In his despair over his lack of success, “The poor Flock...whereof I am the Servant; a poor, foolish, senseless People; how unfruitful, and how ungrateful!...I am so strangely at a Loss, what to do further for them!” Three years later he is still aware of his tendency toward “too much Leaven in my Spirit against a People, whose Behavior towards me is very unrighteous and ungrateful,” *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. II*, 278, 504.

collect ministerial taxes for their own church and pastor, disputes over rates during the critical years of transition created a predictable delinquency in compliance to existing ministerial salaries.<sup>481</sup> While the unwillingness of defecting parishioners to pay rates to the original parish minister created some level of irritation for the core of the congregation, ultimately the impact of this phenomenon was felt most acutely by the pastors whose salaries fell into arrears.

Ebenezer Parkman was only one of many clergy, who experienced such developments but his detailed and poignant diaries offer a particularly vivid view of the experience from the clergy's vantage point. In 1744, the town on Westborough began to discuss dividing the town.<sup>482</sup> The North Side of the town not only asked to be set off as their own parish, but they also resolutely refused to continue contributing to Parkman's support.<sup>483</sup> Such ultimatums carried no favor with the rest of the town. Indignant, the First Precinct dug in their heels and refused to make up the delinquent contributions from the North Side. Friends advised Parkman not to "engage" himself in the "Disputes of [his] Neighbors about Dividing the Town," but this advice naively failed to notice that

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<sup>481</sup> William Bentley reported on the unhappy attempts of his late colleague's heirs to secure the arrearages of their father's salaries. "The principal arguments used unjustly in favor of the Delinquents, are that no services were actually performed for the time, & that a considerable part of the Parishioners never did attend worship in the East House, & have since moved, & removed, into & from said Parish," *The Diary of William Bentley, Vol. I*, 193.

<sup>482</sup> Jan. 9, 1744, "Another fruitless Town Meeting, concerning My Support and Dividing the Town. This Meeting was oversatt by the plan that several Men were not Warned...I had Some perplexity by Means of Neighbor John Rogers his having promis'd me money and continually Disappointed me," *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 90.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid*, Jan. 30, 1744, "Another Town Meeting upon my support etc. They voted but £200 – Old Tenor. The North Side very Resolute. They urg'd that the Town gave me last year more than I needed or desir'd that provisions were cheaper, etc., whereas I never gave so much as for both my Beef and my Rie – and also for Labour."

Parkman alone would fall victim to their quarrel.<sup>484</sup> Parkman anticipated that the division of the town would ultimately dissolve and nullify any previous contract or covenant he had held with Westborough for the last twenty years.<sup>485</sup>

Eventually the First Precinct forged another agreement with Parkman, but unfortunately, the arrearages assessed during their dispute with the North Side in 1744 would remain a contested issue. At times, Parkman consulted with fellow ministers as to whether he should sue the congregation for his dues or merely petition the town meeting year after year.<sup>486</sup> In 1748, the town, who repeatedly put off Parkman's request for his past dues, offered an unusual excuse for their delinquency. Parkman recorded that

Squire Baker's earnest Advice to discharge the Town, tho they do not pay me, and by no means to sue, endeavor to recover from the Town in a lawful way the Debt for my service four months and 15 days before the Town was divided: again they were uneasy at the vote of the precincts in which they promised me 555£ in Case etc. and that I preach old Sermons. This last I have not met with any man til now that would discover to me, nor own.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> These concerns preoccupied Parkman's journal particularly as the meetings draw closer.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid, 114, Jan. 11, 1745, Parkman responded to the committee sent to inform him of the town meeting, "And So now I am after these Things to be thrown upon a Precinct or out of Doors-our old Covenants and Contracts being nullify'd and dissolved – and this without any consent of mine...I was become the great sufferer," *ibid*, 110. Both the north side and the first precinct desired Parkman to be their minister but this appeared to be little comfort to him. He turned down the north side faction and waited on the first precinct to reestablish his contract. Meanwhile, a few thoughtful parishioners periodically offered Parkman their rates voluntarily "on account of the Towns being so long prevented being assessed and so the Rates for [his] Sallery and Support suspended."

<sup>486</sup> Ibid, 156, June 16, 1747, the ministers "were to a Man Warm and Zealous against it."

<sup>487</sup> Ibid, 171, Feb. 24, 1748, Parkman was clearly taken aback and deeply offended by this last charge. Parkman did feel personal guilt over his habit of repeating sermons, but his case against the town was valid and had nothing to do with his personal performance. Perhaps the congregation needed to dig up some justification for their delinquency. It is also possible that this charge was not meant as an excuse but merely an attempt to secure some future improvement from Parkman's performance by tying it to his salary. This episode seems to cement Parkman's discouragement over his personal ability does little to endear his flock to him.

It seems that in their effort to defend the lack of payment, the town decided to delineate their pastor's faults. Parkman had been repeating sermons intermittently for twenty years without hearing any complaint but at this critical juncture, they opted to acquaint him with their dissatisfaction. The following year was spent with Parkman defending his sermon practices, endless wrangling over the technicalities of the precinct's delinquencies and exactly who was liable for the unpaid dues. With each passing year, the likelihood of recovering these monies diminished appreciably; those who truly were responsible for the debt had moved on. Even if the remaining members felt some sympathy toward their pastor's plight, it was quite another thing to ask them to pay their previous ungrateful co-members' dues in addition to their own which they had dutifully rendered in a timely fashion years ago.

By August and again in October of 1748, Parkman was reduced to borrowing money from his parishioners, yet the town continued to seek a full discharge of the debt.<sup>488</sup> Anxious for Parkman to end the matter by signing a complete discharge, they asked Parkman if they were able to "gather but a small part of the Money due to me from the North side, among them in their South Neighborhood, would I give a receipt in full?"<sup>489</sup> Parkman was astonished at their audacity and stated that he was not ready to respond to this request. Nearly every subsequent year, Parkman sent a memorial to the town meeting requesting their attention to his unpaid dues but to no avail. In 1755, Parkman took a different tack and attempted to extend some goodwill toward his flock

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<sup>488</sup> Ibid, 163, Nov. 2, 1747, While Parkman struggled to collect salary in arrears, he is further chagrined to learn that David Hall that his parish has recently voted him 400£ for the year. Parkman's offense was compounded by comparison with other clergy with generous congregations.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid, 186, Nov. 10, 1748.

regarding his salary. Noting the difficulty of the war years, he offered to accept the same diminished rate as he had received the year before. But instead, the town responded by reducing his salary further to “thirty-two Pounds Lawfull Money including firewood.”<sup>490</sup> The dire circumstances of a war-torn community might have justified such a reduction in salary but for Parkman, who still smarted over and continued to harp on his past dues from 1744, this lined up as merely one more offense in a long line of injustice.

It is nearly impossible to read Parkman’s diaries entries after the year of 1744 without sensing the consequences of financial dispute upon the clerical ministry. Whether the arrearages were justifiable, intentional, or merely negligent, lack of compliance to a minister’s salary carried enormous significance. Whether or not noncompliance was purposely used to coerce ministerial behavior thereby infringing upon his authority, it most certainly had that effect. Placing the ecclesiastical leader in a position of need, in which he was forced to borrow from those he was attempting to lead, appreciably sapped the influence and respect the minister could expect from those same parishioners.

Congregations not only exerted their influence through the limitation of clerical finances. Congregations also influenced their minister through their unexpected generosity. Generally, colonial clergy suffered from the fixed nature of their salaries. But even those whose contracts were subject to annual adjustment usually found themselves in the midst of an annual dispute and critique of their performance.<sup>491</sup> Some

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<sup>490</sup> Ibid, 295, Sept. 22, 1755.

<sup>491</sup> James Bailey of Weymouth, Harvard’s Class of 1719. For forty-three years his modest salary not only commanded the attention of the yearly town meeting, the expense of pulpit supply during Bailey’s illness

towns opted to keep their minister's salary at the initial rate but supplemented it with a voluntary "gift" which occasionally amounted to nearly an entire year's salary.<sup>492</sup> Yet, the generosity of the flock could never be guaranteed. And, it could give the upper hand to the congregation. If a minister began to depend upon or expect certain extra "gifts," then the withholding of these bonuses carried significant power. Furthermore, if hard feelings arose between pastor and parishioners, parishioners could use the year-end bonus (or lack thereof) to reflect their dissatisfaction.

Many ministers routinely received extra gifts from their congregations. For their manual labor which was not part of his contract, Eleazer Williams bragged on the number of his congregation who turned out to assist him during harvest,

I had no less than 37 Hands, swinging their Scythes together in my Fields, who all came of their own Accord...they quickly cut me down 20 Load of Hay. And...several of my Neighbors were so kind as to bring some Refreshments to animate and cheer the Laborers. Afterward there came the elderly People, with the young Lads...took the Trouble of also Carting it in for me. - All this was done Gratis.<sup>493</sup>

Particularly in times of hardship, and to express common sympathy and care, flocks might unite to meet a physical need of their pastor. Spinning Bees were often reported in colonial newspapers. Ladies from the Charlestown congregation held a spinning bee for Hull Abbot to make the pastor shirts when his wife died and sixty ladies

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was subtracted from his salary, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VI, 294.

<sup>492</sup> In the 1740s, Manchester set Benjamin Toppin's salary at £50 in hard money but gifted as much as £40 one year, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XI, 170.

<sup>493</sup> *Boston News-Letter*, Aug. 20, 1730 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. V, 472.

gathered on Jonathan Bowman's front lawn to spin for him in his time of need.<sup>494</sup>

Another church hoped their charity would encourage neighboring towns into similar good works for their pastors.<sup>495</sup> Gifts that originated from the entire congregation or even a majority of the congregation generally were delivered free from ulterior motives. But when the wealthiest members offered private gifts, presents, or aid during a financial crisis, the pecuniary concerns could tempt a minister to "prostitute" himself by prioritizing the concerns of the giver.

Some clergy even justified favoritism toward generous parishioners whose contributions made up for the delinquency of the rest of the parish. But even when "bountiful" members noticed the "cruel straits" of the minister and attempted to remedy their financial difficulties, their generosity did not "Excuse the Parish."<sup>496</sup> Nevertheless, ministers were "oblig'd in Gratitude and Justice, by all that's good, to put some Singular Marks of Respect on such their Benefactors; at least they should allow them an uncommon share in their Good Wishes: while others, that neglect their Duty, should have the Portion given them, that is their Due."<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> *Essex Gazette*, Nov. 22, 1768, 3 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VI, 368.

<sup>495</sup> "The Rev. Mr. Dunbar, our beloved Pastor had Ninety Men at Work for him, who cut and hew'd all their Timber needful for the Building his House; which we hope will be a motive to other towns to dale thus generously by their Worthy Ministers," *New-England Weekly Journal*, Mar. 18, 1728 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VII, 167-168 ; Nathaniel Gookin boasted to the papers that his congregation had freely offered to assist in his son's education at College, "and they did it with all the Freedom that can be imagined, I having never asked them to do it, nor indeed, did I so much as think of such a thing till of their own accord they offered it...I boast of my parishioners, hoping that their zeal in this matter will provoke many others to go and do likewise," *Boston News-Letter*, July 1, 1731 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. IX, 45.

<sup>496</sup> Thomas Symmes, *The people's interest in one article consider'd & exhibit'd*. (Boston, 1724), 16.

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*

Ezra Stiles kept meticulous notes of gifts received from various members of his congregation. “Yesterday Alexr Grant Esqu. & his Lady of my congregn set out for Boston to embark there for London; In the last Ldsday contrib. He gave me a half Jo or 8 Doll. & she a Guinea. Since his Return from Jamaica last Jany. His Family have made me presents to amount of Eight or nine Guineas.”<sup>498</sup> Parkman’s friends attempted to care for him during his dispute over arrearages in 1744; Parkman recorded various and sundry gifts which his parishioners offered him during his weekly interaction in the community.<sup>499</sup> Ministers usually recorded the generous members of their flocks by name.<sup>500</sup> Rather than thanking the entire flock and assigning one’s gratitude to a body of individuals, ministers bestowed gratitude singly to those who gave singly. While delinquency from individuals was often attributed to the entire congregation thus rendering an individual’s behavior particularly potent to a minister’s confidence, the generosity of individuals threatened the ministry by compromising the pastor’s objectivity toward his flock.

Gifts perhaps carried the most significance when they met a critical need. The vulnerability of a minister deeply entrenched in debt magnified the significance of the gift and the influence of the giver. With the marriage of his third wife, Cotton Mather assumed the debts of his wife’s previous husband. Eventually overwhelmed and

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<sup>498</sup> June 29, 1770, *Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. I*, 53.

<sup>499</sup> *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*.

<sup>500</sup> Sep. 10, 1771, Stiles even tracked the contribution level of various parishioners from another congregation in which the pastor “necessitated to meditate a Removal for want of Subsistence. The Chh & their pastor were mutually & deeply affected.” By doubling his salary, and agreeing to mark “their Subscription weekly at the Contribution: ...signed by thirty hands,” they managed to convince their pastor to stay, *Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. I*, 159, 173.

desperate, he even contemplated leaving the ministry figuring that within “a fortnight I must either be lodg’d in the Prison, or forc’d into a private Withdrawal. Then 4 principal Gentlemen” from the church came and reassured him that they would “extricate me out of my Difficulties.”<sup>501</sup> Mather discreetly avoided naming names but clearly indicated that only “a part” of his congregation came to his aid. After previously lambasting his entire congregation as a whole, he changed his attitude toward “a part” of the flock. His gratitude was not offered to the entire congregation.<sup>502</sup>

Throughout the eighteenth century, the desperation of a minister inflated the value of a gift that provided pecuniary relief. These “principal Gentlemen” arrived at a crucial moment of Mather’s life. In addition to his financial woes and the recent inoculation crisis, he continued to suffer under his wife’s erratic behavior and local slander.<sup>503</sup> Even though the gift of nearly two hundred pounds appears to have been offered out of compassion and goodwill, the ability and willingness of wealthy members to rescue their minister in his time of need necessarily complicated the relationship between parishioner and pastor. Even when freely and sincerely offered, a gift from those under authority to one in authority could create a sense of indebtedness. As Lyman Beecher noted, a successful ministry required a minister to maintain a degree of “disinterestedness” with

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<sup>501</sup> Mar. 30, 1724, *Cotton Mather Diary*, Vol. II, 713-714.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid, 739, July 6, 1724 -“A part of the Flock, have newly signalized their Kindness to me, and shown me the Kindness of GOD in privately collecting more than two hundred pounds to pay a Debt of my wife’s former husband, which I inconsiderately had made my own;” Similarly, at the other end of the century, Lyman Beecher’s congregation also rescued him from near bankruptcy by raising \$3000 and offering nearly two years salary, *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher*, Vol. I, 286.

<sup>503</sup> Mar. 1724, Some of his enemies “on purpose to affront me, call their Negro’s, by the Name of Cotton Mather...;” *ibid*, 706, Aug. 13-18, 1724, Mather’s wife stormed out of the house in the middle of the night to lodge with the neighbors but coming back later to apologize. Mather recorded that “She expresses the greatest Hatred and Contempt” to me and seemed intent on doing “all she can to ruine my Esteem in the World, and the Success of my Ministry,” *Cotton Mather Diary*, Vol. II, 749-755.

their parishioners.<sup>504</sup> A disinterested ministry required intense personal discipline to keep a sense of obligation from generating favoritism toward those who had provided unsolicited but necessary financial relief.

The effort in maintaining a disinterested ministry was complicated by the clergy's social position in society. In the deferential society of the eighteenth century, the wealthy and prestigious associated regularly with one another. Particularly early in the century, ministers fell into this category and developed deep friendships with those who controlled significant amounts of revenue. Judge Samuel Sewall did not hold membership at the Mathers' church in Boston, yet his respect for them was well known.<sup>505</sup> Sewall often entertained ministers and other notable leaders in the community in his home and in local taverns.<sup>506</sup> Frequently, there would be more clergy represented on Sewall's guest list than any other occupation. He usually recorded all whom he treated to dinner, but at times, the group was so large that he struggled to remember everyone who was there.<sup>507</sup> This network of notables was so significant that Sewall's own minister felt slighted when he did not receive an invitation from Sewall.<sup>508</sup> The minister clearly expected to be included among the ranks of other prominent members of the community.

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<sup>504</sup> *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, Vol. I*, 383.

<sup>505</sup> Nov. 28, 1710, When Sewall seemed to side with the Mathers in a certain matter, Sewall's own pastor angrily accused him of being too loyal to the Mathers, suggesting that "If the Mathers order'd it, I would shoot him thorow," *The Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674-1729, Vol. I and II*, 646.

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid*, 933, Oct. 30, 1719,

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid*, 962-964, Jan. 3, 1721, Sewall's generosity appears to be genuine; 970, Jan. 24, 1704, although he was extremely conscious of his finances, at one point he places them in the care of his wife claiming that she possessed the better "faculty than (Sewall) at managing Affairs;" 496, Oct. 24, 1720, Later in life, he rebuffed the woman he was courting when she hinted that he should keep a coach and wear a wig. Sewall remarked that he did not want to end up like his neighbor who had recently been sent to debtors' prison.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid*, 646, 761.

The Lyndes represented another influential family of wealth in the colonies. Benjamin Lynde's attention to his finances is visible in his journal where he tracked his spending habits. As one of the more powerful members of the Salem congregation, he used his money to further his own convictions and designs. Although his regular weekly contribution amounted to "5s," he readily contributed ten times that amount to the expenses of the ecclesiastical council called to deal with accusations against the current pastor.<sup>509</sup> He not only led the charge to dismiss Samuel Fisk, he led the committee to secure John Sparhawk as the replacement. Sparhawk then became such a favorite that in his will, Lynde left him "as a token of my love and regard to him, one hundred pounds, old tenor."<sup>510</sup> Like Sewall, the Lynde family represented a powerful force in their community. They held strong convictions and possessed the resources to accomplish their own designs.<sup>511</sup> The connection and influence that wealthy members maintained with ministers muddied the objectivity of some clergy.

Even if clergy opted to remain free from association with influential members, they needed to understand which families held prominence within the congregation. Despite the equitable nature of Congregationalism, most congregations functioned within a well-understood social hierarchy. Even in Congregational churches where members theoretically shared in ecclesiastical governance and historians seek the seedbed of democracy, pew assignments punctuated one's social and economic standing. Among the many fierce disputes in which congregations engaged, one of the most contentious issues involved seating arrangements in the meetinghouse. In 1735, the town of Harvard

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<sup>509</sup> *The Diaries of Benjamin Lynde and Benjamin Lynde, Jr.*, 43.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

spent many town meetings wrangling over the correct pew assignments. They not only disputed which pews were most favorably positioned, they struggled to agree on whether seating should be determined solely on member contributions or whether personal character should have any influence on the ranking.<sup>512</sup> Despite the “democratic stirrings” of Congregationalism, pew assignments regularly displayed and reinforced the social status of each individual within the community.<sup>513</sup> Under this system, pastors could easily locate members who carried the most power and influence within the congregation. These members dared not be ignored. Clergy noticed the effects of influential families on their fellow clergy and some lamented the power displayed by wealthy and prestigious members. Stiles recorded an account of “the powerful families of Hall” who “forced some of Dana’s members...to renounce Dr. Dana and his church.”<sup>514</sup> Whether or not a pastor succumbed to the influence and power of prominent family systems in the church, a successful ministry required a savvy awareness of the power brokers within the congregation.

Eighteenth-century clergy held a particularly unique position in New England society. No other colonial profession exerted authority over the very group of people

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<sup>512</sup> Pew assignments often generated congregational strife that ranked next to meetinghouse location. In 1735, the town of Harvard spent at least four town meetings wrangling over pew assignments trying to determine which seat on the floor should outrank the front seat of the balcony and whether assignments should be determined “only and wholly according to what men have payed toward Building the Meeting House,” or whether some measure of personal character should also bear consideration, Norse, *The History of the Town of Harvard*, 188.

<sup>513</sup> Rhys Isaac, in his work on Virginia, emphasizes that the wealthy not only sat in the foremost seats, they also liked to arrive late in order to parade to their seats of honor in a more public fashion, Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*, (Chapel Hill, 1982); Even after the revolution, Beecher combated this perpetual conflict by instituting pew rotation in order to keep the peace, *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, Vol. I*, 373.

<sup>514</sup> 1770, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, 198.

upon whom they also depended for their livelihood. Merchants, physicians, and lawyers, could choose to withhold services from those who refused to render payment.

Congregational clergy required the consent of their constituents to empower their authority. This would be the model for the new Republic's system of authority, but the difference for clergy lay in the financial connection. With congregations in charge of the purse strings, ministerial authority rested in large part on the flock's goodwill.

The relationship between clergy and influential parishioners and its negotiation could not be accurately described as the dependence between patron and client.<sup>515</sup> But the social implications between lender and debtor applied to clergy and those who could meet their pecuniary needs. Gordon Wood maintains that the practice of the colonial form of "deference" was "not a mere habit of mind; it had real economic and social force behind it."<sup>516</sup> As inflation and delinquent salaries weakened the clergy's financial superiority, their prestige in the community was also undermined. Deference toward religious leaders among the first generation of New England colonists may not have originated from economic force, but the financial superiority of the clergy had bolstered traditional forms of deference.

Ultimately, the colonial clergy needed to manage their degree of dependence upon the flock. Ministerial contracts defined the legal relationship and theoretically, contracts promised congregational compliance. Yet congregations utilized a myriad of opportunities to limit the authority of their chosen minister. The flock's social interaction

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<sup>515</sup> Gordon Wood describes the dependence relationships between patron and client in colonial America. Although he does not specifically address clergy issues, his discussion of influential families who create networks of dependence is relevant, Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 57-76.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid*, 63.

with its pastor both empowered and circumscribed his ministerial authority. The less dependence a minister had upon his congregation, the less control they held over him. However, this fact would eventually backfire on colonial clergy. Late in the century, ministers negotiated their authority to gain more autonomy over their ministerial assignments but the weakened bond between short-term ministers and their congregations would take a toll on ministerial authority and overall respect for the office of the ministry.

## Section 4. The Decline of Clerical Authority

### 4. 1The Loss of Educational Superiority and the Itinerant Invasion

“...beginners in religion...should study themselves more, and they will see less reason to think their disposition to exhort and teach to be from the SPIRIT OF GOD.”<sup>517</sup>

Although a constant theme of lay-clerical negotiation existed throughout the eighteenth century, the process was subject to the ever-changing social and economic conditions of the developing colonies. In Connecticut alone, the colonial population increased by three and one half times during the first three decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>518</sup> Concentrated case studies reveal the effects of the colonial population “explosion” on communities. The early part of the eighteenth century ushered in higher birth rates while mortality rates fell sharply.<sup>519</sup> The consequence of the increasing population spurred increasing geographic mobility of the crowded populace. Greven found the third generation of colonists more likely than their predecessors to leave their town of origin.<sup>520</sup> Communities not only accommodated greater numbers of people, the populace itself became shuffled as subsequent generations were forced to seek available

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<sup>517</sup> Charles Chauncy, *Enthusiasm Described and Caution'd against. A Sermon Preach'd at the Old Brick Meeting-House in Boston*, ( Boston, 1742), 22.

<sup>518</sup> During the last three decades of the seventeenth century the population of Connecticut had increased by 58 percent, but the next three decades showed growth of 380 percent, Richard Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765*, (Harvard University Press, 1967), 83, 136.

<sup>519</sup> Philip Greven, *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts*, (Ithaca, 1970), 124; similar conclusions are reached in John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony*, (New York, 1970), 124.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid*, 123.

land. Concurrent with the population growth, new churches were founded at an increasing rate.<sup>521</sup> By the 1740s, the growth in clergy had outpaced growth in churches.<sup>522</sup> Complicating these developments, during the first four decades of the eighteenth century, New England currency drastically slipped in value driving up commodity prices and devaluing salaried positions.<sup>523</sup>

These social, economic, and political developments of the eighteenth-century transformed colonial New England and interrupted relationship patterns of the previous generations. The lay-clerical relationship necessarily adjusted as the strain of population growth, geographic expansion, and religious competition stripped the clergy of their traditional pillars of their authority. Although ministerial authority still required implicit and explicit negotiation, the social developments altered the tools of negotiation available to both congregations and clergy.

