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SAMUEL HOPKINS AND THE COMING OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND TO GREAT BARRINGTON

Michael Winship

The inhabitants of what was to become Great Barrington were in a quandary at the beginning of 1743. Their petition to the Massachusetts General Court to become incorporated separate from their parent town of Sheffield had been unsuccessful. However, in recognition of their distance from Sheffield, the Court had the previous year granted them parish status. At last the long Sunday trudge south to the Congregational meeting house in Sheffield would no longer be necessary. The Court had placed the two usual stipulations on the new North Parish. They were to construct a meeting house, and they were to settle among them an "able, learned and Orthodox [i.e. Congregational] minister." Work on the building was quickly commenced, but how was the parish to attract a minister?¹

This study deals with the problems that developed out of the answer to the question as well as the uneasy resolutions to those problems. It shows a colonial Massachusetts town going through a turbulent process of redefining itself, and it offers a glimpse into the beginnings of local tensions that accompanied the widening gulf between the colonies and Great Britain.

Housatonic, as Great Barrington was then called, was not very appealing at a time when ministers were in short supply. The Berkshires were still the frontier, with a real Indian danger which did not cease until the conclusion of the French and Indian War. Sheffield itself, the first and still the only town in the Berkshires (other than the Indian mission at Stockbridge), had only been incorporated in 1733. The Housatonic Valley, where Sheffield had arisen, was fertile enough, but it was hemmed in by rugged hills to the east and west, a largely unsettled region to the south, and wilderness to the north. The settlers of Housatonic numbered some

1. Charles J. Taylor, History of Great Barrington, Berkshire County, Massachusetts (Great Barrington, 1882), pp. 85-87.

thirty families by the beginning of the 1740s, mostly English but including some Dutch from the Hudson Valley.² They were just beginning to emerge out of the earliest pioneering stages. Mills had been erected on the Housatonic River by the enterprising David Ingersoll, provision for a school to serve the area of the parish had been made, and the first tavern had already been established.³ These were modest beginnings yet the community did not have much cash to offer in way of salary.

A preacher by the name of Thomas Strong ministered a few times in 1742, but for reasons unknown he settled in neighboring New Marlborough. Word then reached Housatonic of a young and unplaced minister, one Samuel Hopkins, staying with Jonathan Edwards in Northampton. On June 20, 1743, David Ingersoll rode out to Northampton to invite Hopkins to preach in Housatonic while he and the parish determined if they were suitable for each other.⁴

What manner of a man was the North Parish soliciting to tend to its inhabitants' souls? Hopkins was a big man, over six feet tall, with a full chest and large head and somewhat ungainly carriage. He was born in Waterbury, Connecticut, on September 9, 1723, the first child of a prosperous farming couple. A serious and obedient child, he was one in whom the seeds of the strictures of Calvinism would take root:

I from my youth was not volatile and wild but rather of a sober and steady make and was not guilty of external irregularities, such as disobedience to parents, profanation of the Sabbath, lying, foolish jesting, quarreling, passion and anger, or rash and profane words; and was disposed to be diligent and faithful in whatever business I was employed. . . .⁵

2. Stephen West, ed., Sketches of the Life of the Late Rev. Samuel Hopkins, D.D., Pastor of the First Congregational Church in Newport, Written by Himself; Interspersed with Notes Extracted from His Private Diary (Hartford, Conn., 1805), p. 47; Taylor, History of Great Barrington, pp. 102-103.

3. Taylor, History of Great Barrington, pp. 146-147, 153, 156.

4. David Dudley Field, ed., A History of the County of Berkshire, Massachusetts (Pittsfield, 1829), p. 228; Samuel Hopkins, Journal, June 21, 1743, Williams College Library, Williamstown, Massachusetts.