The social context of Congregational ministry late in the century differed significantly from its context nearly one hundred years earlier. Religion did not lose its prominence in colonial society but the ministerial hegemony of Congregational clergy visibly weakened by the end of the century. There is a general consensus on the decline of ministerial authority but historians who have charted the decline tend to differ on its

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<sup>521</sup> “21 in 1700s, 22 in the 1710s, 83 in the 1720s, and 94 in the 1730s,” James Schmotter, “The Irony of Clerical Professionalism: New England’s Congregational Ministers and the Great Awakening,” *WMQ 3<sup>rd</sup> Ser.*, Vol. 31, (1979) 158.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid*, Figure 1., 162.

<sup>523</sup> Schmotter points to the price of wheat more than doubling in Boston between 1720 and 1740. Other prices can be found in Roger W. Weiss, “The Issue of Paper Money in the American Colonies, 1720-1774,” *Journal of Economic History*, 30 (1970), 777-778.

causative factors.<sup>524</sup> The declining influence of Congregational clergy in the eighteenth century coupled with the colonial revolt against British authority present an appealing connection that has been explored by many worthy scholars.<sup>525</sup> In this view, the colonists are usually portrayed as an increasingly independent lot for whom the church became a training ground for political activism. After challenging ecclesiastical tyranny within the church, specifically during the events of the Great Awakening, they were well prepared to organize against the political tyranny of Great Britain. While the sequence of these developments points toward maturing democratic tendencies among the colonists, this interpretation depends a bit too heavily on the authoritarian nature of colonial clergy early in the century. Early colonial clergy may have operated within the social framework of an aristocracy, but clergy did not exercise unlimited tyranny over their parishioners; their position remained subject to the consent of the governed.

Contrary to the view of an authoritarian clergy, James Cooper contends that colonial clergy encouraged lay initiative and thought. Ministers regularly taught

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<sup>524</sup>Discussions of religious declension can be found in the following works: Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, (Harvard University Press, 1954); Darrett B. Rutman, "God's Bridge Falling Down 'Another Approach' to New England Puritanism Assayed," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 19 (1962); David D. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century*, (New York, 1974); Emory Elliot, *Power in the Pulpit in Puritan New England*, (Princeton, NJ, 1975); Edmund Morgan "New England Puritanism: Another Approach," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 18 (1966); Stephen Foster, *The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture, 1570-1700*, (Chapel Hill, 1991); Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture*, (Chapel Hill, 1988); Donald M. Scott, *From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry, 1750-1850*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978); Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>525</sup> Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution*, (Harvard University Press, 1966); Patricia U Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society and Politics in Colonial America*, (Oxford University Press, 1986); Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, and *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England*, (Yale University Press, 1977); James F. Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties: the Congregationalists in Colonial Massachusetts*, (Oxford University Press, 1999).

Congregational principles and laymen absorbed their teaching. According to Cooper, the reason for the decline of ministerial authority was the “increasingly profound understanding of Congregational practices and principle attained by the members – and what they did with it.”<sup>526</sup> “What changed...was the laity’s sense of its own authority in church affairs.”<sup>527</sup> Cooper is correct to describe a less submissive laity than previous historians have noticed, but his explanation for their increasingly assertive behavior is less convincing. Cooper’s argument suggests that there must have been an *uninformed* laity earlier in the colonial period that lacked comprehension of their own influence in church matters and needed the clergy to explain their various powers to them. In reality, the first generations that lived through the earliest practices of Congregationalism on American soil likely held a better understanding of their privileges than later generations. Rather, it seems more probable that other factors contributed to increasing lay initiative, which in turn limited ministerial authority.

#### 4.1.1 *Decline among the Educated Clergy*

The early puritan divines enjoyed unprecedented educational and ecclesiastical superiority over their parishioners. College-trained in the liberal arts, ministers often functioned as the most knowledgeable and devout individuals in their communities. The establishment of Harvard and Yale colleges promised to train ministerial candidates and perpetuate the clergy’s hegemony. Yet by midcentury, most of Harvard and Yale

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<sup>526</sup> Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties*, 120.

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid*, 121.

graduates were no longer headed for the ministry; more scholars were choosing careers in medicine and law.<sup>528</sup> Analysis of Harvard and Yale graduates in the eighteenth century reveals that while overall enrollment steadily rose, the number of those who chose the pulpit steadily declined. During the 1690s, 53 percent of Harvard's graduates entered the ministry and with the founding of Yale College, this number would peak at 61 percent. But by 1760, only 33 percent of all graduates entered the ministry.<sup>529</sup> While the number of graduates choosing the pulpit steadily decreased, those who entered the legal and medical professions increased.<sup>530</sup>

The clergy themselves lamented the more "Harvard men" were not joining the ranks of the colonial clergy.<sup>531</sup> Seasoned ministers worried that "our *Bright Young Men*, who have had a Liberal Education bestowed upon them" were forsaking the ministry in pursuit of secular professions.<sup>532</sup> Ministers suspected that the poor financial support of the clergy discouraged young men from pursuing a ministerial career. Thomas Symmes lamented that the "scanty maintenance" and the need to find other "ways to procure a Livelyhood, or live SORDIDLY, & beneath the Dignity of their Office," was

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<sup>528</sup> James Schmotter, "Ministerial Careers in Eighteenth-Century New England: The Social Context, 1700-1760," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Winter (1975), 249-267; Daniel Calhoun, *Professional Lives in America*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1965). Schmotter's work covers the first half of the eighteenth century while Calhoun's analysis spans the second half of the century.

<sup>529</sup> Schmotter, "Ministerial Careers," 251.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid*, 267.

<sup>531</sup> John Blunt in a letter from the 1740s, *Provincial Papers*, XXXIII, 286-287 in Clifford Kenyon Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...: with bibliographical and other notes*, Vols. VIII, (Oxford University Press, 1937), 115.

<sup>532</sup> Thomas Symmes, *The People's Interest in One Article Considered and Exhibited*, (Boston, 1724), 27.

discouraging young men from pursuing the ministry.<sup>533</sup> The currency crises throughout the eighteenth century took a toll on ministerial salaries. Congregations tended to excuse their non-compliance to clerical salaries on the collective effects of inflation. Clergy remained unconvinced. Peter Thatcher contended that ordinary taxpayers actually benefited from inflation.<sup>534</sup> But when ministers no longer “stood well with his people,” congregations failed to meet their contractual obligations.<sup>535</sup> The uncertainty of ministerial salaries offered little incentive to new ministerial recruits.

But beyond their pecuniary concerns, it is also possible that the troubled state of many existing clergy also failed to entice college graduates to their ranks. As early as 1739, Parkman noted that no less than “Seven Towns in that Neighbourhood had ministers guilty of Scandalous offences.”<sup>536</sup> William Bentley’s extensive diary, late in the century, continued to delineate many clergy in a state of conflict with their congregations.<sup>537</sup>

For Peter Thatcher, the “broken” state of ministers at Cambridge was enough to cause him to pass on an opportunity to move to a more prestigious position. Thatcher had settled in Maldon in 1770. However, his skills as an orator preceded him and soon the wealthier First Church of Cambridge invited him to come in hopes that his arrival

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<sup>533</sup> Ibid.

<sup>534</sup> Peter Thatcher, *Reply to Strictures of Mr. J. S.*, (Boston, 1789), 10.

<sup>535</sup> [James Sullivan], *Strictures on the Rev. Mr. Thatchers Pamphlet*, (Boston, 1784), 7.

<sup>536</sup> April 10, 1739, Francis G. Walett, ed., *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782 First Part Three volumes in One, 1719-1755*, (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, 1974), 62.

<sup>537</sup> D.D., William Bentley, *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts, Vol. 1-4, 1784 - 1819*, (Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1962).

“would prevent the opening of the Church of England there, or the separation of the College from the congregation.” Thatcher sought the advice of his good friend, Jeremy Belknap, who offered a tepid warning regarding the “mediocrity of principles, temper, and conduct” in the area. In the end, Thatcher passed up the offer stating “Malden was more agreeable to my inclinations by far than Cambridge.” Thatcher explained that in Malden he was his “own master, there [in Cambridge] I must be everybody’s servant and feel myself surrounded with broken ministers!”<sup>538</sup> If the state of the ministry in the College neighborhood was this unattractive to seasoned and talented clergy like Thatcher, one can hardly be surprised that the ranks of newly trained clergy were diminishing.

But although most of the initial graduates tended to become clergy, the colleges also began to experience noticeable deficiencies in the personal piety of its students.<sup>539</sup> As early as 1719, one Harvard student was expelled for fornication and by 1729, another student began a club designed to improve the moral character of the student body.<sup>540</sup> The constitution of the Philomusarian Club described the moral climate of Harvard.

Whereas the Honourable & Laudable Designs (viz The Promotion of Learning & Good Manners) for which This Illustrious Academy was founded Have Been of Late Subverted And Not Only So But Conversation, which is the Basis of Friendship The fundamental Principle of Society The Great Prerogative of Mankind & Every Way Adapted to

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<sup>538</sup> Peter Thatcher to Jeremy Belknap, Mass. Hist. Soc., *Collections*, 6<sup>th</sup> Ser., IV, 243-246.

<sup>539</sup> For a discussion on college riots and misbehavior see Kathryn McDaniel Moore, “Freedom and Constraint in Eighteenth Century Harvard,” *The Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 47, No. 6. (Nov.-Dec. 1976), 649-659; Leon Jackson, “The Rights of Man and the Rites of Youth: Fraternity and Riot at Eighteenth-Century Harvard,” in Roger L. Geiger, ed., *The American College in the Nineteenth Century*, (Nashville, 2000); throughout the 15 volumes, Shipton offers a summary of college events for each class year in addition to his individual accounts of misbehavior, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College... Vols. I-XV*.

<sup>540</sup> Benjamin Shattuck, Class of 1709, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College... Vol. V*, 492.

the Dignity of Humanity, Is Now att a Very Low Ebb, the Necessary  
Consequence, of Which is the Decay of Learning and Civility, On the  
Contrary Vice and folly Are In Their Zenith....<sup>541</sup>

Unruly students can be found in nearly any given year from Harvard or Yale but in the 1760s and 70s, misbehavior among Harvard scholars abounded. In 1767, John Barnard Swett, was “rusticated for his part in keeping a woman in a college chamber.”<sup>542</sup> William Scales reflected his arrival at college the same year; “...it seemed to me, that I was in the midst of young devils, Nor could I perceive the least spark of sobriety among the Collegians; Profaneness and obscenity were their chief conversation...”<sup>543</sup> Scales claimed that “waggery, dissipation and romance” comprised the atmosphere of Harvard college from his entry in 1767 until his graduation in 1771.<sup>544</sup>

Scales’ report, given later in life, may be tainted with personal rancor but his depiction of the collegiate atmosphere concurs with others. Anxious to see a reformation of his Alma Mater, Stephen Peabody offered his criticism without malice; yet his critique confirms the disorderly behavior of college students. Peabody described “a peculiar Levity, and Carelessness upon the Attendance of Prayers and Lectures” which he believed not only “astonished” incoming undergraduates, but “contributed very much to the Discredit of our Alma Mater.”<sup>545</sup> He recounted students who neglected to properly

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<sup>541</sup> Philemon Robbins goes on to detail various “vices” and “follies” in this constitution found in *Publ. Colonial Soc. Mass. XVIII*, 80-82 as quoted in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard...*, Vol. VIII, 616-617.

<sup>542</sup> Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College... Vols. XVII*, 635.

<sup>543</sup> William Scales, *Priestcraft Exposed*, (Danvers, 1781), 15 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard...*, Vol. XVII, 627.

<sup>544</sup> William Scales, *The Quintessence of Universal History; or, An Epitominal History of the Christian Era, A Poem*, (Massachusetts, 1806), iii.

observe “publick Days.” They arrived “disguised with Liquor, and the major Part act more like Madmen than like Rationals.”<sup>546</sup> Peabody had no personal dispute with the college but feared that without reformation, the unseemly behavior of students would become fodder for the enemies of Harvard.

Peter Thatcher’s letters to Jeremy Belknap reveal additional mayhem on the college campus.<sup>547</sup> Thatcher details a “commotion” or a “rebellion” by undergraduates who objected to the discipline of their Harvard tutors. What may have begun as an innocent attempt by the tutors to correct laxity among students toward their daily recitations, escalated into a near riot in 1768. When tutors announced that they would not excuse any student from reciting without prior permission and then punished those who were absent, students openly defied their tutors. They “hiss’d & clap’d, &c., & in the evening M<sup>r</sup>. Danforth’s window were broke by some persons unknown.”<sup>548</sup> In an effort to elicit a confession from one student who had been discovered locking Mr. Willard and his class in the chapel during recitation, the tutor “shut up” the student in his study for the entire school day without “fire or victuals.”<sup>549</sup> Students responded with more broken windows and threatening letters posted on the tutor’s door warning him to leave “the society.”<sup>550</sup> At this point, the college President and professors got involved but even their

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<sup>545</sup> Phillips Family Mss., 1771, as quoted in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, 210.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid.

<sup>547</sup> Peter Thatcher to Jeremy Belknap, Milton, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1768, *Collections of the M.H.S., 6<sup>th</sup> ser., Vol., IV.*, 25-28.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid.

authority was defied. The “scholars” attempted to negotiate with their superiors by refusing to meet with them unless their punishment was abated. The administration held firm and yet another night of disorder ensued. According to Thatcher, the “guard of y<sup>e</sup> town” was necessitated to protect the President and “other governors of y<sup>e</sup> college.”<sup>551</sup> The next morning, after more fruitless negotiation, “104 or 5 of the scholars went down and gave up their chambers, all y<sup>e</sup> 3 junior classes except 40.”<sup>552</sup>

Regardless of where the fault lay in this disturbance, the students’ open defiance of authority seems key. Initially, the students displayed resistance only to their immediate superiors but the situation rapidly escalated into complete disrespect for the highest level of their educational authority. By all earlier accounts of student behavior during this decade, this was not a well-disciplined or respectful student body. Any attempts to correct their behavior were challenged.

The reputation of Harvard students spread into the community and potentially affected their ability to recruit students. One father, concerned for his children’s education, warned his son about the influence of a Harvard education. His reservations concerned the resistance of Harvard scholars to authority and “an imperious troublesome command.”<sup>553</sup> He encouraged his son to “avoid being tainted with that Sullen Stiff

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<sup>551</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid, Thatcher notes that the senior class was not involved because the initial offensive discipline regarding recitations did not apply to them.

<sup>553</sup> Dec. 1, 1740, Jean Paul Mascarene Letter Book (Mass. Hist. Soc.) as quoted in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College... Vols. XI, 35.*

pedanatick pride I have often remark't affects those who have been long att Your Colledge and which appears in their gait their manners, and their...conversation.”<sup>554</sup>

Yet, the criticism given to higher education was ultimately directed beyond simply the behavior of the students. The administration of these institutions also found themselves under public scrutiny. Some of the misbehavior reflected upon the leadership of the college. John Barnard Swett, who had been disciplined the previous year for having a woman in his college chamber, was not only closely associated with the President prior to his arrival at Harvard College, but also had been living with President Holyoke.<sup>555</sup> The character of Harvard faculty as well as their students suffered a loss of reputation in these years. Even Thatcher, who managed to avoid personal involvement in the “commotion” of 1768, offered a subtle criticism of President Holyoke, by noting that Holyoke denied the students’ demands with “his usual haughtiness.”<sup>556</sup>

Harvard was not the only college managing riotous students. Yale College also dealt with an increasingly disorderly and disrespectful student body. On March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1782, “20 or 25 Scholars went into a great Tumult and Riot, in contempt of a public Judgment & Punishm<sup>t</sup>, inflicted in the Chapel for Damages done to the Hall and Buttery.

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<sup>554</sup> Ibid.

<sup>555</sup> Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College... Vols. XVII*, 635.

<sup>556</sup> Peter Thatcher to Jeremy Belknap, Milton, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1768, *Collections of the M.H.S., 6<sup>th</sup> ser., Vol., IV*, 27.

Upon which they collected in a body for the Demolition of Old College.”<sup>557</sup> Yale students also resisted discipline and expressed their rage in violence.

Yale President, Ezra Stiles, took immediate action expelling three students the next day. Two days later, he expelled another and recorded, “12 rusticated, admonished and otherwise settled the affair for the present.”<sup>558</sup> Yet Stiles was not fully satisfied with the result. “Deeply distressed” over the events, he brooded over whether the punishment had been severe enough. Worried that his “mildness” had “disserved [the] government” of the college, he determined to administer a “Conviction of resolute & firm Discipline” to the scholars.<sup>559</sup> He recorded his intention to convince the students that “we dare inflict the highest Punishments.”<sup>560</sup> For Stiles at least, it seemed that this new generation of scholars would require a firm hand. This was not the deferential generation, which attended the colleges earlier in the century. This latter group of scholars was prone to challenge educational authority.

Another more subtle indication of the students’ devotion to the ministry might be noticed in the questions debated by seniors upon graduation. Each year, a different question was selected for the seniors to debate. Several times in the 1780s, Yale seniors disputed “Whether one should wait till he has an Assurance of his Conversion, before he

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<sup>557</sup> March 26, 1782, Franklin Bowditch Dexter, ed., *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, ed. under the Authority of the Corporation of Yale University, Volume III, January 1, 1782 – May 6, 1795*, (New York, 1901), 12.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>560</sup> Ibid.

enters the Work of the Ministry?”<sup>561</sup> Seven years later, another crop of Yale graduates discussed virtually the same question, “Whether a Man may go into the Ministry know<sup>g</sup> himself to be irregenerate & unconverted?”<sup>562</sup> If this question were an irrefutable certainty to each and every senior in this post-revolutionary generation, it would likely have held little interest as a debate topic. Rather, it would appear that at least for some within the graduating classes, conversion might not have been a necessary element of the Congregational ministry.

Odd as this might be, interest in the ministry from unconverted candidates must have continued to persist throughout the century. In 1789, William Bentley gave a puzzled response to someone inquiring about the profession. Bentley admitted in his journal that he hardly knew how to reply. “I should never advise you to enter the ministry, unless you had rationally examined Christianity. And after such examination I should not recommend preaching, unless you was a firm believer.”<sup>563</sup> Furthermore, Bentley warned that a minister must be “able to abandon without reluctance all worldly interest.”<sup>564</sup> Bentley’s journal entry offers little detail regarding the motives of his inquirer and Bentley does not specifically label him as unconverted. But the tone and direction of Bentley’s response indicates that the man did not profess a personal conversion.

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<sup>561</sup> March 26, 1782, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, Vol. 3, 12.

<sup>562</sup> March 3, 1789, *ibid*, 345.

<sup>563</sup> *The Diary of William Bentley*, Vol. I, 121.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid*, 122.

While some unconverted candidates occasionally gravitated toward Congregational ministry, as a whole the clergy increasingly struggled to attract the most devout and educated young men into its ranks toward the end of the century.<sup>565</sup> Contrary to the earlier generations of clergy, post-revolutionary ministers were less likely to maintain educational superiority over their constituents. With more and more college graduates choosing to practice law and medicine, the clergy were losing their near-monopoly on legal and medical advice. The educated clergy were increasingly forced to share their social status with the rising secular professions of law and medicine.<sup>566</sup> Thus any prestige and deference, which earlier clerical generations received from their educational superiority, slowly dissipated throughout the eighteenth century.

#### 4.1.2 *Invasion of Uneducated Clergy and Itinerants*

Another factor contributing to fewer college-educated ministerial candidates involved the burgeoning amount of uneducated, self-educated and itinerant ministers in the eighteenth century. Many of these ministers were not necessarily illiterate or unlearned, but merely chose to avoid the orthodox ministerial track of Congregational clergy. William Tennant resisted the conventional track of Harvard and Yale education, by setting up his own Log College to the consternation of the most Congregational

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<sup>565</sup> Colleges ranked their new recruits according to their status and promise as a scholar. Early in the century, ministers tended to be ranked in the upper half of their class. Schmotter notices that this trend steadily decreased suggesting that the ministry was failing to attract the most promising and talented youths in New England, Schmotter, "Ministerial Careers," 251-254.

<sup>566</sup> Calhoun compares the social status and development of the clergy, lawyers, and physicians in the latter half of the eighteenth century, Daniel Calhoun, *Professional Lives in America*.

clergy.<sup>567</sup> While Harvard and Yale struggled to recruit devout and “bright” young scholars interested in a clerical career, pious and passionate young men discovered other routes into life-long preaching careers.

Despite the dominance of Congregationalism in eighteenth-century New England, Congregational clergy did not operate in a total religious vacuum. They were well accustomed to the presence of Anglicans, Quakers, and Baptists who competed with Congregationalism for adherents. In the colony of Massachusetts, the towns of Hampton, Salem, Kittery, Falmouth, and Sandwich all boasted Quaker meetings by 1670.<sup>568</sup> In 1665, Baptists established a church in Charlestown and settled in Boston by 1679.<sup>569</sup> Anglicans founded Boston’s King’s Chapel in 1689. Anglicans, in particular, presented a viable alternative to several Yale students who began to question the Presbyterian ordination in the 1720s.<sup>570</sup> The defection of Yale’s rector, Benjamin Cutler, and several former students to the Church of England in 1722, rattled the orthodox college as well as perspective congregations. Following these unsettling desertions from Congregationalism, it was not uncommon for congregations to insert a clause into a ministerial contract requiring a minister to repay the settlement funds if he ever declared for the Episcopacy.

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<sup>567</sup> William Tennant, a Presbyterian minister from Scotland, founded his own theological school, dubbed the “Log College.” It would serve as the precursor to Princeton College and produce a number of revivalists such as Gilbert Tennant who contributed significantly to the Great Awakening.

<sup>568</sup> David C. Brown, “The Keys of the Kingdom: Excommunication in Colonial Massachusetts,” *The New England Quarterly*, 1994, 560.

<sup>569</sup> Ibid.

<sup>570</sup> Franklin Bowditch Dexter, M.A., *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College with the Annals of the College History, Vol. 1*, (Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1885).

Originating within the tradition of Congregationalism, a revitalization of religion began to emerge within the Connecticut valley during the 1730s.<sup>571</sup> The rather short-lived religious stirring, which would eventually become known as the Great Awakening, initially did not strike anyone as an extraordinary event. Most ministers hoped to incite some measure of heightened religious vitality during the course of their ministry.<sup>572</sup> Some called them “harvests,” some called them “revivals,” but all ministers understood the concept of heightened spiritual awareness, which manifested itself not only in new conversions but also in increased spiritual concern among the converted.<sup>573</sup> At the outset, other Congregational clergy supported this work and encouraged similar movements within their own congregations.<sup>574</sup> In fact, one of the major differences between these

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<sup>571</sup> Seminal works on the Great Awakening include: Edwin Scott Gaustad, *The Great Awakening in New England*, (Harper and Row, 1957); C. C. Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism in New England: 1740-1800*, (Yale University Press, 1962); J. M. Bumsted and John E. Van de Wetering, *What Must I Do To Be Saved? The Great Awakening in Colonial America*, (Hinsdale, Ill., 1976); William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977*, (Chicago, 1978); Patricia Tracy, *Jonathan Edwards, Pastor: Religion and Society in Eighteenth-Century Northampton*, (Hill and Wang, New York, 1979). Recent scholarship has emphasized the communication strategies of revivalists; Michael J. Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England's Revival Tradition in Its British Context*, (Oxford University Press, 1991); Harry Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism*, (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1991); Frank Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1745*, (Princeton University Press, 1999). The thrust of some revisionist studies has been to correct the “exaggerated” impact of the Great Awakening: Jon Butler, “Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction,” *JAH* 69, (September 1982), 305-25, and *Awash in the Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1990); Joseph Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards: Religious Tradition and American Culture*, (Chapel Hill, 1995); Frank Lambert, “*Inventing the Great Awakening*,” (Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>572</sup> Jonathan Edwards recognized the spiritual “work” as the “same that was wrought in my venerable predecessor’s (Stoddard’s) days,” Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative*, C. C. Goen, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: The Great Awakening*, (Yale University Press, 1972), 190.

<sup>573</sup> Solomon Stoddard documented several different “harvests” during his ministerial career early in the eighteenth century. At the end of the eighteenth century, Beecher attested that his “My revivals were slower in coming, more gradual in their movement, but for that reason I held on strong and did not flag,” Charles Beecher, ed., *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D., Vol. I*, (New York, 1865), 216.