5. West, Sketches of the Life of Hopkins, p. 7.

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In 1737, Hopkins went to Yale College to study for the ministry, and a year or two later, he joined his parents' church. He was at this time a moderate Calvinist, believing that a person's standing as a Christian lay more in conduct than in inward religious experience. This position he later rejected when the Great Awakening swept over Yale during his senior year. Fellow student David Brainerd convinced him that he could not be a *real* Christian "without feeling his heart, at sometimes at least, humbly and greatly affected with the character of Christ, and strongly going out after him. . . ." Hopkins knew he had not had such an inward experience; he was thrown into despair, fearing that he stood outside the circle of God's elect. Nevertheless, he kept a brave face to the world and his doubts to himself, out of pride, and he finished his studies in 1741.⁶

He travelled to Northampton in 1742 to study with Jonathan Edwards. There and in neighboring towns he preached, and through inner experiences and conversations with Edwards and his wife, he gained hope that he was among the elect. He was invited to settle in Simsbury, Connecticut, but the fact that the Simsbury congregation did not vote for him unanimously was enough to make his uncertainty about his calling as a minister lead him to decline the offer.⁷

Hopkins had good reasons, besides the uncertain state of his soul, to question whether he was suited to lead a congregation. A mild, humble, bookish, and somewhat despondent man, he was an introvert with little by way of small talk or conversation with those who were not close friends. "There was a want of flexibility in his intercourse with promiscuous circles," as the editor of his writings concluded. If Hopkins was not to gather and invigorate parishioners by warmth and human contact, neither was he to attract them by his preaching style; "He pronounced ungracefully and inaccurately; his voice was not good, and his whole enunciation was apt to be drawling and monotonous."⁸ Hopkins characterized himself as having "a very bad and disagreeable delivery."⁹

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 33, 35.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-43, 45-46; Hopkins, Journal, February 20, 1743, ms. in Williams College Library.

8. Edward A. Park, Memoir of the Life and Character of Samuel Hopkins (Boston 1854), pp. 27-28.

9. West, Sketches of the Life of Hopkins, p. 91.

This was the man that the residents of Housatonic invited to preach to them: intellectual, uncommunicative, retiring, and converted to an intense and unyielding interpretation of an unforgiving religion. Hopkins, not surprisingly, recoiled from the rough frontiersmen of the North Parish. By August 1, 1743, he was writing in his journal: "The circumstances of this place appear more and more doleful to me. There seems to be no Religion here, if I did not think I had a Call here I should be quite discouraged." Such observations continued to be entered in Hopkins' diary even after he accepted the position, offered unanimously. On December 11, 1743, three days before his church was to be officially gathered, Hopkins recorded: "I have been very much shut up ever since I have been among this people, they are a very wicked people, but I can't tell them of it."¹⁰

On December 14, no one presented himself as a candidate for church membership and the formation of the church had to be put off until December 28, the date of Hopkins' ordination. On December 23, Hopkins wrote: "The way looks very dark before me. . . . I dare not that there is one male Christian among them, and most of them opposers to divine Grace and the power of Godliness." Nevertheless, by December 28, five persons were found to constitute the church, and Hopkins was ordained. David Brainerd, who was visiting (and whose temperament was at least as melancholic as that of Hopkins) was "grieved to see the Vanity of the Multitude."¹¹

At this point one might ask why Hopkins and the residents of Housatonic did not continue their respective searches elsewhere. Hopkins felt that he should be "willing to go where God calls me, knowing that this life is not the place for happiness," and perhaps his comment on having a calling to Housatonic should be taken at face value. The residents of Housatonic undoubtedly could see that in Hopkins they were getting a man of religion and perhaps further reflected that they were unlikely to get any better for the salary they were prepared to offer.¹²

 10. Hopkins, Journal, August 1 and December 11, 1743.

11. *Ibid.*, December 14 and 23, 1743; Jonathan Edwards, ed., An Account of the Life of the late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd (Boston, 1749), p. 92.

12. Hopkins, Journal, December 24, 1743, Williams College; sixty pounds settlement and a salary of thirty-five pounds to rise gradually to forty-five pounds was the agreement (Taylor, History of Great Barrington, p. 78). Sheffield had given its minister one hundred pounds settlement and a salary of one hundred pounds. See Lillian Preis, Sheffield: Frontier Town (Sheffield, 1976), p. 23.