<sup>574</sup> At the request of another minister, Edwards first penned his account of the revivals, which other ministers read to their congregations and eventually published.

revivals and previous “harvests” was not theological, but geographical in nature.<sup>575</sup>

Ministers noted that “in former times of the pouring out of the spirit...the neighboring towns all around continued unmoved,” but this time, reports of similar stirrings emerged from nearby towns, the middle colonies, the southern colonies, and even England.<sup>576</sup> The scope of these revivals set them apart.<sup>577</sup>

Most Congregational clergy still did not sense any threat to their hegemony when the fiery George Whitefield arrived in Boston. Whitefield was invited and welcomed by many eminent Congregational ministers in New England and initially found many pulpits open to him. Whitefield’s dynamic and unorthodox delivery entranced thousands who turned out to hear his sermons. But the same straightforward manner, which served him so well in the pulpit, later served to alienate Congregational clergy when he published his journal penned during his New England travels. Whitefield’s concern for Boston’s “unconverted ministers” (whom he was “persuaded...talk[ed] of an unknown and unfelt

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<sup>575</sup> The theological issues of the Awakening have been well analyzed by many worthy historians. My intention is not to dismiss the reality of theological differences introduced by revivalists but simply to concentrate my examination on the social dynamics of intruding revivalists who threatened the established clergy’s traditional position of authority. For that matter, if the theological differences introduced by Whitefield and Edwards were the primary complaint among Old Light ministers, then it is curious that Whitefield was not censured during his first tour in New England. Later in his career, his theology did not change; rather his criticism of the established clergy instigated his censure among Old Lights.

<sup>576</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative*, C. C. Goen, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: The Great Awakening*, 159.

<sup>577</sup> The scope of the mid-eighteenth-century revivals has been a point of disputation among colonial historians who contend that extent of the religious upheaval has been exaggerated, Butler, “Enthusiasm Described and Decried;” Lambert, *Inventing the Great Awakening; Pedlar in Divinity*; Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards*. Other historians have emphasized the scope of the transatlantic revivals and the revivalists’ innovative use communication techniques to further the movement, Harry Stout, “Religion, Communications, and the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 34 (1977), 519-41; Timothy D. Hall, *Contested Boundaries: Itinerancy and the Reshaping of the Colonial American Religious World*, (Duke University, 1994).

Christ”) offended many clergy, Boston ministers in particular.<sup>578</sup> Yet Whitefield was not alone in his opinion. In the wake of Whitefield’s preaching tour, Gilbert Tennant, James Davenport and Joseph Adams continued the work and leveled further accusations against an unconverted clergy in New England.

Completely convinced that the religious stirring was an act of God, revivalists deemed anyone who did not acknowledge it as such to be clearly lacking the spiritual discernment of a converted minister. Thomas Barnard of Newbury was forced to defend himself against Adam’s accusation that he was an “opposer of this blessed Reformation.”<sup>579</sup> Adams reasoned that Barnard’s lack of support for the Awakenings permitted only one alternative. Adams’ letter, despite its accusatory tone, truly reflects the sincerity of early revivalists who were completely convinced of their rightness and sought to win others over to their position. “I hope the Lord will convert you and every unconverted Minister, or turn you out of the Ministry. I hope the Lord will come with such Power, that none of you will be able to resist his glorious Work much longer. O that God would bless this Letter to your Conviction!”<sup>580</sup>

While Harvard students would be disputing the necessity of converted ministers later on in the century, in the 1730s and 1740s, established clergy did not appreciate being labeled as an unconverted minister.<sup>581</sup> As early as 1702, when an unnamed fellow minister approached Cotton Mather to confess his doubt about conversion, Mather

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<sup>578</sup> William V. Davis, *George Whitefield’s Journals, 1737-1741*, (Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1969), 471.

<sup>579</sup> Thomas Barnard, *A Letter from Mr. Joseph Adams*, (Boston, 1743), 3.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>581</sup> Mar. 26, 1782 and Mar. 3, 1789, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, 12, 345.

attempted to reassure him and downplay his concern. Mather recorded that “a very religious young Minister...visited me, desiring Advice, about his distress’d Case; for, he told me, he was fully *convinced of his being to this Day, an unconverted and unregenerate Creature.*”<sup>582</sup> At this point in Congregationalism, early in the century, conversion was a clear requirement for the office of the ministry. The young man, “distress’d” over his case, knew it. Cotton Mather, anxious to discount the seriousness of his doubts, knew it as well and hoped to settle the matter privately.

Given these expectations and requirements of colonial clergy, the accusations of Whitefield and other revivalists struck a sensitive spot among the established clergy. Several practicing Congregational clergy even claimed to have been converted under Awakening preachers.<sup>583</sup> Men could hardly be converted in the course of their preaching career unless they had previously been ministering in an unconverted state. Anxious to dismiss the reality of an unconverted ministry, opposers of the revivals could dismiss these conversions as mere “quickenings” of the Spirit or “enthusiasm,” which resulted in a heightened sense of religious vitality. But logically, reports of clerical conversions placed anti-revivalists in a difficult situation. For anti-revivalists to deny clerical conversions merely confirmed the revivalists’ accusations that indeed the anti-revivalists stood in need of their own conversion. But acknowledging clerical conversions forced anti-revivalists to admit that Whitefield and others were correct to notice unconverted ministers among the ranks of settled clergy.

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<sup>582</sup> Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Volume I, 1681 – 1708*, (Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York), 427-428.

<sup>583</sup> Already settled as pastor of Middleborough, Peter Thatcher recounted his conversion experience while listening to Gilbert Tennant’s preaching; Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. V., 321.

Yet clerical conversions represented more than the boasting of revivalists. Practicing clergy themselves attested to life changing conversion experiences occurring well into settled ministries spawned under the dynamic teaching of revivalists. During the Great Awakening and “not long after he settled in the Ministry,” Samuel Willard, “discovered a deep concern about his spiritual State, and became very solicitous for the Salvation of his own Soul.”<sup>584</sup> Following that moment of introspection, Willard “grew much,” “became more and more serious,” “circumspect” and “devout” in his ministry.<sup>585</sup> In a similar fashion, Jonathan Parsons, settled in Lyme, Connecticut, heard Whitefield preach in 1740 and reported a “reconversion.” Thereafter, Parsons would date that moment as his primary conversion experience, which resulted in a more effective manner of “presenting the Gospel to others.”<sup>586</sup> Even a congregation that did not favor the revivals noticed that their pastor, (who initially disapproved of the revivals) had grown “more close and affecting in his preaching” following Whitefield’s visit.<sup>587</sup>

As a supplemental movement contributing to localized ministry by heightening spiritual awareness, revivalism was welcomed. But when revivalists challenged the conversion of settled clergy, they questioned a fundamental element of Congregational ministry. At this point, they set themselves up in competition with the established ministers. The laity would now need to judge for themselves which ministers they

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<sup>584</sup> Thomas Prentice, Preface to Samuel Willard, *The minister of God approved...*, (Boston, 1743), iv.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid, v.

<sup>586</sup> Class of 1729, Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College, Vol. 1*, 389.

<sup>587</sup> Henry Flynt’s description of his pastor Nathaniel Appleton, Henry Flynt, Ms. Diary (Harvard College Library), Dec.-Jan., 1740/1 as quoted in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. V, 602.

deemed to be true converts. Revivalists initiated a competition with the settled clergy in conversion experiences.

What had begun as merely another short-lived “harvest” blossomed into a full-scale public fervor complete with vehement naysayers and enthusiastic supporters. In addition to the revivalists’ offensive accusations, the extraordinary physical manifestations, which often accompanied an “outpouring of the Holy Spirit,” produced both amazement and skepticism among Congregational clergy.<sup>588</sup> While the articulate Jonathan Edwards defended the revivals as a “Surprizing” work of God, the equally articulate and prolific Charles Chauncy led the charge to denounce the religious upheaval.<sup>589</sup> Rather than defending the clergy from the revivalists’ accusations, Chauncy chose to challenge the emotionally driven enthusiasm of the revivals. He presented the “cause” of enthusiasm as a bad temperament of blood and spirits; ‘tis properly a disease, a sort of madness” to which those who struggled with “melancholy” were particularly prone.<sup>590</sup> Chauncy pointed to the various effects of enthusiasm noticing that it tended to produce “a certain wildness...in their general look and air,” [it] “strangely loosens their tongues,” and “throws them into convulsions and distortions.”<sup>591</sup>

While Chauncy emphatically denied God’s hand in this work, his explanation for the sum of the revival effects fell a bit short of reason. Certainly, one could blame the

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<sup>588</sup> Goen, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*.

<sup>589</sup> Jonathan Edwards and Charles Chauncy would serve respectively as the unofficial leaders of the New Light and Old Light ministers.

<sup>590</sup> Charles Chauncy, *Enthusiasm Described and Caution’d Against*, Alan Heimert and Perry Miller, ed., *The Great Awakening*, (The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1967), 231.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*

emotional outbursts on an occasional bout of melancholy or mental instability but to claim mental instability had suddenly and simultaneously seized such a large group of people was less than convincing. Critics did attempt to explain enthusiasm by comparing it to certain distempers, but visitors from other regions who came to witness the astounding happenings soon put that theory to rest.<sup>592</sup> Chauncy did not even attempt to explain the reformed social behavior of the townspeople and their renewed interest in church meetings. He preferred to concentrate on errors and irregularities surrounding worship services.

One of the primary complaints against this new movement was the lack of orderliness that accompanied enthusiasm. Using the Apostle Paul's admonition to the Corinthian church regarding the order of their worship, Chauncy challenged the "kind of religious Phrenzy" evidenced at some meetings.<sup>593</sup> The "uncommon bodily motions" and verbal outbursts resulting in several people speaking at the same time created a disorderly atmosphere.<sup>594</sup> Chauncy particularly condemned the practice of "encouraging women, yea, girls to speak in the assemblies for religious worship" citing its opposition to scripture.<sup>595</sup>

The Awakening presented not only a new manner of preaching and exhortation; the revivals offered a new manner of lay response, which ultimately affected the order of worship. Congregational clergy no longer held a monopoly on religious decorum. Old

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<sup>592</sup> Goen, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 152.

<sup>593</sup> Chauncy, *Enthusiasm*, Heimert and Miller, ed., *The Great Awakening*, 234.

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

Light ministers who insisted on tradition both in the formal delivery of the sermon and in the measured reception of the message now found themselves competing with the passionate delivery of revivalists and the freedom of expression which they permitted among the laity.

In reality, many New Light and Old Light ministers may have differed very little in their goals for their congregations. Earnest clergy on both sides hoped to encourage heightened religious interest in their flocks. And on both sides, clergy dealt with disingenuous members who perhaps participated in worship for some motive other than religious devotion. Parishioners caught up in a “religious Phrenzy” may have represented an insincere worshiper merely enthralled with the emotion and freedom of the experience. Likewise, parishioners who attended an Old Light service but remained disengaged from worship by sleeping or being inattentive represented a passive form of insincerity. Even New Light ministers who supported the Awakening as a “work of God” held reservations regarding the extreme physical manifestations some laymen exhibited. But they attempted to discourage excessive religious expressions while encouraging what they believed to be an authentic response to an “outpouring of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>596</sup> The emphasis upon emotion and experiential religion forced the established clergy to compete with revivalists in worship style.

Furthermore, the use of itinerate preachers, teachers, and lay exhorters threatened order in the church. Itinerancy challenged the positions of established clergy. Even though itinerant ministers by definition did not seek to establish congregations, settled

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<sup>596</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative*, C. C. Goen, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: The Great Awakening*.

clergy worried about the loyalty congregations owed their own preachers. Nathaniel Appleton warned his fellow ministers in a convention sermon that itinerants were “busybodies” without any “plain call,” who “go from Place to Place, entering into other Men’s Charges” was “very ominous” and “threaten[ed] their *Peace*, their *Purity*, and their *Order* exceedingly.”<sup>597</sup> Itinerants represented unpredictable ministers who gained favor among the laity at the expense of the local established clergy. As itinerants and their revivalistic preaching gained popularity, the laity tended to become more dissatisfied with their settled ministers. On the surface, itinerancy offered little more risk to congregational loyalty than the long-standing practice of pulpit exchange between settled ministers. Yet, established clergy were careful to defend their friendly tradition of exchanging pulpits at the invitation of another settled minister. The “occasional Exchanges or Communion of Gifts” were not condemned as long as they were conducted in an “orderly, regular, and peaceable manner.”<sup>598</sup>

Even parishioner preference for one clergy member over another was not an isolated phenomenon linked solely to the Awakening. Throughout the eighteenth century, those who favored particular members of the clergy sometimes avoided the sermons of certain other ministers. As early as 1701, Samuel Sewall recorded his avoidance of Josiah Willard because he disapproved of Willard’s decision to “cut off his Hair, and wearing a Wigg.” But Sewall, always aware of social standing, opted to absent himself only from the morning sermon lest he offend Willard’s friends. In Boston, where the concentrated population supported several churches within easy travel distance,

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<sup>597</sup> *Faithful ministers of Christ*, (Boston, 1743), 39.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

parishioners could and did choose where to attend based on personal preferences. Sewall even vacillated on whether to join one congregation “by reason of the weakness, or some such undesirableness in many of its members.”<sup>599</sup>

Early in his ministry, Cotton Mather admitted his own “foolish Discouragements” when his congregational attendance became “thinner than ordinary.”<sup>600</sup> He consoled himself by hoping that those who “went from *mee*, found their *Edification* to bee promoted Elsewhere.”<sup>601</sup> And Eliezer Rice avoided the “ministrations” of Mr. Martyn both when he “preached [Parkman’s] lecture and when [they] changed. Rice explained his belief that Martyn’s former worldly ways disqualified him from the formal ministry and refused to sit under his preaching.

Clergy may not have appreciated the occasional wanderings of a few parishioners to neighboring churches but it was a tolerable reality. Parishioners who migrated from one parish to another still fell within the ecclesiastical order of Congregationalism.<sup>602</sup> However, the intrusion of uninvited itinerants into the parish of a settled minister during the fervor of the Awakening threatened the settled clergy’s position of authority within the community. Established clergy initially welcomed itinerants into their pulpits and

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<sup>599</sup> Nov. 30, 1701, M. Halsey Thomas, ed., *The Diary of Samuel Sewall, Vol I and II, 1674-1708, 1709-1729*, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York), 458, 35; Dec. 22, 1747, *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 165.

<sup>600</sup> April 5, 1685, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Vol. I*, 92.

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>602</sup> Congregationalism generally required a member to bring a letter of “good standing” from a previous congregation to the next one in order to gain full membership privileges in a new congregation. Although some settled ministers did not respect other ministers, they generally held to similar Congregational forms of order.

permitted their meetings within their parish.<sup>603</sup> Perhaps the desire for ‘revival’ and heightened religious interest outweighed any danger that itinerants represented to the stability or order of the established clergy. But unchecked, the practice of allowing anyone to “go into other Minister’s parish without liberty” was seen to bring on “confusion.” Clergy who first considered such invasion harmless, or even “countenanced” the behavior, soon became “apprehensive of the Danger of it.”<sup>604</sup>

Itinerants were appreciated as supplemental ministers who complemented the ministry of the established clergy and reinforced the position of the settled ministers. But when itinerants critiqued the established clergy, they no longer functioned as team players intent upon the same goals and adhering to the same code of behavior. These roaming preachers sowed division and dissatisfaction among the laity who became increasingly critical of their pastors. The lack of loyalty and deference offered to the settled ministers chipped away at their ministerial authority. Itinerants represented unwelcome and unsettling competition to established ministers.<sup>605</sup>

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<sup>603</sup> Benjamin Prescott initially welcomed Whitefield, but then turned against him later with a lengthy discourse against his ministry, *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield*, (Boston, 1745), 12; James Allen also welcomed the Awakening at first but then became critical of the movement warning his flock “not to go to hear them” lest they “go upon the Devil’s ground,” John Pierce, *Reminiscences of Forty Years*, (Boston, 1837), 28 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. V, 509; John Cotton invited Whitefield into his pulpit in 1740 but later his name appears among clergy who voted to censure Whitefield from their churches, *Boston Evening-Post*, Jan. 7, 1745 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. V, 522.

<sup>604</sup> *Boston Evening-Post*, Jan. 7, 1745 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. V, 522.

<sup>605</sup> Jared Eliot resisted the New Light movement and denounced the divisions it wrought within his congregation. But the effect is perhaps best measured by the number of communicants in his church. Before the Great Awakening, his church boasted 44 communicants out of 130 inhabitants. After 30 years, only two families stayed within the church while the rival New Light congregation held 140; Ezra Stiles, *Itinerancies*, (Yale, 1916), 216 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. V, 195.

Like Whitefield, many itinerants never planned to settle in New England and begin their own congregation, but in the wake of revivalists who introduced a new “manner” of preaching and worship with an emphasis on experiential religion, many parishioners began to demand revivalistic preaching from their own ministers. If a minister resisted, the New Light faction might attempt to dismiss their minister or even form their own New Light congregation. Additional churches forming on the basis of revivalistic preference within existing parishes provided a significant threat to established ministers. At the very least, the revivals generated widespread dissatisfaction within the tradition of Congregationalism.

Although the most famous itinerants did not settle within a particular congregation, they stirred up enthusiastic converts eager to minister. As lay exhorters, newly awakened young men sought opportunities for ministry. Revivalists tended to permit them to hold meetings and travel about ministering to the public. But Old Light ministers complained that these young itinerants had not been selected “by the order that God hath appointed in his Church.”<sup>606</sup> Without the sanction and authority from Congregational ministers, their claim of an “inward call” was appalling to the established clergy. The majority of itinerants lacked formal training in the liberal arts and the “original tongues” of Greek and Hebrew, which established clergy believed was the “handmaid of Divinity.”<sup>607</sup> Newly converted lay exhorters did not necessarily disdain the

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<sup>606</sup> Israel Loring, As quoted from a 1742 convention sermon to fellow ministers, in William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit, I*, (New York, 1857-69), 258 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. V, 78.

<sup>607</sup> Ibid.

studied ministry as an unworthy exercise. Rather, their zeal for immediate entrance into the practice of ministry outstripped the value of a formal ecclesiastical education.

Old Light ministers resisted any shortcuts to the office of the ministry and pointed out the scripture's warning not to lay hands on novices lest they become filled with pride. Chauncy suggested that they study more before attempting to expound the word of God. He contended that these eager teachers should leave the work of ministry to the acknowledged officers of the church. Scripture described

an order of men to whom it should belong, as their proper, stated work, to exhort and teach, this cannot be the business of others; And if any who think themselves to be spiritual, are under impressions to take upon them this ministry, they may have reason to suspect, whether their impulses are any other than the workings of their own imaginations.<sup>608</sup>

The very structure of church leadership and the office of the ministry itself was at stake in this new movement. In fact, some feared the lack of proper deference within the religious sphere could threaten civil authority as well. "Good order is the Strength and Beauty of the World. – The Prosperity both of *Church* and *State* depends very much upon it. And can there be order, where Men transgress the Limits of their Station, and intermeddle in the Business of others."<sup>609</sup> For established Congregational clergy, faithfulness to God required everyone to remain in their proper place. Spiritual order required social order.

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<sup>608</sup> Charles Chauncy, *Enthusiasm Described and Caution'd against. A Sermon Preach'd at the Old Brick Meeting-House in Boston*, (Boston, 1742), Heimert and Miller, ed., *The Great Awakening*, 240.

<sup>609</sup> Charles Chauncy, *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England A Treatise in Five Parts*; (Boston, 1743), Heimert and Miller, ed., *The Great Awakening*, 299.

Even ministers who supported the Awakening worried about the disorder of allowing “new Converts” to imagine that they were “called and qualified to be Teachers of God’s Word.”<sup>610</sup> Joseph Sewall acknowledged the “zeal” and eagerness to declare what God had “done for [their] souls” that led new converts into ministry, but this “edification” of other believers did not necessarily mean that one was called to be a pastor or teacher. No one should take upon “this Office, who are not called to it according to the Order appointed in God’s Word.”<sup>611</sup> Clergy who endorsed revivalism were also concerned about the loss of social and ecclesiastical order. When untrained men assumed the role of a minister, it threatened to “introduce Disorder, and to bring the Gospel Ministry into Contempt, as if there needed no Study, Gifts and Learning to qualify Men for this difficult and important office.”<sup>612</sup> If established Congregational clergy were already concerned with their diminishing influence, any disorder with the potential to embarrass or discredit the ministry represented a threat to the entire office of the clergy. Furthermore, congregational acceptance of untrained ministers devalued the established clergy’s educational qualifications and chipped away at their ecclesiastical monopoly.

What remains amazing is that the efforts of some outspoken novices managed to threaten the learned and established clergy of New England. Predictably, Congregational ministers objected to the invasion of men from a lower “station” into their sacred territory. But if the established clergy truly felt confident in the superiority of their

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<sup>610</sup> Joseph Sewall, *God’s People...*, (Boston, 1742), 27.

<sup>611</sup> Ibid.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid.

educational training, they might easily have tolerated the inferior efforts of emotional revivalists and allowed their own superior skills to outshine the weaknesses of their competitors. If the emotional outbursts of enthusiasm were as unsavory as critics described, surely the revivals would have generated little following among the constituents of established clergy. Whether the Great Awakening might have died out sooner without the vehement reaction from established clergy will never be known, but it is possible that the organized resistance among anti-revivalists may have protracted the effects of the revivals.

For the established clergy, perhaps one of the most troubling facts surrounding this version of enthusiasm was that it originated within the Congregational discipline. The differences of Anglican, Quaker and Baptist doctrines presented less of a threat from their position outside of Congregationalism; but revivalism came from within. Despite the complaints of untrained men “transgressing” the limits of their station, revivalism boasted some of the best and the brightest of established Congregational clergymen. Had the Awakening’s first revivals begun with a lesser theologian than Jonathan Edwards, they might not have received the public acclaim they eventually achieved.<sup>613</sup> Not even Chauncy could dismiss revivalism as merely the invention of inferior minds; Edwards’ intellect and articulation infused the Great Awakening with an undeniable sense of credibility. Whitefield, too, defied the notion of an illiterate, emotionally driven, itinerant minister. Despite his unorthodox extemporaneous delivery, Whitefield’s Oxford education and theological prowess also demanded enough respect to secure a warm

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<sup>613</sup> Tracy, *Jonathan Edwards, Pastor*; Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards*.

welcome in New England.<sup>614</sup> In order to combat Whitefield's widespread influence, Chauncy and others resorted to calling for a collective boycott from Congregational pulpits.<sup>615</sup>

The influx of itinerant ministers invading parish boundaries offered a significant challenge to the clergy's ecclesiastical superiority; itinerants even broached the sacramental duties normally reserved for established ministers.<sup>616</sup> The Awakening produced a new crop of ministers who did not necessarily depend upon an orthodox education from Harvard or Yale. The lack of ministerial candidates graduating from these colleges should not be interpreted as an overall declining interest in the office of the ministry. Rather, it reflects in part that additional avenues into clerical careers began to open up. Candidates had always been at the mercy of the congregations willing to invite them to settle as pastors, but now congregations demonstrated a willingness to accept the passionate piety of novice ministers in place of a college education.

#### 4.1.3 *Competition between Clergy*

The decline of the educated clergy and the invasion of untrained itinerants leveled the playing field for Congregational clergy. Without their traditional position of

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<sup>614</sup> Stout, *The Divine Dramatist*; Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity*.

<sup>615</sup> For some of Chauncy's denunciations of the revivals see Chauncy, *Enthusiasm Described and Caution'd against; Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England; The Late Religious Commotions in New England Considered. An Answer to the Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards's Sermon, Entitled, the Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God; Ministers Cautioned against the Occasions of Contempt*, (Boston, 1744).

<sup>616</sup> Itinerant ministers freely baptized, performed communion and ordination ceremonies, without concern for ecclesiastical license or permission of a legitimate association of the Congregational clergy.

superiority, established ministers found themselves forced to compete with itinerants in the delicate areas of personal piety, passion, and sermon delivery. And in these areas, established clergy were often found to be lacking. Even if pastors denied the competition, their congregations were making comparisons between revivalists and the established clergy.

One of the effects of the Awakenings was a desire among the laity for additional meetings throughout the week. Whitefield and other revivalists maintained rigorous schedules often preaching several times a day, several days in a row. No longer satisfied with Sunday services and midweek lectures, the newly invigorated laity requested additional services from their settled ministers during the week. In 1741, the Second Church of Ipswich, like many others, became concerned with “what they should do to be saved.”<sup>617</sup> Whereas they had previously been “careless and worldly,” they now expressed an “Engagedness to hear the Word preached, Christian Conferences; private Meetings for religious Worship; and Assistance to each other in the Way of Life.”<sup>618</sup> Their pastor, Theophilus Pickering, offered only cautious encouragement of this heightened religious interest although he did permit New Light ministers to preach to his flock. This congregation did not initially seek to replace their pastor with another specific minister, but they did appreciate the new manner and experiential emphasis of New Light preaching. The congregation hoped their pastor would “adapt his Preaching... to the times” but after holding a few extra lectures for a couple weeks, Pickering then reverted

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<sup>617</sup> *A Plain Narrative of the proceedings which caused the separation of a number of aggrieved brethren from the Second Church in Ipswich*, (Boston, 1747), 4.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*

to “his *old Way of Preaching* (Which now was become very *unsavoury* to us.)”<sup>619</sup> The lay-clerical relationship deteriorated from there. Pickering found his “*Manner of Preaching, more than the Matters preached*” under scrutiny and his piety judged by his unwillingness to hold extra midweek meetings to satisfy his congregations newfound religious interest.<sup>620</sup>

Parkman faced similar criticism during the Great Awakening. In 1744, he approached a member and his wife to inquire regarding their absences from the “public assemblys.”<sup>621</sup> At first, the member assured Parkman that their absences should not be taken personally; they had not left out of “disgust.” Instead, the parishioner offered benign excuses explaining that Mr. Prentice’s meetinghouse was nearer and that Parkman’s meetinghouse had grown too crowded. But then the member went on to admit that he and his wife had been threatened (by another member) with charges of “disorderly conduct” because the wife had cried out during the recent earthquake.<sup>622</sup> All of these reasons, real or contrived, might have satisfied Parkman. However, the layman then proceeded to address Parkman’s preaching style. Parkman recorded, “He, in the Course of the Talk told me my Conversation was but a little of Spiritual Things – that Mr.

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<sup>619</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>620</sup> *The Pretended Plain narrative convicted of fraud and partiality*, (Boston, 1748), 13, for the next eight years, Pickering would be embroiled in congregational conflict which did not end even upon his untimely death. His supporters continued to refute his critics by publishing their version of the dispute.

<sup>621</sup> July 9, 1744, *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 100.

<sup>622</sup> Parkman does not explain this in his journal account but the context of the entry suggests that her crying out was an anomaly in the community. It might have had something to do with the enthusiasm of the revivals rather than simple fear from a natural disaster.

Prentices Sermons were lively, profitable and Excellent – that as for me I very much affected such ministers as were opposite....”<sup>623</sup>

To Parkman’s chagrin, his sermons, passion, and personal piety were being compared with neighboring New Light ministers. Established clergy weighed the criticism leveled at them and attempted to refute the charges contending “there are as many and as deeply heart searching sermons among those Term’d opposers as any others whosoever etc.”<sup>624</sup> But the passionate delivery of experiential religion by revivalists caused the established clergy’s traditional reading of previously composed sermons to pale by comparison. The Great Awakening, as short-lived as it may have been, not only awakened those who responded to the revival movement, it forced the established clergy to reevaluate and defend their own methodology.

In an effort to defend their position, Old Light ministers sought to discredit revivalists. According to Chauncy, enthusiasts were “mere pretenders” who threatened all of religion by their “ill representation.”<sup>625</sup> Convinced of the danger of permitting such a movement, Chauncy attempted to rally other clergy together in order to condemn Whitefield and the revivals. Critics of the revivals may have calculated that a consensus among New England clergy would eradicate this dangerous new enthusiasm from their midst. Perhaps they figured that a consensus among Congregational clergy would buttress both their civil and ecclesiastical authority. But Chauncy and others

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<sup>623</sup> July 9, 1744, *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 100.

<sup>624</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 23, 1744, Rev. Aaron Smith discussed this with Parkman, 90.

<sup>625</sup> Chauncy, *Enthusiasm*, Heimert and Miller, ed., *The Great Awakening*, 231-232, ironically, this is the exact charge laid against the established clergy by revivalists. Whitefield and others condemned the established clergy for pretending to be converted.

overestimated their solidarity. Conversely, they underestimated the strength and influence of the revivals. The full-scale pamphlet war instigated by Chauncy and the pressure to sign a denunciation of Whitefield forced clergy everywhere to choose sides. It was not enough to witness the revivals from afar and form a private opinion; the highly publicized debate did not simply offer criticism of the Awakening, the debate demanded each clergyman to determine whether the revivals truly constituted a “Work of the Spirit of God.”<sup>626</sup>

For some ministers, choosing between New Lights, who supported the revivals, and Old Lights, who denounced the revivals, was a simple decision. But other ministers who felt the impact of the Whitefield’s preaching tour did not relish the pressure to publicly support or condemn the Awakening. Ebenezer Parkman, like many other ministers, noted Whitefield’s arrival in Boston and the extraordinary reception he received. Parkman, who struggled to prepare his own sermons, expressed intrigue that Mr. Whitefield preached “Twice every Day to the astonishment of all.”<sup>627</sup> Parkman and his wife traveled to several distant locations in order to witness Whitefield preach “to incredible multitudes...with wondrous power.”<sup>628</sup> Parkman admired Whitefield’s preaching but unlike those ministers who incorporated the “new manner” and rejuvenated their own sermon delivery, Parkman battled discouragement and preached with “much difficulty.”<sup>629</sup> Parkman continued to repeat sermons to the dissatisfaction of both his

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<sup>626</sup> Edwards, *The Distinguishing Marks*; Goen, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 53.

<sup>627</sup> Sept. 23, 1740, *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 84.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid, 86.

congregation and himself. Shortly following one of Whitefield's tours through New England, Parkman repeated yet another sermon and "mourn[ed] over my Dullness and want of Spiritual Taste etc."<sup>630</sup> It seems that in the wake of Whitefield's impressive preaching tour, Parkman found his own "manner of preaching" wanting. Exposure to Whitefield's style merely reminded Parkman of his own deficiencies. Parkman never recorded a "conversion" experience under the shadow of the Great Awakening but he certainly "examined my state anew."<sup>631</sup> He acknowledged his own shortcomings but then related his discouragement in the context of comparison with other ministers. "I hope it is the Grief and Burthen of my Soul that I am So exceedingly behind, and so destitute, and empty, when others are springing forward, and ready for every good work."<sup>632</sup> Parkman clearly felt the effects of Whitefield's sermons but was ready to neither endorse nor condemn the movement.

Oddly enough, historians explained Whitefield's unusual speaking ability to his constant repetition of the same sermons.<sup>633</sup> Whitefield's flair for the dramatic and his ability to memorize his sermons appeared to enhance the impact of his messages. Benjamin Franklin, always an interested spectator, but never a convert, noted that Whitefield's delivery became even better as the sermons became completely committed to memory; yet Franklin enjoyed hearing him preach even if it was the very same message he had heard before. But for Parkman, sermon repetition did not improve his

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<sup>630</sup> Ibid, Aug. 18, 1745, 122.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid, Sept. 4, 1744, 89.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid.

<sup>633</sup> Stout, *The Divine Dramatist*; Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity*.

delivery. Instead, his congregation became impatient with this practice and Parkman berated himself for resorting to old sermons.

Ebenezer Parkman's journals provide an example of the Great Awakening's effect upon the established ministers in New England. As a Congregational clergyman, Parkman's oratory and literary skills never warranted great personal acclaim, yet his faithful service and central location allowed his participation on a many ecclesiastical councils and gave him a broad perspective of Congregationalism in New England. Parkman's fifty-year tenure in Westborough spans the years of the Awakening and displays the pressure on settled clergy to evaluate the validity of the revivals. Neither an enthusiastic adherent nor a vehement opposer to the movement, Parkman weathered the revivals while prioritizing his relationship to his flock.

By the end of 1742, Parkman's journal entries reveal that "Great awakenings" were stirring throughout his community in private meetings. Parkman did not make a rash judgment concerning some of the "commotion" and "uncommon things" occurring at these meetings but he clearly wrestled with the phenomenon; "My own Mind wrought very much on my inward State and upon what God is doing among his people."<sup>634</sup> Yet a divide among the people and among the clergy grew quickly. Some members expressed dissatisfaction while others applauded and praised God for a new awareness of his presence. Even though Parkman did not actively encourage the Awakening within his congregation, members of his flock reported their conversions and awakening

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<sup>634</sup> Jan. 5, 1742, *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 88-89.

experiences to him.<sup>635</sup> And Parkman rarely met with other pastors during these years without discussing the “State of Religion in these times.”<sup>636</sup> Although the Great Awakening revivals proved to be surprisingly short-lived, their influence penetrated every segment of society.

The revivals also forced established ministers to negotiate their own ministerial authority through their approval or disapproval of the new religious enthusiasm. Although he never endorsed the revivals, it is interesting that Parkman never questioned that the religious stirrings, even though accompanied by “commotion,” were from God. He referred to the enthusiasm as evidence of “what God is doing among his own people” although he struggled to explain the happenings. Parkman was a curious observer of Whitefield and New Light preaching but he stopped short of encouraging the Awakening within his own congregation. While his hesitation to promote this new enthusiasm might have originated from Parkman’s own lack of conviction, it also seems that his congregation’s sentiments played a large role. When a neighboring New Light minister encouraged him to “come out – boldly for the Cause of God” so that he could “come freely into my Pulpit and then he Should be free to ask me into his,” Parkman flatly refused. Parkman told him it was “necessary to regard my people...and I know well that my people would be greatly disgusted and I did not think it wise or prudent to give way

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<sup>635</sup> Ibid, Aug. 6, 1744, Eli Forbush came to Parkman “engaged in the Business of his Soul and appears to have experienc’d some Remarkable Convictions” and another “experienc’d wonderful awakenings,” 101; Sept. 11, 1744, Mr. Cook came and gave his recent conversion at the impulse of the revivals, 104.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid, Jan. 2, and Jan. 23, 1744, “We don’t meet without some Contests about the Times,” 90.

to it.”<sup>637</sup> Regardless of how Parkman might have personally felt about the revival movement, he was not going to risk his own position over something this controversial. He negotiated his position and recognized the limits of his influence.

But while Parkman was uninterested in pushing his congregation beyond their comfort level, he also refused let his fellow clergy dictate his position. In 1745, some ministers gathered to “draw up and Publish a Testimony against Mr. Whitefield.”<sup>638</sup> Parkman stayed home and sent his regrets. By April, Parkman noted that Whitefield was still preaching “every Morning at Boston,” but that the “Divisions” were “hotter than ever.”<sup>639</sup> At the next official ministers’ meeting, Parkman declined to transcribe the minutes from the “out-of-season, and out-of-place Meeting” in which the clergy denounced Whitefield. Parkman “strenuously denied” the censure of Whitefield and even offered to relinquish his position as clerk in the meeting rather than record the testimony against Whitefield.<sup>640</sup> Parkman’s sentiments are evident even a year later when Parkman “intimated” to fellow ministers that “we had been too Partial in the late Times; particularly against Mr. Whitefield.”<sup>641</sup> Regardless of the pressure from the established clergy, Parkman refused to condemn the excesses of the Awakening through

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<sup>637</sup> Ibid, Dec. 25, 1745, the context of these journal entries and the New Light tendencies of Mr. Prentiss suggest that Prentiss was hoping Parkman would embrace New Light theology and preaching methods, 129.

<sup>638</sup> Ibid, Jan.22, 1745, 110.

<sup>639</sup> Ibid, April 6, 1745, 114.

<sup>640</sup> Ibid, June 11, 1745, 119.

<sup>641</sup> Parkman’s sympathies toward Whitefield and his manner of preaching seem genuine and unadulterated by any close friendship with the young minister. Although Parkman traveled significant distances several times in order to hear him and at least once, spent some time with him after a service, his journals do not reflect the bias of a strong friendship.

a censure of Whitefield. Parkman recognized the sentiments of his own congregation and chose to neither publically support nor publically denounce the religious phenomenon.

Unlike Parkman, Thomas Smith of Falmouth, opted to encourage the Awakening in his congregation. He also remarked about the “sad division in the Convention of Ministers” in Boston.<sup>642</sup> Smith’s journal entries suggest that the work of Chauncy and his supporters intensified the defense of the Awakening among New Lights. The clergy who opposed the “late work of God in the land” managed to obtain a vote “against the disorder” which put the “ministers on the other side into a great ferment.”<sup>643</sup> But the controversy reached well beyond the clergy. Smith noted “people through the country are also universally divided and in the most unhappy temper. The opposition was exceedingly virulent and mad.”<sup>644</sup> Rather than squelch an irregular religious disorder, the aggressive stance of Old Lights against Whitefield and other New Lights seemed to breathe life into the entire movement.

Yet, Smith’s endorsement of the revivals came with a price. Tensions continued to escalate the next year as Smith made plans to invite Whitefield into his pulpit. “Leading men” within Smith’s flock generally opposed Whitefield’s visit but that did not deter Smith. Influential members came to him “violently opposing” the visit and took “unwearied pains...to prejudice the people against [Whitefield].”<sup>645</sup> For months ahead of the revivalist’s arrival, Smith recorded that he was “much about with the people to quiet

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<sup>642</sup> May 26, 1743, William Willis, ed., *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, (Portland, 1849), 104.

<sup>643</sup> *Ibid*, 104-106.

<sup>644</sup> *Ibid*, 107.

<sup>645</sup> *Ibid*, 117.

them with respect to Mr. Whitefield.”<sup>646</sup> Whitefield eventually arrived and preached from Smith’s pulpit and in many other locations in the community without objection. But Smith recognized the risk he took by insisting upon Whitefield’s visit against the wishes of the communities’ “leading men.” In retrospect, Smith admitted that he had been in “great concern” about Whitefield’s visit because of “such violent opposition.” “I feared nothing but such a quarrel as would be fatal to me; but now he is come, stand still and see the providence of God.” Fortunately for Smith, five of his greatest antagonists “were all gone out of town, so that there was no uneasiness; but all well, and general reception.”<sup>647</sup> Smith’s gamble paid off but like Parkman he recognized the limits of his power and the potential consequences of his actions.

For Smith, Parkman, Pickering and all other Congregational clergyman, the controversial Whitefield and other revivalists challenged their ministerial authority by forcing all ministers to evaluate the validity of the Great Awakening. When a congregation and their pastor did not agree on that important issue, the minister’s career could be jeopardized. Pickering’s congregation challenged his entire ministry over his unwillingness to embrace New Light teaching. Smith believed that his ministry was threatened by a potentially “fatal quarrel” with the leading men in his flock who did not

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<sup>646</sup> Ibid, Nov. 2, 1744, 115.

<sup>647</sup> Ibid, Mar. 26, 1745, “I have been in great concern about Mr. Whitefield’s coming among us, there having been such a violent opposition to him among all our leading men except Mr. Frost, and such unwearied pains taken to prejudice the people against him, so that I feared nothing but such a quarrel as would be fatal to me; but now he is come, stand still and see the providence of God,” 117.

appreciate his support of Whitefield.<sup>648</sup> Parkman deftly managed to avoid a public stance on the revivals yet he sympathized with the Awakening.

Revivalists challenged the ministerial authority of the established clergy by invading their parishes and competing with them in areas of devotion and preaching style. The passionate style of New Light ministers provided great contrast to the formality of Old Light clergy. As revivalists encouraged individuals to evaluate their personal spiritual condition, parishioners also began to judge the spiritual vitality of their pastors. In the absence of their traditional bastions of superiority, most established clergy either adapted to the new “manner” of preaching or opted to attack it as an illegitimate method of ministry.

When itinerant ministers began to broach the firm boundaries of parish lines, which had virtually assigned parishioners and their taxes to a particular congregation based upon geography, established clergy found themselves forced to *attract* parishioners, who now began to consciously decide which church or service to attend. Pickering may not have wanted the extra burden of providing additional services for his own flock but he did not object to his members attending other religious gatherings in the community. The opportunity to attend an itinerant midweek service while still maintaining membership in an established congregation could not help but spawn comparisons.

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<sup>648</sup> John Fisk is another example of a minister who favored the Great Awakenings while his congregation largely disapproved. In 1741, he followed the advice of his neighboring ministers and sought a dismissal, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. V, 146.

Increasing availability of alternative options for worship provided the laity with a choice. The options available to parishioners opened up a marketplace of religion.<sup>649</sup> Although his depiction of the Awakening as a “fictive” event is less than convincing, Frank Lambert astutely describes the religious landscape as a “free marketplace of religion.”<sup>650</sup> His tone presents this terminology as a criticism, which for him seems to verify the sinister motives of self-seeking ministers, such as George Whitefield, who borrowed techniques from the expanding commercial marketplace.<sup>651</sup> However, the burgeoning marketplace of religion can also be seen as a self-correcting event, which forced all clergy to compete on a level playing field and prove the sincerity and authenticity of their faith. Congregational clergy were forced to compete without the net of their traditional social and economic superiority.

Eighteenth-century clergy would not get to minister with the same degree of status and influence that their predecessors had enjoyed. Congregational deference decreased as revivalism encouraged individual reflection and discernment. Parishioners

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<sup>649</sup> Frank Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America*, (Princeton University Press, 2003), 8.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid.

<sup>651</sup> Stout, “Religion, Communications, and the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution;” *The Divine Dramatist*; Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity*; Hall, *Contested Boundaries*; Several historians have investigated the communication techniques and strategies of Whitefield and other revivalists in order to understand the phenomenal success they achieved in such a short period of time. It is tempting to criticize the revivalists for their innovative use of communication techniques. But it appears that this criticism is tainted by an aversion to modern-day revivalists, who seem bent on fleecing the public in the name of religion. Some historians seem to find the marketing skills and savvy use of advance public relation teams to cheapen an event touted as a “work of God.” As such, the emphasis on this aspect of the Great Awakening comes off a bit like an “expose” of the insincere motives of the early revivalists. Certainly, insincere ministers existed among both Old Lights and New Lights, but the innovative use of modern communication techniques does not serve as an accurate indictment of sinister motives. While all historians are subject to their own personal biases and filters, it seems more accurate to notice that the religious competition of this Awakening perhaps forced an increasingly lackadaisical clergy to reevaluate the sincerity and authenticity of their faith.

not only reflected on their state of their own souls, they began to judge the state of ministers' souls as well. Competition between a decreasing number of trained clergy of questionable piety and a vigorous and passionate group of largely untrained revivalists diminished the authority of the ministerial office. Lay-clerical negotiation of ministerial authority in the eighteenth-century reflected the competition between clergy to attract and retain membership. Lay-clerical negotiation also reflected the ever-increasing choices of religious expression and opportunities of worship.

In the midst of this itinerant invasion, established clergy in the 1740s were beginning to sense the decline of other social and economic factors, which had previously bolstered their ministerial authority. The established clergy's loss of educational and ecclesiastical superiority would be compounded by several currency crises diminishing the salary values of colonial clergy and reducing their financial superiority in the community. Explosive population growth and westward expansion in the eighteenth century gradually weakened the power of localism as communities grew large enough to support multiple churches.<sup>652</sup> The increasing population and the availability of western land also began to erode the loyalty ministers previously enjoyed from their constituents as the populace moved toward the frontier. In the eighteenth century, parishioners were presented with more options and tended to feel less obligated to a particular congregation. In response, ministers would begin to seek to regain some control over their own futures in the transforming colonial society.

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<sup>652</sup> My definition of localism includes the power of small communities to require social conformity.

## 4.2 The Loss of Localism in the Revolutionary Era

The late contest with Great-Britain, glorious as it hath been for their country, hath been peculiarly unfortunate for the clergy. Perhaps no set of men, whose hearts were so roughly engaged in it, or who contributed in so great a degree to its success, have suffered more by it.<sup>653</sup>

Throughout the eighteenth century political, economic, and religious tensions, natural population growth and colonial expansion tested the social mores of New Englanders. Previous generations had depended upon the stability of their communalism to anchor their newly established colonies. As the initial leaders of these charter colonies, Congregational clergy felt the stress and strain upon their ministerial role during the eighteenth century. Early in the century, the negotiation of ministerial authority between a single minister and his flock tended to operate within the stability of a localized community. By the end of the century, lay-clerical negotiation not only reflected the loss of educational and ecclesiastical superiority in a newly competitive religious landscape, but lay-clerical negotiation also reflected the loss of localism in colonial society.<sup>654</sup> Leverage that clergy had used to retain their ministerial authority

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<sup>653</sup>Peter Thatcher, *Observations upon the Present State of the Clergy of New England*, (Boston, 1783), 5.

<sup>654</sup> Unlike Daniel Calhoun who defines localism as “home-townism” and relates localism to whether a pastor was “born in the same county as the church,” my definition of localism involves the power of close-knit communities to produce conformity among its inhabitants regardless of the birthplace of the pastor or his lack of relatives in the community. Daniel Calhoun, *Professional Lives in America*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), 128. Other authors who examine the impact of localism include: Timothy Breen, “Persistent Localism: English Social Change and the Shaping of New England Institutions,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, (January 1975); Edward M. Cook, Jr., *The Fathers of the Towns: Leadership and Community Structure in Eighteenth-Century New England*, (Baltimore, 1976); John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony*, (New York, 1970); Philip Greven, *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts*, (Ithaca, 1970); Charles Grant, *Democracy in the Connecticut Frontier Town of Kent*, (New York, 1961); Kenneth Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years, Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636-1736*, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1970); Christine

became increasingly ineffective. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, Congregational clergy found themselves forced to seek other means of negotiating their waning authority.

The communitarian impulse of the early Puritan ideal did not erode uniformly throughout New England. As Jack P. Greene explained in his review of several seminal works on colonial New England society, at least one reason for their conflicting conclusions on the pace of social development could be related to the lack of similar economic and environmental pressures present in all communities.<sup>655</sup> The pressures of economic and geographic expansion fell disproportionately upon colonial towns. Communities who remained isolated from the escalating inter-colonial commerce and the ever-westward migration of land-seeking colonists retained the communitarian traditions of localism longer than the towns which first felt the effects of colonial growth. The disparity between New England towns and their respective loss of localism challenges the historian who attempts to categorize the demise neatly within a limited number of years. But as concentrated studies of particular towns have demonstrated, certain communities resisted the effects of colonial growth and expansion longer than others did.<sup>656</sup>

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Leigh Heyrman, *Commerce and Culture: The Maritown Communities of Colonial Massachusetts, 1690-1750*, (W.W. Norton and Co., New York, 1984).

<sup>655</sup> Jack P. Greene, "Autonomy and Stability: New England and the British Colonial Experience in Early Modern America," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Winter, 1974), 171-194.

<sup>656</sup> Demos, *A Little Commonwealth*; Greven, *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover*; Grant, *Democracy in the Connecticut Frontier Town of Kent*; Heyrman, *Commerce and Culture: The Maritown Communities of Colonial Massachusetts*; Lockridge, *A New England Town*; Greene, "Autonomy and Stability: New England and the British Colonial Experience in Early Modern America."

The explosive growth of the population provided one of the most significant stresses to the localism of early colonial communities.<sup>657</sup> In Connecticut, the population increased by 58 percent in the thirty year period between 1670 and 1700. Between 1700 and 1730, the population grew at a rate of 380 per cent.<sup>658</sup> This growth also accounted for the founding of twice as many towns in Connecticut in the thirty years following 1690 as in the thirty previous years.<sup>659</sup> While some population estimates must be surmised from rate lists until an official census was taken of a given town, the data are revealing. In Andover, Massachusetts, rate lists reveal only 600 people in 1685. When the first federal census was taken in 1790, Andover's population totaled 2863, increasing by over four hundred percent.<sup>660</sup> These figures are even more astounding when Greven demonstrates that the third generation suffered from increased rates of mortality, decreasing rates of fertility and an overall reduction in family size. Although the fourth generation, who reached maturity in the middle of the eighteenth century would

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<sup>657</sup> For discussions on various aspects of colonial population growth see Daniel Scott Smith, "The Demographic History of Colonial New England," *Journal of Economic History*, 32 (1972), 165-183; Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century*, (Boston, 1955); Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America, 1625-1742* (New York, 1938); Richard S. Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees: The Winthrop Dynasty of New England, 1630-1717*, (New York, 1971), 59-190; Stephen Innes, *Labor in a New Land: Economy and Society in Seventeenth-Century Springfield*, (Princeton, 1983); Heyrman, *Commerce and Culture*, chapter 1; John Murrin, "Review Essay," *History and Theory*, 11, (1972), 226-275; James Henrietta, "The Morphology of New England Society in the Colonial Period," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2 (1971), 379-398.