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The first years of Hopkins' ministry seemed to go relatively smoothly. The membership in his congregation (membership being distinct, of course, from church attendance) slowly rose. Some of these new members seem to have been "hopefully converted" and not merely transferred from other churches, indicating that Hopkins' preaching had some effect. In 1749, Hopkins married a local woman, Joanna Ingersoll, with whom he was to have eight children. Having first turned it down himself, Hopkins prevailed with his mentor, Jonathan Edwards, to take the vacant Stockbridge ministerial position. Edwards' move to Stockbridge in 1751 gave Hopkins an intellectual and religious companion only seven miles distant.¹³

But the situation in the North Parish brought with it no shortage of frustration. Hopkins' impression of the religiosity of the parish did not improve over the years. In spite of a number of "hopefully converted" people joining the church, it was not until 1753 that Hopkins witnessed what he considered to be a genuine conversion among his congregation.¹⁴ On December 28, 1754, he could write in his diary:

This day finishes eleven Years since I was ordained to the Work of the Ministry. How poorly it has been spent, God knows! Have had no success! Have reason to be greatly ashamed. Kept a secret Fast. God only knows my misery.¹⁵

Hopkins' intense religious convictions did nothing to make his relationship with his parishioners easier. Around the turn of the 1750s, following Jonathan Edwards' lead, he made an inward conversion experience a necessary prerequisite for church membership, and he refused to baptize children of non-members.¹⁶

13. Great Barrington Church Records, pp. 190-200, in Cooke Collection, Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield. One hundred and sixteen people joined the church during Hopkins' ministry, forty-five from other churches, and seventy-one by profession; Park, Memoir of Hopkins, pp. 55, 57; West, Sketches of the Life of Hopkins, p. 54.

14. West, Sketches of the Life of Hopkins, p. 55.

15. Hopkins, Journal, December 28, 1754, Hopkins Papers, Andover-Newton Theological Seminary.

16. In a letter apparently written around the end of February of 1752, Hopkins stated that because of his church membership standards, "Theer is considrable Number of Parents within the Bounds of my Parish whose Children are not baptized. . . ." Hopkins to

He thus was revoking the Half-Way Covenant, and, in effect, trying to reverse the trend of the last one hundred years of Massachusetts Congregationalism. Consequently throughout the 1750s, the number of unbaptized children mounted in the parish, to the consternation of their parents. Hopkins' stand on church membership was not made easier by the move from Stockbridge to the North Parish of General Joseph Dwight, around 1757. Dwight, a lawyer, judge, soldier, and Harvard graduate, was the most eminent man in the parish, and he continued there the opposition to Edwardian church membership policies that he had displayed in Stockbridge.¹⁷

Hopkins also encountered opposition on more recondite theological issues. In the late 1750s, as his contribution to a theological dispute brewing in New England, Hopkins started to preach that sin was a positive advantage to the world, not something that God merely allowed, but something that God positively willed. It was on this issue that Hopkins first published and so began his rise to prominence as a leader of the neo-orthodox New Divinity movement in Congregationalism. However, a member of his congregation, Israel Dewey, was upset enough about the doctrine to write a letter to Hopkins at the end of 1757. Dewey warned Hopkins that he would feel obliged to work for Hopkins' removal as pastor if he persisted in such doctrines.¹⁸ A few months later, Dewey was called up for church discipline for his "disorderly behavior in the time of preaching," presumably while Hopkins was discoursing on sin. Dewey apologized for his behavior, although not for his beliefs. He was admonished before the membership, but the censure before the whole congregation that had been discussed was not executed, indicating that Dewey's position had sympathizers.¹⁹ When Dewey published his letters to Hopkins in 1759, the church took no action against him.

Hopkins' reaction to dissension within his congregation was in keeping with his limited abilities at human interaction and was not conducive to building a united congregation:

Rev. Newall, n.d., written on the back of a printed proclamation dated February 17, 1752, Hopkins Papers, Andover-Newton Theological Seminary.

17. Field, History of the County of Berkshire, pp. 233-234; Park, Memoir of Hopkins, p. 68.

18. Park, Memoir of Hopkins, pp. 68-69.

19. Congregational Church Records, vol. 1, pp. 35-36, in First Congregational Church, Great Barrington.

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I had from time to time some opposers of the doctrines which I preached, but being persuaded and knowing that they were the truths contained in divine revelation, this opposition, from whatever quarter did not in the least deter or discourage me from adhering to them and vindicating them publicly and in private.²⁰