<sup>658</sup> Richard Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765*, (Harvard University Press, 1967), 83.

<sup>659</sup> Ibid.

<sup>660</sup> Greven, *Four Generations*, 176-177; Lockridge also notes the rate of population growth in his analysis of Dedham, Massachusetts where the population doubled in 50 years. Between the years of 1648 and 1700, population increased from approximately 400 to 750. Between the years of 1686 and 1736, population increased from 600 to 1200. Lockridge, *The First One Hundred Years*, 64, 94.

experience lower rates of mortality, they also became more geographically mobile.<sup>661</sup> It follows that the explosion of Andover's population did not amount to the simple replacement of settlers by their own offspring. The population not only increased from the natural growth of those already settled in the New World, it also grew from the continuing immigration of Europeans, servants, and slaves to the colonies as well as the migration of colonists from one community to another.<sup>662</sup> The influx of new settlers swelled existing communities while other existing settlers steadily moved toward the frontier in search of unsettled land. This geographic expansion functioned as a relief valve for the increasing population and dissipated the social tension that undergirded localism. When colonists possessed viable options for relocation, the social pressure to conform within an isolated community naturally lost its force.

Using census figures, Ezra Stiles meticulously tallied the colonial population and reported to colonial magistrates. His figures found that the colony of Connecticut boasted "141 Thousand Souls" in 1762. By 1774, the colony held "197 Thousand Souls."<sup>663</sup> Thus, Stiles calculated an increase of more than 50 thousand in 12 years besides the "30 Thousand Emigrants from the Colony in that space."<sup>664</sup> Stiles' figures

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<sup>661</sup> Although Greven's analysis concerns the effect of demographics on the institution of family, his data also illuminates the effect of demographics on the forces of communal stability and conformity within localized communities. Furthermore, Greven notes "similar patterns of experience arising from similar circumstances, with successive periods of mobility, stability and renewed mobility, have been found to correspond closely with the lifetimes of successive generations." Greven, *Four Generations*, 272-274.

<sup>662</sup> Ibid, Chapter 2, Greven analyzes the birth and death rates pointing out the overall increasing life span of colonists as the colonies matured.

<sup>663</sup> June 16, 1774, *Franklin Bowditch Dexter, ed., The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, ed. under the Authority of the Corporation of Yale University, Volume 1, January 1, 1769 – March 13, 1776*, (New York, 1901), 443.

<sup>664</sup> Ibid.

indicate that in little more than a decade approximately half the population in the colony of Connecticut represented new settlers. These statistics do not support the notion of localized covenanted communities gathered under the authority of well-known influential ministers. By the end of the eighteenth century, the colonial populace had become shuffled as the relocation of original settlers and the influx of new settlers transformed colonial demographics.

#### 4.2.1 *The Power of Conformity*

Out of a necessity for order and survival in the disorderly New England landscape, the first Puritan settlers covenanted themselves together in a homogeneous society.<sup>665</sup> For both ecclesiastical and civil rule, these first generations voluntarily established and then expected religious and social conformity; “For the worke wee haue in hand, it is by a mutual consent through a speciall overruleing providence...to seeke out a place of Cohabitation and Consorteshipp vnder a due forme of Government both ciuill and ecclesiasticall.” John Winthrop reminded first generation colonists that “the care of the publique must oversway all private respects...wee must be knit together in this worke as one man.”<sup>666</sup> This foundational tenet of Congregationalism pervaded the rhetoric of New England clergy. Thomas Hooker also emphasized the “Mutual covenanting and confoederation of the Saints in the fellowship of the faith ...which gives constitution and

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<sup>665</sup> May 1643, The Puritans covenanted together for “their mutual safety and welfare,” Richard S. Dunn, James Savage, Laetitia Yeandle, eds., *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630-1649*, (Harvard University Press, 1996), 434.

<sup>666</sup> John Winthrop, *Winthrop Papers, MHS, II*, (1931), 283-294 as quoted in Perry Miller, *An Errand into the Wilderness*, (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956), 38-39.

being to a visible Church.”<sup>667</sup> The strength of the community rested upon the “mutual reference and dependence” of the “whole or intire body” as they were “joined each to the other.”<sup>668</sup>

While these first generation clergy encouraged their constituents to covenant together out of mutual love and “brotherly affection,” Congregational doctrine also carried the weight of religious responsibility and ultimate survival. Winthrop reminded his flock that they had entered into God’s “covenant with him for this worke...[and]...We have professed to enterprise these Accions vpon these and these ends.”<sup>669</sup> Mutual covenant not only made good sense, it represented a fulfillment of their relationship to their God. To fall short of the covenant was to risk disappointing God and reaping the consequences. Winthrop warned that “If we should so frustrate and deceive the Lords Expectations, that his Covenant-interest in us, ...then All were lost indeed; Ruine upon Ruine, Destruction upon Destruction would come...”<sup>670</sup> Furthermore, colonial survival and the success of the experiment depended upon the loyal adherence to a mutual covenant. Covenanted communities represented the most practical manner in which to engage a foreign land and its inhabitants. Winthrop effectively tied the success of the entire colonial venture to the faithful maintenance of their covenanted society. What had begun as a voluntary and practical matter of governance and responsibility became a requirement with the ominous threat of both spiritual and physical destruction.

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<sup>667</sup> Thomas Hooker, *Survey*, part I, 47 as quoted in Miller, *An Errand into the Wilderness*, 38-39.

<sup>668</sup> *Ibid*, 50.

<sup>669</sup> Winthrop, *Winthrop Papers*, MHS, II, (1931), 283-294 as quoted in Miller, *An Errand into the Wilderness*, 38-39.

<sup>670</sup> Winthrop as quoted in Miller, *An Errand into the Wilderness*, 6.

This early homogenous group of settlers valiantly established a civil government upon ecclesiastic principles out of the willingness of their hearts. They voluntarily determined to bind their fortunes and their failures together believing that they were on a mission to fulfill God's expectations for them. But the sincerity of these early covenantal communities belies the fact that no simple escape clause existed for those who might change their mind or the next generation who would be born within these mutually bound societies. As voluntary as these early mutual commitments may have been, early colonial leaders articulated no other viable options. Survival in the New World, ecclesiastically and civilly, depended upon the establishment of tightly bound homogenous communities. In many ways, the institution of covenanted community represented both spiritual and physical salvation.

Despite the mutuality of the initial covenant, at some point, perhaps sooner than anyone anticipated, the covenant required enforcement.<sup>671</sup> When a member of the community violated the established social and ecclesiastical order, discipline measures were used against the offender. As the Biblical literalists that they were, Puritans followed the scriptural mandate of excommunicating members guilty of deliberate and unrepentant misbehavior. In line with their rigid membership requirements of a personal conversion experience, Puritans physically excluded from their society those who flagrantly defied the accepted behavior of the covenanted saints. Excommunication was not taken lightly nor initiated with haste. 'Delinquent saints' generally drew the criticism

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<sup>671</sup> Oberholzer provided one of the first extensive works on disciplinary action of Congregational churches in New England. Limited largely to Massachusetts, Oberholzer examined church records to track the use of discipline from the earliest known instances in the sixteenth century up to the nineteenth century, Emil Oberholzer, *Delinquent Saints: Disciplinary Actions in the Early Congregational Churches of New England*, (New York, 1956).

and concern of their fellow communicants before any formal disciplinary action ensued. Scripture mandated a one-on-one approach between believers.<sup>672</sup> If the confrontation did not secure remorse and repentance, the matter would be brought to the church. When the efforts of the leadership failed to achieve repentance, the offender was to be “cast out” from the communion of the saints for the “further mortifying of his sinn & the healing of his soule.”<sup>673</sup>

In localized covenanted communities where members depended upon one another for religious and social interaction, excommunication signified an extreme measure of discipline and usually functioned as the last resort reserved for belligerent members. Excommunication required all other communicants to cut the offender off from society and even to refrain from eating and drinking with the offender “that he may be *ashamd*.”<sup>674</sup> Despite the intentional social pressure inflicted by such censure, the Cambridge Platform reminded Congregationalists that excommunication was a “spiritual punishment” and it did not warrant any loss of civil rights.<sup>675</sup>

More than punishment, reconciliation to the covenanted community remained the principal goal of excommunication. In the hope that they would be encouraged toward repentance, excommunicates (like any other unregenerate) were encouraged to attend religious services. In an effort to explain the severity of church discipline, Brown and

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<sup>672</sup> Matthew 18, *New International Version*, this chapter outlines the scriptural mandate for reproof and excommunication.

<sup>673</sup> Williston Walker, ed., *Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism*, (New York, 1893), 228.

<sup>674</sup> Exceptions were sometimes offered to close family members, particularly the children of offenders who were permitted to eat with their parents.

<sup>675</sup> Walker, *Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism*, 228.

others tend to emphasize the Puritan's diligent desire for an undefiled church. Scripture did call for removal of "leaven" which might corrupt the other members of the congregation but this was not the primary Biblical motive for excommunication.<sup>676</sup>

According to scripture, the primary motive for church discipline always involved repentance and sought the restoration of a fallen brother.<sup>677</sup>

Empowered by his congregation, the minister initiated exclusion from the community. As the guardian of the covenanted community, colonial clergy bore the responsibility for oversight and the faithful administration of church discipline. David Hall points out that the English Parliament did not permit clergy to exercise control over church discipline but in New England Congregational ministers dictated the disciplinary measures within their flocks.<sup>678</sup> The power to initiate such extreme forms of social

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<sup>676</sup> I Corinthians 5, *Kings James Version*; This chapter offers the basis for excommunication and involves the Corinthians' acceptance of a flagrant fornicator in their membership. But the initial concern that the Apostle Paul brings up in his letter is their lack of remorse and concern for the offender; "That ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who hath done this deed might be taken away from you," I Cor. 5:2. The members were encouraged to "deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh," but the reason for such drastic measures is in the next phrase: "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus," I Cor. 5:5. This passage of scripture also shows up in *The Confession of 1589*, Walker, *Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism*, 39. Paul warned the Corinthians to "purge out therefore the old leaven" lest it "leaven the whole lump," and not to keep "company with fornicators" who called themselves brothers, I Cor. 5:6-11. The mandate was not a directive for isolation from sinful individuals in society but a means of calling out members who did not live up to their profession of faith and thereby cheapened the faith. Further scripture for excommunication included the Apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians: "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted," Gal. 6:1.

<sup>677</sup> May 6, 1711, Cotton Mather fretted "There is among the Communicants of our church, a Number of exceeding wicked People, and yett such as cannot easily be reached by our Discipline....I will study the best Wages I can, to recover the Wicked out of their miscarriages." The next month, Cotton worried about some "Professors of Religion in my Neighborhood that are fallen into the way of drinking to Excess. Their Intoxications begin to be observed; there is a Danger lest they hasten upon themselves Rebukes and Censures from the Church of God...(seeks) "the best way to admonish them, so as to recover them," Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Volume I, 1681- 1708, Vol. II, 1709-1724*, (Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York), 69-70, 78-79.

<sup>678</sup> David D. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century*, (New York, 1974), 130-136; Oberholzer, *Delinquent Saints*.

ostracization, even if it did involve the cooperation of the parishioners, contributed to the social authority of the clergy and consequently, to the office of the ministry.

Although the ministers' prerogative to initiate church discipline smacks of totalitarian power, excommunication required compliance from the community. Colonial clergy recognized that "Without the consent of the Church...no excommunication can effectively attain its end, because the denial of communion, is a free act of the communitie."<sup>679</sup> A minister could declare excommunication but the congregation implemented it. Even at the height of its use in the seventeenth century, clergy needed the cooperation of his congregation to exclude an offending member. The mandate of refusing to eat with a shunned member not only affected the offender, the entire family would feel the impact of their punishment as they suffered the ostracization of a close relative and rearranged their daily habits to avoid contact.<sup>680</sup> It is probable that in small, localized communities, colonists were motivated to comply with the exclusion of another out of fear for their own reputation.<sup>681</sup>

David C. Brown effectively argued that excommunication lost its force in the wake of the Massachusetts charter of 1691.<sup>682</sup> In response to the increasing presence of Quakers, Baptists, and Anglicans, the charter permitted these groups to worship without

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<sup>679</sup> William Ames, *Conscience*, bk. 4, pg. 89 as quoted in Brown, "The Keys of the Kingdom."

<sup>680</sup> Congregationalism did relax the rigid requirements of excommunication for the innocent involved. Children of excommunicated members were not prohibited from sharing a meal with their wayward parents, Oberholzer, *Delinquent Saints*, 32.

<sup>681</sup> Ibid, 39, Oberholzer points out that a member who "violated the quarantine of an excommunicate, he was himself subject to discipline, but no such censure has been found."

<sup>682</sup> David C. Brown, "The Keys of the Kingdom: Excommunication in Colonial Massachusetts," *The New England Quarterly*, 1994, 560.

government interference. According to Brown, the charter “buttressed a shaky toleration with the force of law and hastened the decline of discipline.”<sup>683</sup> By sanctioning everyone’s “liberty of conscience” in the matter of worship, Congregationalists lost their monopoly over church membership. Chastised members could escape punishment simply by joining a different church. In 1730, Thomas Clap aptly summed up the clergy’s logistical quandary. When admonished for immorality, one recalcitrant couple responded by transferring to another church. The frustrated clergyman wrote to Benjamin Colman offering the following analysis, “We must Conclude, either to lay aside all Discipline and never Pretend to Deal with any men for their Faults at all...or else to begin to Deal with men, and when they say they are Churchmen to let them alone, and by this means it is probable that in a little time a great part of the Country under such Temptations will say they are Church-Men.”<sup>684</sup> Ministers recognized that one of their functions as shepherds of the flock was losing its effectiveness. The increasing availability and legal toleration of alternate congregations robbed the office of the ministry of one of its former bastions of authority.

Brown’s correlation between the decline of church discipline and the increase of religious toleration explains the social impact of excommunication; but his explanation is less persuasive in regard to the spiritual impact. Brown emphasized the unique two-pronged feature of excommunication: social exclusion in the present life and spiritual damnation in the afterlife. Church discipline did provide an incredible form of social control within Puritan societies. The effect of ostracization within the limited social

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<sup>683</sup> Ibid.

<sup>684</sup> Thomas Clap, Windham, to Rev. B. Colman, Boston, Dec. 8, 1735, as quoted in David H Flaherty, *Privacy in Colonial New England*, (University of Virginia Press, 1972), 162.

spectrum available to the early colonists was formidable. When the membership of the church mirrored the membership of the community,<sup>685</sup> even less-than-devout “horseshed Christians” would feel the results of community rejection.<sup>686</sup> With the rise in population, religious competition, and subsequent religious toleration, churches represented an increasingly smaller fraction of the New England population.<sup>687</sup> It follows that the impact of social exclusion from a particular flock carried less significance.

But excommunication also carried the stigma and threat of eternal damnation. Unlike the legal repercussions under the English version of church discipline, the Massachusetts practice of excommunication emphasized spiritual exclusion.<sup>688</sup> “It would be difficult to exaggerate,” argued Brown, “the anathema’s tremendous influence over people who believed in the church’s power to loose, to bind, to curse, and to separate.”<sup>689</sup> Certainly, the significance of belief played a central role in church discipline. Evolving demographics may explain why social exclusion lost its force but provides little insight

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<sup>685</sup> Rutman charts the dramatically decreasing ratio of church membership to population. Boston, due to its location and prominence felt the effects of colonial development sooner than some of the isolated inland communities on the colonial frontier, Darrett B. Rutman, *Winthrop’s Boston: Portrait of a Puritan Town 1630-1649*, (University of North Carolina, 1965).

<sup>686</sup> Hall discusses the various reasons why colonists valued membership or attendance to religious services. Some clearly attended out of religious devotion while others came primarily for the social connections provided by regular attendance to the weekly meeting, David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England*, (Alfred A Knopf, 1989), 138.

<sup>687</sup> Rutman extrapolates from his data that “by the end of 1649 the 484 communicants of the First Church [in Boston] represented certainly no more than two-thirds of the town’s families and less than one-half of the town’s total adult male population,” Rutman, *Winthrop’s Boston*, 58, 146-147; Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, 100.

<sup>688</sup> Brown contends that with the establishment of secular tribunals in the place of ecclesiastical courts permitted the civil magistrate to inflict fines, corporal punishment, and imprisonment upon adulterers and drunkards even if they were not members of a particular congregation. Thus the practice of excommunication could be reserved for offending members of the covenanted flock, Brown, “The Keys of the Kingdom.”

<sup>689</sup> *Ibid*, 561.

into why the fear of spiritual damnation did not continue to be compelling. If the fear of spiritual damnation did not warrant continued usage of excommunication, then was it ever really the motivating factor for repenting members? Did approval from a competing ecclesiastical leader negate the judgment of another minister's chastisement? Or is it possible that for a rebellious Puritan, the spiritual significance of excommunication simply did not match the weight of social rejection? The spiritual consequences perhaps represented a more potent and eternal form of punishment, but one that was delayed until the afterlife. The more temporal form of social exclusion might have signified a less severe consequence, but its effect was immediate.

Accounts of penitent members, who returned to the flock and were received back into society, do not definitively reveal their motives.<sup>690</sup> Despite the goal of reconciliation for wayward communicants, perhaps the greater reason for returning members remained social in nature. Eternal damnation could be denied but social ostracization was more difficult to ignore. If the principle objective of repentant Puritans was to regain lost social benefits, then excommunication defeated the ultimate purposes of church discipline. In the pursuit of conformity, congregations risked readmitting hypocritical members who did not possess a heartfelt conviction for acceptable community behavior. Despite the earnestness of Puritans seeking genuine "visible saints," the practice of excommunication created an atmosphere of coercion. Conformity did not guarantee sincerity or unity of purpose. As early as the seventeenth century, Sir Richard Saltonstall questioned John

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<sup>690</sup> Oberholzer describes numerous accounts from church records documenting the return of excommunicates but they were merely required to provide a verbal confession. They were not required to reveal the reason or motive for their return beyond the repentance. Oberholzer, *Delinquent Saints*.

Cotton on the issue of coerced conformity in regard to church attendance.<sup>691</sup> Saltonstall wondered if intolerance of nonconformity might produce hypocrisy instead of piety. Cotton responded, “If the worship be lawful in itself, the magistrate compelling him to come to it, compelleth him not to sin, but the sin is in his will that needs to be compelled to Christian duty.”<sup>692</sup> For Cotton, coercion was justifiable in the quest for conformity. Just as Hall demonstrated the variety of motives for attending a weekly religious service, a variety of motives might have driven censured members to reconcile to the church.<sup>693</sup> The desire for social inclusion, particularly in localized communities early in the century, provided great incentive for communal conformity. The members’ desire for social inclusion directly contributed to the power and influence of Congregational clergy while the forces of communalism remained strong. But as communalism dissipated, clerical authority waned.

Historians have linked the decline of localism to notable growth in individualistic thought during the eighteenth century.<sup>694</sup> The first and second generations of Puritans enjoyed a high degree of conformity aided by mutual watchfulness.<sup>695</sup> Yet, it would be too simplistic to suggest that the early colonists’ commitment to the commonwealth indicates their altruism in contrast to the self-centered individualism of the next

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<sup>691</sup> Isaac Backus, *History of New England*, (Arno Press, 1969), 198-200.

<sup>692</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>693</sup> Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment*, 138.

<sup>694</sup> Lockridge, *A New England Town*, 183; Breen, “Persistent Localism;” Cook, *The Fathers of the Towns*; Greven, *Four Generations*; Daniel Scott Smith, “The Demographic History of colonial New England,” *Journal of Economic History*, 32, (1972), 165-183; Heyrman, *Commerce and Culture*.

<sup>695</sup> In the first scantily populated communities, mutual watchfulness was an effective method of maintaining conformity to community standards. Easily identified obstinate members faced formidable community pressure encouraging them to repent.

generations. Certainly, the first covenanted communities in the colonies had great incentive to prioritize the goodwill of the community over the well-being of the individual. As a group, the original settlers had shared a determination to risk an oceanic crossing in order to settle in the New World. Their “errand into the wilderness” bound them together as they collectively and voluntarily established community in a distant land.<sup>696</sup> Few early colonists relished the idea of survival against the elements and native inhabitants without the support of the group. There was strength in numbers. The original settlers needed each other. When survival depended upon the solidarity of the whole, there was high motivation to suppress personal pursuits in favor of the entire community; in this case, the most self-seeking and individualistic goal *was* the good of the community.

It is clear that the eighteenth-century colonists more willingly sacrificed conformity in the pursuit of their own self-interest. Second- and third-generation colonists expended less concern and effort toward the well-being of the whole community. By this time, safety in the burgeoning population no longer required a high level of cohesion within a covenanted community. Mutual watchfulness also became a more difficult process within a growing population. Furthermore, second- and third generation New Englanders were not transplanted Englishmen anxious to separate themselves from the Church of England. While these later colonists may have accepted the tenants of Puritanism with greater or lesser degrees of conviction, they did not share the original determination of their forefathers who chose to relocate in the New World.

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<sup>696</sup> Miller, *Errand in the Wilderness*.

As the colonies permitted increasing diversity of religious belief and personal behavior, community solidarity lost much of its force.

Yet this did not mark the beginning of individualism. James F. Cooper argued, “a spirit of individualism eroded the communitarian ideals in which Congregationalism was grounded.”<sup>697</sup> However, it would be more accurate to contend that the social transformation that accompanied population growth and geographic expansion *negated* the communitarian ideals upon which Congregationalism was grounded. While communal conformity among the original settlers may have contributed to the success of their “errand,” over the years, the growth in population, increasing stability of colonial communities, rising educational levels, economic strain, and greater religious diversity reduced their dependence upon communitarian ideals.<sup>698</sup> Without the need for solidarity, the forces of localism dissipated. Colonial society undeniably felt the effects of increasing secularism during the eighteenth century, but it is misleading to blame the “fecklessly competitive individualism” of a new generation of egocentric colonists.<sup>699</sup> Rather, the dissipation of localism permitted individuals to pursue their own best interests in an increasingly tolerant social environment no longer dependent upon conformity.

The force of excommunication was only as powerful as the limits of localism. As population growth and religious competition matured various communities, the force of church discipline decreased respectively. Competition in the religious landscape and

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<sup>697</sup> James F. Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties: the Congregationalists in Colonial Massachusetts*, (Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>698</sup> The stability of colonial communities refers to the longevity of their establishment, particularly as the line of frontier continued to encroach further into native-inhabited land.

<sup>699</sup> Lockridge, *A New England Town*, 190.

the rise of religious toleration not only diminished the effect of church discipline, it diminished the authority of the clergy. Early in the colonial period, the clerical prerogative to initiate excommunication functioned as a significant tool of negotiation for clergy. In localized communities where church members depended upon the mutual inclusiveness, excommunication could represent a tremendous weapon of social exclusion in the hands of the clergy. But this tool would lose its significance in the eighteenth century as communal conformity gave way to the strain of population growth and religious competition.

#### *4.2.2 Population Growth and Social Realignment*

Colonial expansion did not simply result in additional communities comprised of the newest inhabitants sprinkled among older established towns.<sup>700</sup> Rather, the explosive growth of population strained the social mores of pre-existing covenanted communities and disrupted the stability of social conformity. The rapid growth of colonial towns often ended up dividing the community. The divisions commonly resulted in the establishment of an additional church in the community and division within a congregation provided an opportunity for social realignment. Colonists who had earlier been covenanted together into one church and community and whose differences may have been suppressed for the good of the whole, could now express their dissenting views by establishing or joining another Congregational church.

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<sup>700</sup> Bushman's charts of town and parish development in Connecticut demonstrates the interspersed placement of newer towns and parishes among those first established, Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, Appendix I, 291-293.

In Westborough, Parkman first recorded the efforts of members who were petitioning the Assembly for a division of the town in 1743.<sup>701</sup> Parkman visited parishioners within his jurisdiction to discuss their absences and received excuses regarding the convenience of attending a closer meetinghouse, which was less crowded, but eventually the parishioners owned up to a preference for another minister's preaching style.<sup>702</sup> One member stressed to Parkman that he was not "disgusted" with him or the church and gave no indication that he would have boycotted the services had no other worship options been available. It is also apparent that the member's concerns were not severe enough to warrant leaving Congregationalism for a dissenting church. But the availability of *another* Congregational church, which perhaps only differed in style, perpetuated social realignment.<sup>703</sup> Attendance at a new church placed the member within a new mutual covenant with different members while remaining in the same community. The member's religious needs were met, but Parkman's jurisdiction over the member was severed.

Colonists often justified the establishment of a new church by lamenting the distance and travel conditions of 'outliers.'<sup>704</sup> But the practical effect of church divisions

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<sup>701</sup> Feb. 14, 1744, Francis G. Walett, ed., *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782 First Part Three volumes in One, 1719-1755*, (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, 1974), 90.

<sup>702</sup> Ibid, July 9, 1744, 100.

<sup>703</sup> Ibid, Parkman recorded that Fay's concerns had nothing to do with spiritual concerns, rather they were issues of preaching style.

<sup>704</sup> Meetinghouse disputes are peppered throughout New England church records. The initial location of the first meetinghouse rarely satisfied everyone as the community grew in population and geographic size. These disputes could be vicious as members bickered over where to construct a new meetinghouse and often resulted in a church division. Meetinghouse disputes were not isolated to a particular moment in colonial history but continued to erupt whenever the population in a given area grew to a point of supporting another congregation. In 1723, for the people of Sudbury, the river presented a formidable obstacle between the meetinghouse and many of the congregation. High water frequently prevented many

lay in the depletion of the original congregation's tax base.<sup>705</sup> Unpaid ministerial dues became difficult to collect from parishioners who had placed their loyalty and membership in a new church.<sup>706</sup> While the strain of dividing communities undoubtedly created adverse effects on community networks, no other social position felt the stress more poignantly than the office of the ministry.<sup>707</sup> The salary arrearages resulting from the awkward and drawn out establishment of new congregations affected the clergy's financial superiority over his flock. Beyond the fiscal realities, the unwillingness to comply with contractual salaries created angst and discouragement among clergy who found themselves the unsuspecting victims of the social transformation of the developing colonies stimulated by population growth, religious competition, and currency crises.<sup>708</sup>

James Schmotter argues that colonial clergy were *not* "trapped by the forces of social change;" rather "their status, prestige, and influence doomed to decline because New England was becoming a secular society." He contends that the continued influence

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from attending church so the people on the west side of the river obtained permission from the General Assembly to establish another church. But while members may have explained the existence of a new church with the ease of attendance, it appears that a deeper conflict may have been brewing. As pastor in Sudbury, Israel Loring, appears to have been suffering with his salary in arrears. When the newly formed group offered him a settlement package of 100£, he gladly accepted and left his previous congregation without a minister or much of their previous congregation, Clifford Kenyon Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...: with bibliographical and other notes, Vols. V-XVIII*, (Oxford University Press, 1937), Lockridge, *A New England Town*.

<sup>705</sup> Feb. 19, 1744, much to Parkman's chagrin, the North Side began to cut off their ministerial support before they even received permission to organize a new congregation, *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, 92.

<sup>706</sup> *Ibid*, Parkman spent the next decade complaining over the unpaid salary support from this contentious year in Westborough. The exiting parishioners refused to pay their just dues and the remaining members refused to compensate for their delinquency.

<sup>707</sup> James W. Schmotter, "Ministerial Careers in Eighteenth-Century New England: The Social Context, 1700-1760," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Winter (1975), 261.

<sup>708</sup> The remainder of Parkman's journal is filled with accounts, too numerous to list, of despair, lost sleep, and anger over his treatment during the division of the Westborough, *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*.

of revivalists prove that ministers could remain “a powerful force” in the lives of New Englanders. Instead, Schmotter finds the explanation for clerical decline in the “overwhelming attention ministers paid to their own professional problems.”<sup>709</sup> I agree with Schmotter that in many ways, colonial clergy were their own worst enemy. Their efforts to restore power to the office of the ministry by simply demanding deference and authority coupled with incessant complaints regarding salaries was largely ineffective; it often served only to antagonize and further alienate their parishioners. However, I contend that the clergy *were* the unwitting casualties of social forces beyond their control in ways that uniquely victimized the office of the ministry. Currency crises affected them more than any other profession specifically because they operated under fixed contracts and usually could only negotiate their salary at a single point at the start of their career. The explosion of population growth rearranged parish boundaries and adversely affected ministerial jurisdiction. And the increase in educated professions undermined the clergy’s educational superiority. These forces steadily diminished clerical authority while medical and legal professions enjoyed increasing status and influence.<sup>710</sup> The fault that does belong squarely upon the Congregational clergy, however, is their *reliance* on these tenuous social and economic factors for their authority. Had the ministerial authority of the established clergy rested more fully on their personal piety and devotion, they might have withstood the pressures of population growth, geographic expansion and the invasion of competing itinerants.

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<sup>709</sup> James W. Schmotter, “Ministerial Careers in Eighteenth-Century New England: The Social Context, 1700-1760,” *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Winter (1975), 261.

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid*, Calhoun, *Professional Lives in America*.

Parkman struggled to understand why his contract with a given community could be so easily negated during the course of establishing new parish boundaries. While town meetings were filled with discussion of the logistics of dividing the town, his twenty-year-old contract became null and void under the new arrangement. Forced to renegotiate a salary package with the remaining members, the situation could have offered a minister a chance to rectify any discontentment with his last contract. But in Parkman's case, the investment of a twenty-year career in one location negated the primary negotiating tool available to ministerial candidates: the ability to refuse a contract with little or no recourse to their personal lives. For in this situation, the congregation held most of the power; if Parkman refused their offer, they merely looked for a new candidate. Parkman, on the other hand, would be forced to relocate his large family and seek a new position in another town in the middle of his ministerial career.

The growth in population and the establishment of new churches ultimately weakened the ecclesiastical authority of ministers over their parishioners. Despite the dramatic 400 percent growth in Andover, as early as 1640, the growth of church membership throughout the colonies lagged behind the escalating population.<sup>711</sup> Although the first generation of colonists participated in Puritanism with near unanimity, in Dedham, nearly one-half of all adult men were not members of the church in 1662.<sup>712</sup> The Half-Way Covenant did return many colonists back into the fold by increasing ministerial jurisdiction over the population but by the eighteenth century parishioners in many locations could easily relocate to nearby congregations to escape admonishment

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<sup>711</sup> Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, 100.

<sup>712</sup> Lockridge, *The First One Hundred Years*, 34.

and oversight from their pastors. This decline in congregational and clerical loyalty escalated as the colonies increasingly offered a marketplace of religious options within Congregationalism. Population growth and religious competition from nearby congregations diminished the authority of the clergy and altered their tools of negotiation.

#### 4.2.3 *Opportunities for Ministers*

Population growth and geographic expansion certainly created adverse effects on the office of the ministry but it also opened a host of ministerial career opportunities for clergy. With a higher density of population, the northeastern counties of Massachusetts generally provided the most appealing pulpit assignments in terms of salary and prestige early in the century. In 1700, this region employed 45 percent of Congregational clergy; by 1760, only 22 percent served in these counties. Later in the century, new settlements on the frontier began to draw ministers further west and into the backcountry of New Hampshire and Maine. Between the years of 1700 and 1760, the number of congregational clergy in these backcountry pulpits had risen from 6 to 60.<sup>713</sup>

In terms of supply and demand, the number of Harvard and Yale graduates failed to increase after 1720 but the flow of New Englanders to the west creating more empty pulpits than the supply of available trained ministers could fill.<sup>714</sup> In 1780, Ezra Stiles compiled a list of candidates to the ministry among the colleges of New England as well as the number of vacant parishes within the New England colonies. He reported a mere

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<sup>713</sup> Schmotter, "Ministerial Careers."

<sup>714</sup> *Ibid.*

80 candidates available to fill 245 vacancies.<sup>715</sup> This figure did not even include numerous empty pulpits in the Ohio valley. Early in the eighteenth century, congregations routinely considered several candidates before choosing between them. But in post-revolutionary days, the abundance of vacancies presented ministerial candidates with the dynamic of buyer's market.

The frontier could certainly offer a brutal existence for ministerial candidates raised and trained in the relative safety and civility of established colonial towns, but the demand for clergy late in the century was relentless. Anxious to settle clergy, proprietors and investors recognized that an established congregation attached intangible value to their land. "The great difference between New Englanders and the other colonists," according to Stiles, was their insistence upon vital religion in their settlements. While other colonies had little regard for religion in their settlements, New Englanders could not "be persuaded or induced to remove to new settlements without they have a sure prospect of the Gospel Ministry."<sup>716</sup> Stiles claimed that it was a "known fact" in New England that an established ministry attributed "such value to Lands" even when it promised compulsory ecclesiastical or civil taxes to support it.<sup>717</sup> Twenty years later, the lack of ministers in some areas forced concessions in Congregational polity. The town of Whitestown, "100 miles up the Mohawk R. beyond Albany" sought ordination for their

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<sup>715</sup> Jan. 11, 1780, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, V. II, 402-405.

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid*, Nov. 20, 1772 in a letter to Dr. Philip Furneaux, 473.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibid*.

prospective minister before he settled among them because they lacked any settled ministers in the area to perform the ordination ceremony on site.<sup>718</sup>

But while frontier posts may have been less than attractive to the ambitious ministerial candidate, the frontier offered discouraged ministers an opportunity to escape a miserable existence within a particular congregation. Jeremy Belknap had settled in Dover in February of 1767. In a letter to a friend in 1778, he described the hardship he endured with a congregation who continually failed to pay his relatively moderate salary of 100£ a year. In lieu of his congregation's deficiency, friends met his needs but Belknap worried that he was becoming a burden even to those who had so "cheerfully" contributed to his support. He confessed that the probability of remaining in Dover grew increasingly remote, "especially at this time of the year," when he settled his annual accounts. Belknap refused to present his congregation with complaint or stir up any "controversy" with his people lest it discourage any successor from settling in his place. But he tentatively investigated options for employment in the west as he considered his options. In spite of available empty pulpits, Belknap's complete frustration with the ministry even led him to consider giving it up entirely. He inquired into any occupation which might provide a "decent maintenance and proper education" for his family. Beyond that "principal concern," he merely hoped to find a livelihood, which might "suit his capacity."<sup>719</sup>

In an additional letter to the same friend, Belknap inquired for another discouraged clerical colleague regarding employment opportunities in "*Ohio country*."

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<sup>718</sup> Ibid, Dec. 29, 1792, 438.

<sup>719</sup> 1786, Belknap to Hazard, *Collections of the M.H.S., Vol. II, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., (Boston)*, 428.

Belknap's friend, whose support was "small, has a mind to remove to the more fertile and enlivening regions of the S.W." He had a large family to support but was willing to farm; he could also practice medicine or tutor. However, he sought the facts regarding the "real state of danger from the Indians," the cost and terms of acquiring land, and a location where someone with his skills should settle.<sup>720</sup> Still other ministers headed west, not to escape a difficult situation, but primarily to minister to the Indians. In 1772, several men were "ordained to the ministry with a special View to a Mission among the Indians at Muskingham beyond the Ohio, about 800 Miles off, where a remarkable Door is opened for the Gospel."<sup>721</sup>

Although many of their predecessors had enjoyed life-long tenures with one flock, late in the eighteenth century the availability of western lands presented new opportunities to discouraged ministers who consciously traded lengthy tenure for a different assignment. The decline of ministerial loyalty to specific congregations did not stem directly from new opportunities but as frustrations mounted among New England clergy who felt abused by their flocks, the options introduced by geographic expansion offered them a new and powerful tool of negotiation.

#### 4.2.4 *Revolutionary Impact on Pastoral Relations*

The American Revolution presented yet another blow to the office of the ministry. Already struggling with the loss of educational and financial superiority, the invasion of

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<sup>720</sup> Ibid, 430.

<sup>721</sup> June 11, 1772, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. I*, 242.

itinerant ministers, population growth and westward expansion, colonial clergy would find that the revolution offered a further challenge to their relationship with their congregations. By scattering congregations in war torn areas, depleting the membership of males as they were called into battle, and the displacement of ministers who traveled with regiments as chaplains, many lay-clerical bonds were severed beyond repair. Post-revolutionary America presented a brand new slate of churches seeking ministers and thus offered ministers with even more options than their predecessors had enjoyed. The abundance of ministerial opportunities increased the clergy's personal autonomy but it did not restore authority to the office of the ministry. Rather, some clergy complained that the success of the Revolution had emboldened colonists to slight the sanctity of the lay-clerical bond.

The late contest with Great-Britain, glorious as it hath been for their country, hath been peculiarly unfortunate for the clergy. Perhaps no set of men, whose hearts were so roughly engaged in it, or who contributed in so great a degree to its success, have suffered more by it. The people, having emancipated themselves from the British government, and felt their competence to carry every point they chose, have, in some places at least, forgotten that they could never be emancipated from the bonds of justice. They have been too ready to suppose that their declaration and authority were sufficient to dissolve the most solemn engagements, and that *the people could do no wrong*.<sup>722</sup>

Ecclesiastical and civil conformity within a tight-knit covenanted community, which undergirded ministerial authority in the seventeenth century, strained under westward geographic expansion in the next century. The Revolutionary War provided yet another and possibly the final blow to localism. The intensity of warfare on New England soil scattered the populace and fragmented community ties. Those who fled

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<sup>722</sup> Peter Thatcher, *Observations upon the Present State of the Clergy of New England*, (Boston, 1783), 5.

their homes and churches occasionally attempted to reassemble churches to their pre-war state but members did not always choose to return and ministers were sometimes already committed to other pulpit assignments. The Revolutionary War dispersed many New England congregations beyond any hope of reassembly.<sup>723</sup>

During the height of warfare, whether it was the shorter stint of King William's War or the lengthier Revolutionary War, church and community conflict tended to level off as New Englanders prioritized the more immediate concerns of survival.<sup>724</sup>

Congregations operated in maintenance mode during wartime and were pleased simply to keep the doors open and a minister in the pulpit. New Hampshire conscripted their clergy leaving congregations struggling to maintain pulpit supply. Generally, older colleagues reassumed the bulk of the preaching schedule in place of younger clergy who headed off to battle. Clergy could also pay a substitute to serve for them.<sup>725</sup>

However, many ministers eagerly laid aside their pulpit duties to serve their colonies. Like other clergymen, Abiel Leonard served as a chaplain in the Revolutionary

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<sup>723</sup> Although the congregation considered disbanding, West Church relocated to Nova Scotia during the Revolutionary War. Taking church records, the silver and a few personal belongings, the congregation reorganized their church in Nova Scotia. Unfortunately, Gen. Gage revoked the pass he had given the minister and had him arrested. By the time the pastor was eventually acquitted a nearby church invited him to preach. West Church found the economic conditions in the new location intolerable so they returned to Boston. Finding the situation no better there, West Church officially disbanded although their minister agreed to preach to them for voluntary contribution, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XIV, 282; Ezra Stiles' congregation in Newport fell upon similar hardship when the British took over their meetinghouse, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*.

<sup>724</sup> April 19, 1747, "Sunday. Very thin meeting; people fearing to come, partly by reason of what the Indians have done..." Although war had not yet been declared, tensions between colonists and the Indians were rising and affected the church. Smith mentioned many killings and captures among the people but offered little commentary on their spiritual condition, William Willis, ed., *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith and the Rev. Samuel Deane*, (Portland, 1849), 128.

<sup>725</sup> When New Hampshire conscripted their clergy, Jonathan Searle paid one-third the cost of his substitute in May of 1777. But he only ended up serving for 10 days, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. XVI, 91.

war. When he heard reports from battles in Lexington and Concord, he promptly sold the parsonage and marched with his regiment.<sup>726</sup> In March of 1776, Enos Hitchcock was appointed chaplain to the Massachusetts Continentals.<sup>727</sup> He found his way to his regiment by lodging with other clergy along the way. The following year, his congregation granted him a year's leave of absence and he served in an additional Brigade. Another minister was alerted with an alarm from Ticonderoga in the middle of his sermon. Legend maintains that he grabbed his gun from its usual spot in the corner of the pulpit and led his company to battle.<sup>728</sup>

Congregations generally supported their departing ministers during war, but clerical salaries presented a difficult problem for both clergy and congregations alike.<sup>729</sup> In addition to the inconvenience that absentee clergy caused congregations, wartime inflation prompted some ministers to consider additional employment. Phineas Whitney explained to his flock in a town meeting that without some addition to his subscription, he would need to seek assistance through some other business.<sup>730</sup> In 1779, the town responded by voting unanimously to "make good the Salary of Rev. Mr. Whitney, during the War, according to the original Contract." As his contribution to his "Country's

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<sup>726</sup> Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XIV, 452; Samuel B. Webb, *Correspondence and Journals*, Vol. I, (New York, 1893), 225.

<sup>727</sup> Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XVI, 476-477.

<sup>728</sup> Henry Ames Blood, *History of Temple, N. H.* (Boston, 1866), 25 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XV, 334.

<sup>729</sup> In 1777, depreciation was so rapid that Jonathan Barns "gave the whole of his salary for one sucking Calf," Robert F. Lawrence, *The New Hampshire Churches*, (Claremont, 1856), 183-184 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XVII, 337.

<sup>730</sup> Seth Chandler, *History of the Town of Shirley*, (Shirley, 1883), 224 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XV, 529-530.

Cause,” he requested that the People deduct from his Salary the taxes against his estate which anyone else would have incurred without a ministerial exemption.<sup>731</sup> John Ellis offered to surrender £100 of his salary while he served as chaplain, but as the war dragged on, his congregation grew impatient and formally dismissed him in 1782.<sup>732</sup>

Other congregations showed more sympathy to their ministers and voted in raises to compensate for war inflation.<sup>733</sup> The *Massachusetts Spy* listed the generosity of some parishes in order to spur others on to similar charity. “...In these days of too general declension and oppression” colonists were encouraged to “give such a portion to the suffering clergy.”<sup>734</sup> Some ministers had relocated because they could no longer exist on a salary depreciated by Revolutionary inflation.<sup>735</sup>

New England congregations in the line of battle took the brunt of warfare when their meetinghouses became confiscated by friendly or enemy armies. Regulars removed the steeple from West Church lest it be used to signal the rebel lines.<sup>736</sup> Later General Gage turned the church into barracks for his troops. The church in Newport, under the care of Ezra Stiles, experienced a similar fare. “The Officers were taking up house for

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<sup>731</sup> *Boston Gazette*, July 12, 1779, 3/2.

<sup>732</sup> Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XII, 546.

<sup>733</sup> Joseph Bean in Wrentham; Jacob Cushing in Waltham, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XII, 240, 254 and Thankful Rice, *ibid*, Vol. XIII, 292.

<sup>734</sup> *Massachusetts Spy*, June 24, 1779, 3/1.

<sup>735</sup> Ebenezer Grosvenor in Scituate, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XVI, 435.

<sup>736</sup> Simeon Howard, Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XIV, 282.

Barracks, & among others have taken my House & Meetinghouse – which last it is said they intend to make an Assmly Room for Balls & C after taking down the Pews.”<sup>737</sup>

The Newport congregation scattered in the face of British hostilities. Stiles stayed in town as long as he dared; even “lodging my diary outside my house” and keeping entries on loose paper until he felt that danger had passed.<sup>738</sup> In September of 1775, Stiles reported that two thirds of his congregation had already fled; only 30 families remained out of his usual 150 Families.<sup>739</sup> By the first of the year, he figured that of the “9200 souls in Town last year are not about 2500 left.”<sup>740</sup>

As some congregations dispersed under the pressures of war, other communities actively sought the services of displaced clergymen. At his request, “Revd Mr. Brett” was dismissed from the church in Freetown for lack of support and scarcity of members; the church was “reduced to only three Male members, & he having a Call elsewhere.”<sup>741</sup> Still holding out in Newport, Stiles also received calls from other congregations to come and preach for the winter.<sup>742</sup> Some of his “Society” judged it “expedient” for his immediate safety and urged him to accept the offer. Others objected and gathered a

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<sup>737</sup> Dec. 11, 1776, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. I*, 96.

<sup>738</sup> *Ibid*, Dec. 15, 1775, 643.

<sup>739</sup> *Ibid*, Sept. 3, Oct. 17, 1775, 611, 625.

<sup>740</sup> *Ibid*, Jan. 2, 1776, 649.

<sup>741</sup> *Ibid, Vol. II*, May 5, 1776, 12.

<sup>742</sup> *Ibid*, Sep. 25, 1776, Stiles accepted a temporary arrangement, but he turned down Taunton who was attempting to find a minister after their pastor’s death. Believing that the Newport church was already beyond recovery, they asked him to settle. He declined; “I hoped it might please God that my Congregation at Newpt might be gathered again, and that I should by no means seek a Disconnection from them at present,” 58.

subscription of 60 dollars to entice him to stay.<sup>743</sup> Stiles finally agreed to move out of harm's way but only until "his scattered flock can be reassembled."<sup>744</sup>

Unfortunately, for the Newport congregation and their beloved pastor, this dream never materialized. Warfare simply altered too many social and environmental factors. Stiles had relocated to Dighton in 1776 to escape the dangers of Rhode Island. After only a year, he began to receive additional offers. The First Church of Portsmouth approached him to settle among them. But additional opportunities also became available. Charles Chauncy, offering up half of the weekly contribution, invited Stiles to aid him in his work in Boston. Chauncy listed several other congregations whose pulpits stood vacant assuring Stiles that there was a dearth of ministerial employment in Boston and the surrounding areas. Yet, Stiles wavered at the prospect of permanent settlement. He was willing to assist in whatever way he was capable but reminded his inquirers that his pastoral relation with Newport had not been dissolved. "Dur<sup>g</sup> their Dispersion I am ready to serve any vacant Chh," but "If this Disper. Shd be of long Continuance, my temp<sup>y</sup> resid. in any part. Chh might phps. terminate in a settlement."<sup>745</sup> From Stile's perspective, he was living in an "exiled state."<sup>746</sup>

To top it off, Stiles received yet another offer, which would compete with his hopes of returning to Newport. In September of 1777, the Corporation of Yale College

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<sup>743</sup> Ibid, *Vol. I*, Oct. 17, 23, 28, 625-628.

<sup>744</sup> Ibid, 658-659.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid, in a letter to Rev. Dr. Haven, Feb. 7, 1777, 121.

<sup>746</sup> Ibid, in a letter to Dr. Chauncy, Mar. 13, 1777, 144.

elected him to the Presidency of the College.<sup>747</sup> In light of this opportunity, the church in Portsmouth where he was providing pulpit supply lost no time in drawing up a formal and unanimous offer in hopes of keeping him. Meanwhile, Stiles sought counsel from colleagues and former parishioners at Newport. Those of his former flock who could be reached hesitated to release him from his pastoral relation but understood the futility of maintaining a contract, which could not be practically fulfilled. The Revolution had decimated the Newport congregation beyond any viable hope of restoration. One former member lamented, “I wish there was a prospect of your Newport<sup>l</sup> flock ever returning; but alas! They are scattered up and down the Land like Sheep without a Shepherd, and it is probable that many of them will never again return to Newport.”<sup>748</sup>

To the displeasure of both clergy and congregations alike, the Revolutionary War disrupted many lay-clerical relationships. Thus clerical tenure declined as post-revolutionary clergy tended to minister in four or more locations during their career while seventeenth-century clergy were likely to pastor in only one or perhaps two congregations in their lifetime.<sup>749</sup> Historians have tracked the trend toward shorter clerical tenures in one location throughout the eighteenth century little consensus exists

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<sup>747</sup> Ibid, 208-209. This appointment was fraught with political significance and not a complete surprise to Stiles. He claimed that it was unexpected, but only because he had given up hope for the position. Doctrinal differences had impeded any prior election so in spite of his supporters’ endorsement, Stiles determined “not chuse to hear of it, & the mention of such a Thing has for some years been painful & disgustful.” He chose instead to concentrate on the difficulties of such a position requiring the governance of 150-180 “Gentlemen Students” whom he characterized as a “Bundle of Wild Fire not easily controlled & governed.” Furthermore, Stiles recognized that his election (in spite of his doctrine) was designed specifically to “prevent the Assembly’s building another College.”

<sup>748</sup> Ibid, Dec. 19, 1777, in a letter from Hon. William Ellery Esq. to Ezra Stiles, 250.

<sup>749</sup> Both Scott and Hatch discuss this phenomenon, Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (Yale University Press, 1989); Donald M. Scott, *From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry, 1750-1850*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978).

on its impetus.<sup>750</sup> Clergy did serve shorter terms late in the century and moved more freely from one flock to the next indicating less rigid adherence to the lay-clerical relation, but the displacement of wartime refugees severed even stable pastoral relations. Stiles faced no immediate conflict with his members and desperately wanted to reassemble his congregation. Even after he had settled into the presidency at Yale, he struggled to release his previous congregation when the remaining members eventually did settle another pastor.<sup>751</sup> But circumstances beyond anyone's control had distinctively and decisively altered the social and religious landscape.

Other churches simply never recovered from wartime strife. In 1790, William Bentley attended a review held in an "old Parish one mile from the harbor." No congregation had gathered in the meetinghouse for the past seven years and the building had fallen into much disrepair. Bentley explained, "After the Harbour was settled this parish being divided the adherents to the old Church were few, & much lessened in numbers by the war."<sup>752</sup> Following the death of their minister, their diminished membership never managed to secure a new minister.

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<sup>750</sup> Calhoun charts ministerial tenure but the actual point of decline is complicated by whether one measures from the end of long term ministries or the beginning or short-term ministries, Calhoun, *Professional Lives in America*; James Schmotter, "Ministerial Careers;" Cook, *The Fathers of the Towns*; Scott, *From Office to Profession*; Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*; Erik R. Seeman, *Pious Persuasions: Laity and Clergy in Eighteenth Century New England*, (John Hopkins University Press, 1999).

<sup>751</sup> Stiles' attachment to his previous congregation remained so strong that in eight years into the presidency at Yale in 1786, some still suspected that he had not yet relinquished all thought of returning to Newport. He had continued to visit and preach on occasion through the years and remarked that they were "unwilling to relinquish me and consider my pastoral relation dissolved: they would gladly Consent to my Absence during the War, but would consider me as their pastor." When they finally called another ministerial candidate to settle permanently, Stiles was critical of his theology and initially unwilling to participate in the ordination ceremony, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. III*, 204, 213, 219.

<sup>752</sup> Bentley, D.D., William, *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts, Vol. 1-4, 1784 - 1819*, (Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1962), 195.

Late in the century, other war torn congregations reassembled with a different roster of members and found themselves seeking a pastor from a largely depleted supply of ministers. Fewer Harvard and Yale graduates chose pulpit careers and some existing clergy continued serving for the duration of the war.<sup>753</sup> Congregations increasingly approached other settled ministers attempting to entice them with a better location or salary. Settled in the parish of Linebrook, George Lesslie diligently battled a declining membership and revolutionary inflation. When Thomas Kendall rode in to ask him to pastor a newly established church in Washington, New Hampshire, Lesslie secured a dismissal from Linebrook.<sup>754</sup> Stiles' journal is filled with such broken pastoral relationships; "Another among Congreg<sup>a</sup>, viz., Mr. Sprout rent from his Chh. At Guilford without their consent, to get a better settlement at Phildel<sup>a</sup> – D<sup>f</sup> Whitaker from his Chh. At Chelsea for a better Living at Salem – Mr. Hopkins, &c., &c."<sup>755</sup>

During the revolutionary period, the very prominent Brattle Street congregation had been struggling to fill their pulpit. They called Peter Thatcher, known for his oratory skills, away from Malden in 1784. The newspapers gossiped that he accepted to escape the poverty he endured at Malden.<sup>756</sup> Thatcher refuted the rumors in the *Independent*

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<sup>753</sup> Schmotter, "Ministerial Careers."

<sup>754</sup> Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XII, 285.

<sup>755</sup> May 3, 1770, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, Vol. I, 49.

<sup>756</sup> *Salem Gazette*, Dec. 27, 1784, Jan. 4, 1785.

*Chronicle*, but with his new salary package, Thatcher became the best-paid minister in Boston.<sup>757</sup>

In a more unusual case, a church desperate to steal another congregation's pastor negotiated his release for a price. William Emerson preached the artillery Election sermon to the favor of influential members of First Church in Boston so they approached Harvard Church to secure his release. "After a few months' negotiation, and the refusal of an offer of eight hundred dollars made by the city society, the sum of one thousand dollars was accepted by the Harvard committee, and Mr. Emerson was honorably dismissed by ecclesiastical council, September 7, 1799."<sup>758</sup> The lack of clerical supply contributed to this increasing practice of "robbing" ministers from other churches. Early in the eighteenth century, such practice was considered unseemly and rarely occurred. But the dearth of trained ministers and the loss of the forces of localism contributed to congregational boldness.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the once sacred commitment between a congregation and their chosen pastor had lost much of its earlier luster. Early in the century, ministers were still negotiating under the shadow of the previous generations who had set a standard of permanency. When a congregation and a ministerial candidate anticipated a life-long tenure in one location, they both negotiated with longevity in mind. In fact, congregations were known to reduce settlement packages for older ministers, figuring in the amount of years they could hope to expect from an older pastor

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<sup>757</sup> *Independent Chronicle*, Dec. 30 in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XVII, 243. While these movements toward better paying positions initially seems to support Scott's concept of a "prestige ladder," it is important to note that many of these movements were instigated by congregations, not greedy ministers applying for higher salaries in more prestigious pulpits.

<sup>758</sup> Henry S. Norse, *The History of the Town of Harvard, Massachusetts, 1732-1893*, (Harvard, 1894), 214.

before they would be required to raise another settlement amount.<sup>759</sup> Ministerial candidates weighed their invitations carefully, wary of becoming trapped in an unpleasant lay-clerical relationship for the remainder of the lives.

But the length of lay-clerical relationships gradually succumbed to the loss of localism encouraged by population growth and the effects of revolutionary warfare in displacing ministers and scattering congregations. As these forces, which had previously bolstered ministerial authority began to lose significance, Congregational clergy were forced to compete without their previous educational and financial superiority. Midway through the century, they found themselves struggling to maintain their memberships as congregations began to compare the educated clergy against the itinerants promoting revivalism. The accumulation of these factors contributed to the loss of ministerial authority and significantly altered the relationship between clergy and congregations.

The lack of permanency in the relationship between a flock and its shepherd at the end of the century required a different type of lay-clerical negotiation than clergy and congregations had used at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Among Yale graduates who chose the pulpit between the years of 1700 and 1775, fully 79 percent served in only one pastorate throughout their career. In the last 25 years of the century, only 57 percent of Yale graduates who entered the ministry served a single pastorate.<sup>760</sup>

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<sup>759</sup> Upon settlement in 1754, New Braintree attempted to calculate the years of service left in Benjamin Ruggles. Noting that he had already served 30 years in the ministry, they determined that “forty years was as long as one minister with another commonly lived to supply the same pulpit so they had voted to give [Ruggles] about one-fourth as much as they would give a young man.” *Account of the observance of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary; of the incorporation of the town of New Braintree, Mass.*, (June 19, 1901).

<sup>760</sup> Scott, *From Office to Profession*, 3-4.

Daniel Calhoun offers an extensive analysis of clerical permanency in New England with data from Rhode Island and New Hampshire.<sup>761</sup> He charts the decline of lengthy pastorates and notices the sharpest decline in the early part of the nineteenth century.

Longevity of tenure may have still been a viable goal throughout the eighteenth century, but in the atmosphere of revivalism in the 1740s, sincerity of vital religion took precedence over everything else, including the sacred commitment between a congregation and its minister. Parishioners were unwilling to remain subjected to a minister who did not share their convictions simply to maintain the sanctity of a permanent ministry. In a permanent lay-clerical relationship, the candidacy process was the most significant moment of negation and represented a point of no return. But as career-ending disputes became more common, clergy were forced to negotiate their behavior more carefully throughout their careers.

Among Congregationalist clergy, the frequency of disputes with their congregations rose steadily from 22 percent in 1700 to 52 percent in 1750.<sup>762</sup> With the increase in conflict, the rate of dismissals resulting from lay-clerical disputes also grew. In 1700 and 1710, only 12 percent of all Congregational clergy would experience a severed relationship with their congregation at least once in the minister's lifetime. By 1750, this number of ministers had grown to 29 percent.<sup>763</sup> Schmotter also charted the

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<sup>761</sup> The impetus for shorter, multiple pastorates is difficult to isolate due to the differences based on the year the term ended versus the year the term began, Calhoun, *Professional Lives in America*, chapter 4.

<sup>762</sup> Schmotter, "Ministerial Careers," 266.

<sup>763</sup> *Ibid.*

source of lay-clerical conflict and found salary issues to be the most common issue of conflict between ministers and their congregations.<sup>764</sup>

In the system of Congregationalism, ecclesiastical councils had been set up to protect either the flock or the shepherd from injustice. While each church retained autonomy and possessed the right to refuse a council's advice,<sup>765</sup> councils were designed to function as a mediator in lay-clerical conflict. Ideally, a council of neighboring clergy would provide an objective view to a dispute.<sup>766</sup> But this feature of Congregationalism began to falter in the eighteenth century. Calling a council became tantamount to a threat against the opposing party. Because Congregationalism specified a "mutually" chosen ecclesiastical council, a refusal to accept the other's choice of a council could stymie any efforts at resolving a potentially career-ending conflict. William Balch summed up the quandary explaining why councils had lost effectiveness. "If there be one scheming Minister, or scheming Delegate more than half, you'll get the Case. And if there be one more opposing Minister or opposing Delegate we shall get it."<sup>767</sup> The ability of either side to handpick a sympathizing council negated the objectivity of the mediating power.<sup>768</sup>

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<sup>764</sup> Ibid, other common conflicts involved issues of doctrine, conduct, and meetinghouse sites, 257-261.

<sup>765</sup> Sept. 8, 1773, "Rev. Jn Walley was installed Pastor of Church in Bolton which had lately dismissed Rev. Mr. Goss.... A Minority of this Church adhered to Mr. Goss, and and a Council Dr. Chauncy Moderator advised them to walk as a Pastor and Church. A warm Controversy is arisen of the Power of a Church to dismiss its Pastor contrary to advice of Council – also on the Pastors Negative," *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. I*, 412.

<sup>766</sup> Walker, ed., *Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism*.

<sup>767</sup> *Letters from the First Church in Glocester*, (Boston, 1744), in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vols. VII, 299.

<sup>768</sup> It is possible that the ability to handpick sympathizing councils arose from the explosive growth in population. It is interesting that this complaint does not seem to be a concern in the previous century.

As fractured pastoral relations became more frequent, clergy sensed the vulnerability of their position. Under Congregationalism, the flock held significant power over the termination of their relationship to their minister. When a congregation initiated a dismissal of their pastor, they voted on the issue. But even when a minister sought the dismissal, he had to request it from the congregation and theoretically, wait upon them to approve it. Although early in the century congregations had dutifully dismissed clergy guilty of grievous offences, by the latter part of the eighteenth century, dismissals began to feel much more arbitrary to New England Congregational clergy.

From a clerical perspective, fickle congregations dismissed clergy at will. Stiles reported the unseemly dismissal in 1769 of Joseph Wheeler from the Harvard congregation after only 10 years of ministry. A “young boisterous” new preacher had “engaged their Affections, so that the pple were desirous of dropp<sup>g</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Wheeler for M<sup>r</sup> Johnson.”<sup>769</sup> Without any legitimate complaint against his morals or doctrine, the Harvard church called a council and promptly discharged their minister.

Even more disconcerting to Stiles was the contagious aspect of such behavior. After 30 years in the pulpit at Bolton, Massachusetts, Thomas Goss also fell victim to his congregation’s preferences. “Bolton caught the Spirit, tired out of a worthy pastor, want a new & more boisterous one.” Bolton called a total of “3 Councils – one ex parte – two mutual” to seal the deal but no legitimate offense could be found. All three councils cleared Goss of “Trifling accusations and declared him to be a worthy pastor.” Yet the church refused the advice of all councils and “*voted him dismissed contrary to his Desire*

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<sup>769</sup> Stiles included the charismatic new preacher’s reputation “of doubtful morals at Harv. Coll.,” *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. I*, 167-168.

&c.” The congregation admitted that they had “little or noth<sup>g</sup> ag<sup>l</sup> him,” still they maintained their right to seek a minister to their “Taste and Liking.”<sup>770</sup>

These cases marked a disturbing trend for Congregational clergy and stirred a “warm Controversy” over the “Power of a Church to dismiss its Pastor contrary to advice of Council – also on the Pastors Negative.”<sup>771</sup> Congregationalism rendered absolute power to individual congregations over their “officers.” Much as clergy despised any abuse of that power, they recognized the danger of altering this ecclesiastical structure; “If we once depart from the plenary power of Chhs over their officers – we may adopt a principle w<sup>c</sup> will justify the Pontificate.”<sup>772</sup> Familiar with the evils of clerical exploitation, Puritans had favored absolute autonomy to their congregations. For the most part, the system worked as designed, but late in the eighteenth century, clergy began to fret over the flock’s arbitrary use of that power. Stiles questioned, “Is it the will of Christ that the Brethren have the power of *Electing & Rejecting* their Pastors at pleasure?” But at the same time, he wondered if a “few instances of the Chhs abus<sup>g</sup> their power in rejecting a worthy pastor,” should lead the “Body of the pastors” to seek “such an alteration of the Eccl Policy...”<sup>773</sup> There were no easy answers and no simple solutions.

As a breach of the lay-clerical contract became more common, it lost much of its earlier stigma and changed the way congregations and clergy negotiated ministerial

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<sup>770</sup> Ibid.

<sup>771</sup> Ibid, Sept 8, 1773, 314.

<sup>772</sup> Ibid, 168.

<sup>773</sup> Ibid.

authority. By the end of the century, ministers attempted to regain some control over their futures. Rather than negate the power of the churches, clergy found ways to increase their leverage and expand their negotiating position. In 1782, several ministers serving as a “Committee of the Corpor<sup>a</sup>” traveled to Milford to “negotiate M<sup>r</sup> Wales’s Removal.”<sup>774</sup> Milford stubbornly refused to consent to their minister’s removal, take advice from an ecclesiastical council, or call a mutual council. They admitted that Wales could call one if he wished but they would “do nothing w<sup>c</sup> had the least Tendency to his Removal.” The committee reminded the congregation that although the pastoral relation was “sacred,” it was “not held so inviolable” that a people could not dismiss a minister whenever they so chose. Therefore, “by parity such might be the Case that a Minister might think it his duty to resign his pastoral Charge & remove to another service for Gd & the Chhs...”<sup>775</sup>

When the committee of ministers mentioned the “parity” of the situation, they revealed the heart of the issue. Weary of congregations dismissing pastors at will, the clergy supported Wales in his desire to leave without even addressing the issues leading to the dismissal. What was good for the flock seemed good for the shepherd. Clergy did not dispute the autonomy of congregations, but they began to demand more autonomy for themselves. If the strictures of Congregationalism could be used in favor of the congregation’s wishes, New England clergy would find ways to apply the technicalities of the Congregational platform in their own favor. Clergy would continue to negotiate within the confines of Congregationalism but they would find ways to gain more control

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<sup>774</sup> Jan. 9, 1782, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, Vol. III, 2.

<sup>775</sup> Ibid.

over their own futures. In his decision to leave East Hampton for the congregation in Litchfield, Lyman Beecher commented "...if I must make sacrifices, make them to the poor and not to the rich."<sup>776</sup> Beecher did not move to avoid the sacrifice of ministry, but he clearly valued the right of self-determination.

Throughout the decade of the 1780s, Stiles reported multiple fractured lay-clerical relations.<sup>777</sup> In Fairhaven, after the congregation offered him £120 to leave them, Sam Austin accepted their offer and called a council without the consent of his flock.<sup>778</sup> Fairhaven soon regretted their action, "dissatisfied with their Vote to give him so much," but found that they were legally obligated.<sup>779</sup> They hoped that refusing to vote him a formal dismissal might relieve them of their obligation but unfortunately it would also leave them with a minister they no longer wished to keep. Meanwhile, Austin secured another position at Worcester and sold his new house. Austin, in the new spirit of self-determining clergy, took matters in his own hands; when his pastoral position felt jeopardized, he took initiative to arrange for future employment. The scarcity of ministers to vacant pulpits opened up this venue for eighteenth-century clergy.

When Wheelock faced dismissal, he specifically asked his church *not* to leave the decision in the hands of the "Consociation;" nor an ecclesiastical council, nor a council of "Pastors & Chhs promiscuously selected..." but instead to seven pastors mutually

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<sup>776</sup> *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher*, 191.

<sup>777</sup> Feb. 26, 1789, "Great Seaching of Heart in the Chhs. Two Chhs. In this City tired or wearied out with their Pastors & wish for their Dismission," *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. III*, 343.

<sup>778</sup> *Ibid.*, Dec. 19, 1790, 377.

<sup>779</sup> *Ibid.*

chosen.<sup>780</sup> His congregation agreed. Stiles reported this as a new method among ministers. “When a pastor wants to be dismissed, he gets his chh. to put the power of dismissal out of their hands & vesting it in a council of pastors.” This was highly unusual and “foreign from Consoc. power and Authority.” Mr. Hopkins had proceeded in the same fashion and Mr. Fish was “negotiating a similar Dismission.”<sup>781</sup> Clergy not only negotiated their settlement and their authority, they also began to negotiate their dismissals. A council of pastors did not always present opinions in the clergy’s favor, but at least ministers could hope to keep the decision from being tainted with personal vendettas from their own flocks.

Other clergy began practicing increasing autonomy by arranging for less binding contracts from the start. Rather than settling into a theoretically permanent relationship, some opted for interim positions. In 1788, one congregation offered a minister £115 salary “as long as he or they shall please, i.e. he to leave them when he pleases, and they to seek out & get another Minister as soon as they please.”<sup>782</sup> This relationship kept both parties free from being trapped in an unpleasant situation. Furthermore, they could sever their connection without the complication of involving a council of seven neighboring ministers.

In another case of dismissal, John Mellon angered his congregation by imposing the pastor’s ‘negative.’ Several members from a neighboring church came hoping to partake in communion. Put to a vote, the congregation voted their approval. Mellon

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<sup>780</sup> May 3, 1770, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. I*, 49-50.

<sup>781</sup> Ibid.

<sup>782</sup> Ibid, Dec. 9, 1788, 334.

disagreed and invoked his pastoral privilege to veto the congregation's wishes. A controversy rapidly ensued resulting in an unofficial vote for Mellon's dismissal. In response, Mellon called his own council, which found in his favor. Before they could settle the matter, Mellon began to preach to nearly half of the congregation in a private home and quickly procured an invitation to preach at another church.

Mellon, like other clergy late in the century, did not wait for official proceedings; he moved on and took control of his own destiny. But the question had become one of legality. Ezra Stiles fretted whether Mellon was "legally or ecclesiastically dismissed?...By law he can hold his Salary till he is dismissed by Advice of an Ecclesiastical Council mutually chosen."<sup>783</sup> Stiles admitted that Mellon had the right to demand his salary until the church followed the appropriate procedure of legal dismissal but recognized that it would never bring reconciliation. For all intents and purposes, the lay-clerical relationship had been severed and merely required legal separation. Despite the sincerity upon which it was founded, the traditions of Congregationalism began to falter on the technicalities of its own structure. Ministers were beginning to apply the legalism of their ecclesiastical structure as effectively as their congregations had depended upon it.

Furthermore, the lack of ministers to fill empty pulpits at the end of the century also led to new interpretations of the clerical power, particularly in regard to administering "seals" in "destitute" churches.<sup>784</sup> In the seventeenth century, ministers

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<sup>783</sup> Dec. 7, 1774, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, Vol. I*, 498-499.

<sup>784</sup> In 1780 Stiles listed only 80 Congregational candidates available to fill 245 vacancies, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, V. II*, 402-405.

generally did not conduct sacramental duties of baptism and communion in any church but their own. But in the eighteenth century, neighboring pastors occasionally handled such duties if a church did not have a settled minister. This need would be compounded following the Revolutionary War. It became such a hazy distinction that “It is scarcely yet agreed that a Minister whose pastoral Relation is dissolved may administer sealing ordinances.”<sup>785</sup> Clerical power was no longer strictly confined to the ordaining congregation. It was becoming more of a profession unto itself, transferrable between like churches. This matter would become personal for Stiles when he accepted the presidency of Yale. He vehemently defended his role as a member of the clergy even though he was no longer related to a specific congregation. “The office power doth not cease with the Dissolution of a past. Relation to a particular Chh.”<sup>786</sup> However he noted this as a change from the former practice of Congregationalism. Whether the variation on clerical power originated from a need to reach shepherdless flocks or signified a blatant attempt to grab power, it still represents a significant expansion of ministerial authority late in the eighteenth century.

However, the adjustments of Congregational clergy late in the century to gain more autonomy came with a price. The increase in frontier settlements as colonists moved west and the relocation of the populace from revolutionary warfare certainly offered ministers an opportunity to begin again with new congregations and a chance to escape the confines of an unfavorable pastoral relationship. And the post-revolutionary demographics also allowed clergy to combat what they viewed as the arbitrary use of lay

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<sup>785</sup> Ibid, Oct. 12, 1777, 218-219.

<sup>786</sup> Ibid, 316.

power over their ministers. By working within the system, clergy circumvented the legalities of Congregational structure and moved on to more pleasant circumstances as soon as trouble began to brew with their own flocks. Yet, as freeing as these measures may have been for New England clergy, these changes would never restore the status and influence back to the office of the ministry that the previous generations had enjoyed. In protecting themselves from what had become a socially and economically declining career, they lost one of the critical elements of the lay-clerical relationship which encouraged ministerial authority and respect: longevity in the pulpit.<sup>787</sup> Without a relationship built upon trust and security that the messenger of God was committed personally to his flock, the congregation and clergy lacked confidence in one another. By the end of the century, neither one could be counted on to stay in the relationship if a better prospect became available. For congregations, the option to trade out a dull pastor for a livelier one sounded like a viable alternative. And for clergy, the prospect of a congregation that might pay their salary on time over a currently delinquent flock held significant appeal. But these self-serving goals on both sides of the equation ultimately weakened the bond between clergy and their congregations. The disposable nature of multiple short-term tenures did not foster ministerial authority.

The authority of the office of the ministry had never been guaranteed for any generation. From the earliest moments of American Congregationalism, ministerial authority was negotiated between a congregation and its pastor. As the colonies

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<sup>787</sup> Calhoun charted the average length of ministerial terms by county to reveal: Rockingham county was 32.7 years in 1730 and fell to 6.8 years by 1820; Strafford county was 42.5 years in 1730 and fell to 2.8 years by 1820; Hillborough county was 33 years in 1730 and fell to 9.4 years by 1820 and Merrimack county was 41.5 years in 1730 and fell to 7.1 years by 1820, Calhoun, *Professional Lives in America*.

developed, negotiation strategies necessarily adjusted to accommodate the evolving social and economic environment. While the process of negotiation between congregations and their ministers remained a constant factor throughout the colonial period, the tools of negotiation available to each entity altered as westward expansion and warfare shuffled the populace in ways that limited the forces of localism. The decline of ministerial authority throughout the colonial period can not be traced to a single point or source. Rather, the growing and shifting populace emboldened the laity to exercise their powers of negotiation in a more overt manner throughout the eighteenth century. And the clergy's concurrent loss of educational and financial supremacy as well as their monopoly over religious sacraments prompted ministers to protect their position by reducing their dependency upon individual congregations. Individually, Congregational clergy gained more control over their own futures but as a whole, they lost the authority formerly rendered to the office of the ministry.

## Section 5. Epilogue

In stark contrast to the position of ecclesiastical and civil authority held by seventeenth-century Puritan divines, the state of the trained clergy had plummeted to an alarming level by the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>788</sup> For many ministers, the declining reputation, character and influence attributed to their position not only reduced the level of prestige formerly linked to the office, it threatened the effectiveness of the ministry. In an effort to analyze and understand the decline, the “Society for the Relief of Aged and Destitute Clergymen” commissioned a committee of three clergymen and three laymen to gather information regarding ministers’ salaries in New England.<sup>789</sup> Among the questions posed to churches, ministerial associations, seminaries and college presidents from various denominations, several addressed the declining number of trained ministerial candidates.

### QUESTION III.

*“Do you think that any young men have been prevented from entering the ministry in consequence of the insufficiency of salaries? Or have any clergymen left the profession on that account?”*

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<sup>788</sup> Donald Scott has described this transition as the professionalization of the office, Donald M. Scott, *From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry, 1750-1850*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978).

<sup>789</sup> Charles Brooks, *A Statement of Facts from each Religious Denomination in New England, Respecting Ministers Salaries*, (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1854). This extensive report reflects responses from more than fifteen hundred clergymen regarding their previous ministerial experience. Although the responses of this report were not compiled and printed until 1854, the questions referred to the past and reflect the state of the ministry in the early part of the nineteenth century. For my purposes, the candid responses from these clergy demonstrate the *result* of ministerial negotiation from the previous century. In an effort to solicit unguarded responses, the committee promised anonymity to respondents identifying their answers by region.

“We have, in New England, an increase of population, yet a diminution of numbers in the clerical ranks. This refusal of the ministerial office must have its cause. We judge that cause to be mainly this, - the withdrawal of the people from the pecuniary support of the clergy.”<sup>790</sup>

#### QUESTION IV

*“Do you think that the cause of the Redeemer is suffering from the want of an adequate pecuniary support of the clergy?”*

“Yes, in many ways. Not merely in lessening the number of the clergy, but in its bearing on their character, reputation, and influence. It endangers their independence: it induces a life of shifts and expedients; it exposes them to trials which are apt to dull their sense of some of the most important social obligations. A man, who, from any cause, has contracted debts which he cannot pay, cannot speak as if his soul were his own; he certainly cannot as if his house were his own, or his furniture, or his books.”<sup>791</sup>

It is worth noting that none of the responses to this detailed survey of over 1500 New England ministers attributed the decline of ministerial candidates to political or theological disputes.<sup>792</sup> Rather, the more pedestrian issues of pecuniary arrangements and the repercussions of inadequate support upon the “character, reputation and influence” of the clergy were blamed for fewer ministerial candidates.<sup>793</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>790</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>791</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>792</sup> Ibid, 18-19, although the survey asked for answers regarding the last 20 yrs, several respondents incorporated their 29 or 30 years of experience into their conclusions. None of the respondents even mention the upheaval of the Second Great Awakening other than a single reference to the “many, without a collegiate education (who) have of late years entered the profession.” Yet even with these additions to the clerical pool, several responses lament the “alarming scarcity of suitable candidates for the vacant parishes.”

<sup>793</sup> Ministers lamented that by the inadequacy of ministerial support “Hereby likewise Religion is more slighted and disregarded. Ministers outward Meanness and poverty, makes their Persons to be despised, that

they believed their dependence upon their congregations compromised the objectivity of their messages. This report illuminates the result of one aspect of the complex process of negotiation between congregations and their ministers. Unpaid salaries produced much more than financial insecurity; in many ways they threatened the entire ministry and contributed to the decline of ministerial authority.

Although at the beginning of the eighteenth century voluntary versus compulsory maintenance remained a matter of dispute, Congregational clergy had increasingly resorted to salary contracts with congregations rather than rely on the voluntary support of their parishioners.<sup>794</sup> Yet the efforts of these ministers to protect their position and secure guaranteed salaries may have actually accelerated the decline of ministerial authority. Rather than bolstering the clergy's position, the contractual delineation of various forms of compensation provided their congregations with a forum to demonstrate their level of support through contractual compliance or lack thereof. In many cases, the punctuality of salary payments served as a barometer of congregational approval. When salaries fell into arrears, ministers then found themselves in the awkward position of deciding whether to demand previously promised payment in exchange for pastoral services. Salaries were not only "ticklish things" in the eighteenth century, ministers participating in Brooks' survey reported continued resistance from congregations to

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leads men to despise their Office and their Work, and so their Counsels, and their Preachings are undervalued; the slighting of their Persons because of their outward Meanness, will have a Secret Influence to render their Work unsuccessful," A friend of the churches, *A plea for the ministers of the Gospel*, (Boston, 1706), 28-29.

<sup>794</sup> Increase Mather, *A Discourse concerning the maintenance due to those who preach the Gospel*: (Boston, 1706); Thomas Chalkley, *Forcing a maintenance not warrantable from the Holy Scripture*, (Boston, 1714); John Tufts, *Anti-ministerial objections considered*, (Boston, 1725); John Rogers, *An answer to a small pamphlet entituled, a monitory letter about the maintenance...*, (Boston, 1725); Scott, *From Office to Profession*.

discuss arrearages; “I am not properly supported; but I cannot say a word about it, because it would react destructively against me.”<sup>795</sup>

While the failure of congregations to comply with ministerial salaries was certainly not the only reason for the decline of clerical authority in the eighteenth century, it exposes and demonstrates an important locus of control congregations retained over their ministers.<sup>796</sup> Throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth, the power of the purse became a ready tool in the hands of disgruntled parishioners to express their displeasure. It would be pressing too far to suggest that the complaints of unmet ministerial salaries reveal a collective lay conspiracy against the clergy. Rather, several eighteenth-century currency crises coupled with explicit salary contracts rendered clergy particularly vulnerable to congregational negligence.<sup>797</sup> According to one minister, “by reason of Ignorance of Expensiveness of Books,” the congregations were “very unfit to judge the necessities of the Minister.”<sup>798</sup> While many delinquencies may not have signified malice, contracts also offered peeved parishioners an irresistible opportunity to

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<sup>795</sup> Clergy recognized the need to avoid exhibiting “a begging spirit,” Brooks, *A statement of facts...*, 9-10, 20.

<sup>796</sup> Salary issues were the most common issue of lay-clerical conflict, James Schmotter, “Ministerial Careers in Eighteenth-Century New England: The Social Context, 1700-1760,” *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Winter (1975), 257-261.

<sup>797</sup> Even the nineteenth-century ministers responding to Brooks’ survey were reticent to assign any collective sinister motive to the inadequate pecuniary support of the clergy. Some excused their congregation’s delinquency as a matter of ignorance. “Few farmers know what it costs [the clergy] to live, because they supply themselves from their farms, without paying cash; therefore they are the last persons in the world to judge of the expenses of a clergyman.” Yet, when asked how to remedy the situation, most responses recommended some form of ministerial restraint, ranging from keeping “still” to demanding “nothing.” Their responses comport with continued congregational resistance to salary issues. At the very least, the urge to “keep still” may suggest that speaking out on the matter had not profited those who tried it in the past, Brooks, *A statement of facts...*, 21.

<sup>798</sup> A friend of the churches, *A plea for the ministers of the Gospel*, 14.

defy ministerial authority.<sup>799</sup> Usually, defiant members represented a minority of the group. However, it only took a minority to send a salary into arrears.

It is interesting that within the mutual watchfulness of Congregationalism, many congregations failed to require or maintain conformity on this issue. Some parishioners seemed to find the delinquency of their fellow members a nuisance and attempted to coerce payment from them.<sup>800</sup> But in general, while other offences might be closely monitored, fellow parishioners rarely sought prosecution for nonpayment. Could this reflect a lack of concern even among compliant members toward ministerial salaries? Instead, at the risk of jeopardizing his relationship with his congregation, the minister was left to initiate lawsuits against his own parishioners for arrearages. In any case, seasoned clergy understood that a minister with a delinquent salary often found himself in a no-win situation.

the Minister Contracts with his People, for a *certain stipend*, which is usually but *small*, and very indifferently paid, the Minister indeed has his Remedy at Law against Defaulters, but if He should Sue any of his People, he must bid adieu to his Preaching in that Place: and after all, the Maintenance of Country Ministers, is but barely Sufficient to support themselves and their Families, which is not only a Discouragement to Learning, but tends to lend the Sacred Office of the Ministry itself Contemptible.<sup>801</sup>

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<sup>799</sup> Ibid, 15, “The Minister and the People make a Bargain...if they have a great affection to the Minister, and he holds them to it, they give the more, if they are not very fond of him, or if he be of a more easy Nature, they give the less....”

<sup>800</sup> Mar. 22, 1748, The first church of Westborough expressed their irritation with the north side communicants who refused to pay rates to Ebenezer Parkman for the last several months of 1744, Francis G. Walett, ed., *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782 First Part Three volumes in One, 1719-1755*, (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, 1974), 173.

<sup>801</sup> Thomas Symmes, *The people's interest in one article consider'd & exhibit'd*. (Boston, 1724), 33.

Ministers may have gravitated toward contracts as an assurance of regular remuneration, but the clergy's efforts at self-protection ultimately amplified their own vulnerability to the congregation.

Beyond the simple pecuniary ramifications of unmet salary obligations, the clergy's dependence upon congregational funds for their subsistence complicated the lay-clerical relationship and potentially their faithful performance of the official duties.<sup>802</sup>

From the earliest part of the eighteenth century, veteran clergy had predicted that the financial arrangement between a minister and his congregation could compromise the integrity of his ministry.

When the Maintenance of the Ministers is Precarious; they depend on the Giddy Humours of inconsiderate People, for their Necessary Supplies; and know that if the People are Displeas'd, they'l withhold from them their Daily Bread; What greater Temptation can Ministers be laid under to be unfaithful; To withhold the Truth, or, not speak boldly, and as the Oracles of God? And how Fatal is this to be, both to Ministers and the People?<sup>803</sup>

Among their many duties, colonial clergy considered their function as the messenger of God to be their primary role. Yet some of the messages they felt convicted to deliver might not be well received by their congregations. How could a minister "boldly" preach a potentially offensive message from God if he first had to consider the risk of angering those who paid his salary?<sup>804</sup> Seasoned ministers warned against falling

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<sup>802</sup> While historians refer to the salary disputes between clergy and congregations, little analysis has been offered on the effects of this conflict upon the ministers' ability to function in the office.

<sup>803</sup> Symmes, *The people's interest in one article consider'd & exhibit'd.*,29.

<sup>804</sup> "...it would be too great a temptation to them to be unfaithful in their Work, they occasion oftentimes in their Preaching to speak such things as may be offensive to some of the Wealthiest People in the

“under the awe of men of wealth and influence” and tempering their sermons for “fear of offending them.”<sup>805</sup> It took a principled and courageous man to preach a sermon that he knew would alienate those in his flock who met the bulk of the congregation’s financial obligations.<sup>806</sup>

Some ministers confessed this tendency in themselves; “I am apt to be Cowardly and to decline reproofing sin privately and in public.”<sup>807</sup> By the end of the century, a pastor who refused to challenge his flock could be labeled as nothing less than a “Man pleaser.”<sup>808</sup> Veteran clergy understood the temptation to shy away from conflict and encouraged new ministerial candidates to “Be not afraid of man, but faithfully deliver the *whole* counsel of heaven.”<sup>809</sup> Ezra Stiles warned that one particular minister would “be in Danger of a Duplicity of Character for he is ever adjusting himself to everybody, that it is somewhat difficult to find his real Judgment.”<sup>810</sup> Whatever a minister preached, an

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Town...upon which occasion they may with-hold a considerable part of their maintenance.” A friend of the churches, *A plea for the ministers of the Gospel*, 11.

<sup>805</sup> Symmes, *The people’s interest in one article consider’d & exhibit’d*, 30.

<sup>806</sup> Financially independent ministers who derived their living from outside sources ministered with greater freedom of expression. However, congregations also criticized their pastors for spending too much time on their worldly endeavors and occasionally groused over the wealth of financially independent clergy.

<sup>807</sup> Clifford Kenyon Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...: with bibliographical and other notes, Vol. V*, (Oxford University Press, 1937), 477.

<sup>808</sup> Boston Evening-Post, Sept. 10, 1770, 1.

<sup>809</sup> Italics are mine, Ebenezer Grosvenor, *A Sermon preached at the ordination of...Daniel Grosvenor, (Boston, 1774)*, 28.

<sup>810</sup> June 24, 1773, Franklin Bowditch Dexter, ed., *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, ed. under the Authority of the Corporation of Yale University, Vol. I*, (New York, 1901), 389-390.

“oft repeated principle” among clergy stated “that the pastor not temper [his] preaching to the prejudices of his flock.”<sup>811</sup>

Yet, this was not to suggest that all prejudices of the flock were inherently wrong. Clergy did not encourage candidates to provoke their congregations merely for the sake of provocation. At the end of the century, Lyman Beecher confessed that in writing sermons, he did “made some effort to gratify the popular taste; for to tell the truth, I think the popular taste here to be in the considerable degree right.”<sup>812</sup> Beecher did not find it necessary to antagonize the congregation in order to be faithful to one’s call. When he deemed the “popular taste” to be correct, Beecher was pleased to accommodate it.

But the general temptation of a minister to accommodate his flock’s desires for the sake of his own gain was considered such a pernicious quality among ministers that clergy compared it to prostitution. Experienced clergy recognized the insidiousness of this temptation and warned candidates against it; “do not profanely prostitute the sacred character to...popularity, impurity, pride...”<sup>813</sup> In his calculations of the number of clergy worldwide, Ezra Stiles feared that the pastoral “office is Prostituted as to three Quarters of these.”<sup>814</sup> As the office of the ministry slipped ever more toward a simple fee-for-service profession, the purity of the ministerial function was becoming compromised by financial motive and personal gain. The ministry became prostituted

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<sup>811</sup> Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. VI, 551.

<sup>812</sup> *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, Charles Beecher, ed., Vol. I, (New York, 1865), 103.

<sup>813</sup> 1753, in Shipton, *Biographical sketches of those who attended Harvard College...*, Vol. XIII, 625.

<sup>814</sup> 1771, *Diary of Ezra Stiles*, 164.

when that sacred service which should have been delivered with passion was delivered for a fee.

Once a pastor began to depend upon the gratuity of his parishioners, he risked selling himself and his ministry in exchange for his own welfare. Clergy who merely gave their congregations what “their itching ears wanted to hear” in order to secure their salary were derogated as “hirelings.”<sup>815</sup> Puritans had warned that a man on maintenance would be forced to take care not to “anger his employers.”<sup>816</sup> Clergy may have leaned toward the security of contracts as a means of protecting their public office, yet in practice contracts reduced the clergy to employees and placed them at the mercy of their congregations. Contractual maintenance ultimately threatened the authority of the clergy by swinging the pendulum of power in favor of the congregation.

‘Prostitution’ served as a fitting description for a relationship that carried a commitment level often compared to marriage. Throughout the colonial period, it was not unusual for clergy to use language common to wedding vows in reference to the lay-clerical relationship. In 1729, John Wadsworth accepted Canterbury’s call under these considerations, “that while I shall be your gospel minister I have a gospel maintenance, not only in youth but also in old age, if spared thereto; in sickness as well as in

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<sup>815</sup> “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear,” 2 Timothy 4:2-3, *New International Version, International Bible Society*; Baptists and Methodists had warned against “hirelings” for years. Some considered as “hirelings...all such as receive money for preaching,” William Scales, *Priestcraft Exposed* (Danvers, 1781), 16.

<sup>816</sup> David D. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century*, (Chapel Hill, 1972), 70.

health...”<sup>817</sup> John Hancock defended his right to separate from his congregation by reminding his critics that “although ministers are married to the ministry, yet I see no reason or scripture ground to think they are married to ye people.”<sup>818</sup> Even as late as 1819, when President Thomas Jefferson consulted William Bentley regarding a position at the University of Virginia, Bentley declined on the grounds that “he had been so long wedded to the East Church, he could not think of asking a Divorce from it.”<sup>819</sup>

Regardless of whether the pastor was ecclesiastically wedded to the office or the flock, the commitment of the lay-clerical relationship was often rendered in the language of marriage and treated with similar sanctity. In many ways, the period of candidacy resembled the dynamics of courtship followed by a large, public celebration when ordination marked the beginning of what both parties anticipated to be a permanent relationship. Even the first years of a ministerial tenure often represented a rather idealized and naïve period of optimistic enthusiasm complete with a polite degree of congregational deference, which tended to dissipate in the face of familiarity. Yet, the depth of the commitment expected between a minister and his congregation continued to be reflected in the warnings against prostituting the office. Even as ministerial tenure declined toward the end of the century, the lay-clerical relationship was to remain untainted by the financial arrangement. Clerical integrity demanded that ministers

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<sup>817</sup> 1729, Ellen Larned, *History of Windham County, Connecticut, Vol. I*, (Worcester, 1874), 292.

<sup>818</sup> Peter J. Gomes, Untitled review of J. William T. Youngs, Jr., “God’s Messengers: Religious Leadership in Colonial New England, 1700-1750,” *New England Quarterly*, 4, Vol. 50, (Dec., 1977), 706-709.

<sup>819</sup> *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts, Vol. I, 1784 - 1819*, (Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1962), xxi.

maintain some degree of disinterestedness in both congregational approval and financial compensation.<sup>820</sup>

Although clerical support was collected through parish rates, the congregation's liberty to choose and arbitrarily negotiate the salary package of their pastors, set a value upon an individuals' personality, capability, oratory skills and potential service.<sup>821</sup> Some clergy could command a better salary than others and received more offers than their peers received. The clergy were in danger of being reduced to a commodity for colonists, who, regardless of their personal devotion, determined to maintain religious culture in their communities. Although the Puritan divines had considered the ministry to be a "calling," eighteenth-century clergy increasingly found themselves thrust into a religious marketplace competing for pulpit, salary and parishioners. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, ministers could say with candor, "Ability is a man's capital, and he will very likely to take it to the best market."<sup>822</sup>

The reality of these circumstances, however, was not ominous to everyone. One respondent to Brooks' survey considered meager ministerial salaries a purifying agent. When asked whether "proper pecuniary support" would be necessary to attract the "ablest minds" to enter the ministry, he argued that the "ablest and best, intellectually and morally" would not be deterred. But he was certain that poor pay potential would

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<sup>820</sup> Lyman Beecher listed "disinterestedness" as a necessary feature of a successful ministry, *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, 383.

<sup>821</sup> Some congregations offered less to older men from whom they did not expect as many years of service before they would need to put together another settlement fee. Others paid large amounts to other congregations to buy a particularly desirable minister out of his existing contract.

<sup>822</sup> Brooks, *A statement of facts...*, 19.

certainly dissuade “second and third rate men” from pursuing the pulpit.<sup>823</sup> For him, “one good effect of this present evil is to purify motive in entering the sacred office.”<sup>824</sup> Yet others fretted that the current depreciation of the ministry would attract an unseemly sort. “If society consents to lower the pulpit to a level with the sidewalk,” clergy feared that “anyone” might enter it, but “of what sort must they be?”<sup>825</sup> But whatever sort of candidates pursued the ministry early in the nineteenth century, they entered a profession that no longer commanded the same level of compensation, esteem or prestige that it once did.

As early as 1706, Clergy issued warning that ministers who faced uncertain and delinquent maintenance would be particularly tempted to prostitute their ministry.<sup>826</sup>

Hereby there is danger that Ministers will be low spirited. The Meaness of men’s outward Condition does dispirit them, and Ministers are hereby in danger to be unfitted to do this Work with Boldness, as they ought to do; they will be afraid to reprove, and afraid to govern; yea, men will disdain to be reprov’d, and to be governed by them; and so the Work of God is not carried on with that courage and faithfulness, that He does expect.<sup>827</sup>

But clergy were worried about more than the occasional rogue minister who might compromise his own calling in exchange for the security of a promptly paid salary. Most clergy believed that the overall character of the ministry would be shaped by the

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<sup>823</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>824</sup> Ibid.

<sup>825</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>826</sup> “Ministers may be under Temptations...to go too far in seeking to Please the People, least they shut their Liberal Hands and close their Purse strings.” A. Mather, 26 as quoted in Richard Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765*, (Harvard University Press, 1967), 158.

<sup>827</sup> A friend of the churches, *A plea for the ministers of the Gospel*, 29-30.

character of the minister. “If People are negligent of their Duty to their Ministers, ‘tis a great Temptation for Ministers to be negligent in their Callings; and a *Scandalous Maintenance* is apt to make a *Scandalous Ministry*,”<sup>828</sup> The behavior of a minister reached beyond the individual reputation of a given pastor; a clergyman’s conduct reflected on the entire profession and threatened the effectiveness of ministry in general. One of the respondents to Brooks’ survey, connected the “depreciation of the estimation of the clergy” to the declining “importance of their labors for the welfare and salvation of souls.”<sup>829</sup> One thing clearly led to the next. Ministers who did not faithfully discharge their duties threatened the very “Work of God.” Early nineteenth-century clergy did not seek to merely regain a level of social and financial influence held by earlier generations, they sought to restore what they believed to be the result of declining clerical esteem: the work of God carried out with boldness, courage, and faithfulness.<sup>830</sup>

Up through the beginning of the eighteenth century, colonial clergy had exercised high levels of ministerial authority and civil influence over lengthy tenures. During this time, laymen exhibited a fairly submissive attitude contributing to clerical power. But this relationship rested on various social and economic conditions which offered clergy financial and educational superiority and bolstered the forces of localism. Yet even in their elevated social status, these clergy subtly negotiated various behaviors in exchange for their authority. They carefully gauged the limits of their power and acquiesced to congregational pressure, sometimes in ways, which went largely unnoticed by their

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<sup>828</sup> Jabez Fitch, *A plea for the ministers of New England*, (Boston, 1724), 14.

<sup>829</sup> Brooks, *A statement of facts...*, 23.

<sup>830</sup> A friend of the churches, *A plea for the ministers of the Gospel*, 29-30.

constituents. Ultimately, the ministerial hegemony of first generation colonial clergy came with a greater price than most historians have noticed. The authority which they wielded required them to pay close attention to the expectations of their congregation.

Given the anticipation of life-long tenure, these clergy had perhaps even more motive than those later in the eighteenth century to please their congregations. Just as a lengthy tenure promised significant local influence and power, a clerical dismissal early in the colonial period generally carried more weight than it would later on when an abundance of ministerial posts and the trend toward shorter tenure offered dismissed ministers more options and less damage to their reputations. Thus, although congregations may not have recognized their collective power, seventeenth-century congregations circumscribed ministerial authority more than most historians have previously noted.

In the eighteenth century as the colonies began to feel the strain of geographic expansion, currency crises, invading itinerants, increasing levels of lay education and social mobility, patterns of localism collapsed. Congregations were not only empowered to reject various ministers and congregations in order to form new churches, congregations were also emboldened to dismiss colonial clergy at will. These social and economic developments threatened ministerial authority as parishioners exhibited greater levels of lay privilege. Congregations did not discover lay privilege during the eighteenth century; rather the dissipation of educational and financial superiority, a monopoly over religious sacraments, and conformity imposed by localism; all of which had previously bolstered ministerial authority began to evaporate allowing laymen to display more initiative.

By the end of the century, Congregational clergy had not regained a monopoly on the sacraments or higher education. They had not managed to raise their rate of pay. They certainly had not reversed the effects of population growth on the forces of localism. However, the dynamics of westward expansion and the shuffled populace following the Revolution had created a multitude of vacant pulpits with fewer candidates available to fill them. Frustrated by rigid clerical contracts, which seemed to increasingly favor a congregations' arbitrary whim to dismiss a pastor at will, Congregational clergy took advantage of the increasing opportunities to negotiate less binding agreements. Clergy gained further autonomy and control over their own futures as lay-clerical separations became more common. Ministers became less willing to suffer the life-long indignities of salary arrearages. And the heightened demand for preachers permitted clergy to escape conflict or salary delinquency from one congregation by moving to another. While some call this the 'prestige ladder,' for many it presented an escape from an acrimonious lay-clerical relationship.<sup>831</sup>

These circumstances may have alleviated some of the clergy's chief frustrations during the middle of the century but it did not restore ministerial authority to the office of the ministry. The movement to multiple, shorter tenures managed only to weakened the lay-clerical bond. The efforts of late eighteenth-century clergy to correct the confinement of ministerial contracts ultimately contributed to the decline of the office of the ministry. By the end of the century, clergy possessed more personal control over their own future than at any previous time in colonial development. But the irony of their newly achieved

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<sup>831</sup> Scott, *From Office to Profession*.

autonomy is that they respectively lost the degree of ministerial and social authority exercised by their forbears.

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