From the beginning, Hopkins' relations with the Dutch settlers of Housatonic appear to have been strained. These Dutch were Lutherans and, as such, would have found the Congregationalists' non-liturgical services and Calvinist doctrines alien, quite apart from cultural differences. They had done their share in building the meeting house and paying for the minister, but if they expected any reciprocity they were to be disappointed. Isaac Van Deusen, the grandson of one of the Dutch of that period, of the same name, wrote a highly-colored manuscript account in 1828 of the Dutch settlers' clashes with Hopkins.²¹ The account, if questionable in its details, seems probable enough in its outlines. At some time, probably in the late 1740s, the Dutch requested of Hopkins the right to have a preacher preach to them in their own language occasionally at times when the meeting house was otherwise unoccupied. Hopkins refused, which he might not have done had they been Dutch Reformed and so Calvinist. The Dutch began to stay away from the meeting house, in defiance of the law. Hopkins' response was to have a number of them arrested, among them Isaac Van Deusen and John, Peter, and Garret Burghardt. The Dutch, given a choice between a fine and a day in the stocks, chose the latter. Thereafter, they complied with the minimum requirements of the attendance law and otherwise brought in their own preachers to preach privately.²²

20. West, Sketches of the Life of Hopkins, p. 60.

21. See The Berkshire Courier, July 2, 1892, for Van Deusen's account in its entirety.

22. Most writers follow Taylor in dating this incident in the late 1750s, but Van Deusen's time frame, although undated, does seem compressed. He is specific that after this incident, the Dutch first sent for a Rev. William Berkenmeyer from Lunenburg, New York (today Athens) to preach to them, and when his time was over, a Rev. Michael Knoll from Kinderhook. Since Berkenmeyer died in 1751, it is plausible that Van Deusen's account is correct and that the stocks incident preceded Berkenmeyer's death. See Joseph Hooper, "The Protestant Episcopal Church in Berkshire," Berkshire Historical and Scientific Society Collections (Pittsfield 1890), pp. 187-212.

Sometime thereafter, the account continues, presumably around 1760, the Dutch requested that their share of the money that went towards the support of preaching be given to their own ministers. Not surprisingly, Hopkins rejected this. A number of townspeople, among them David Ingersoll and John Williams, with Church of England leanings, advised the Dutch to send to Litchfield, Connecticut, for an Anglican missionary, since the Anglican Church was legally entitled to support in Massachusetts.²³

While most of the above account is beyond corroboration, it cannot be coincidence that not one Dutch name is on the Congregational church's membership list for this period.²⁴ The Dutch, parents of unbaptized children (and those dissatisfied with Hopkins' doctrinal and human rigidity) would have reason to desire a change in the parish's religious situation by the 1760s.²⁵

Meanwhile, the North Parish itself was growing. By the beginning of the 1760s it had a population estimated at five hundred and a doctor and a lawyer (the latter being Samuel's brother, Mark Hopkins). Agitation for town status had been renewed in the 1750s, and in 1761, the North Parish became the town of Great Barrington. Those dissatisfied with Hopkins were only a small part of the town of Sheffield, but they were a significant force in Great Barrington.²⁶

Affairs seemed to go smoothly in the new town, however. The first town meeting, on July 22, 1761, was devoted to the election of town officers, and the Hopkins family dominated the more important positions. Samuel's brothers, Timothy and Mark, were chosen as town treasurer and town clerk, respectively. Timothy was elected one of the three selectmen and assessors (one of the others was also a church member). In the third meeting, on November 16, it was even voted to increase the reverend's salary by twenty pounds, which added to a fifteen pound increase of the previous year, gave him

23. See Robert Libby, "Anglican-Lutheran Ecumenism in Early American History," Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, XXVI (September 1967), pp. 211-232.

24. Great Barrington Church Records, pp. 190-200.

25. William Patten, Reminiscences of the Late Samuel Hopkins, D.D. of Newport, R.I. (Providence, 1843), p. 58.

26. Taylor, History of Great Barrington, pp. 163-165, 210, 212, 223.

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eighty pounds per annum.²⁷ Unfortunately, such harmony was the calm before the gathering storm -- the Anglican missionaries were coming.

Solomon Palmer was the first missionary to arrive, probably in late 1761 or early 1762. Based in Litchfield, Connecticut, he made two visits to Great Barrington, where he preached and administered baptism and the Last Supper. He claimed to his superiors at the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel that "at both visits, 36 Persons, most of them heads of Families, ordained for Conformity."²⁸ The agitation in the town that immediately preceded and followed Palmer's visit has left no direct record, but the town had an old habit, not one unique to Great Barrington, of failing to vigorously collect the funds voted for the minister's salary; this habit was to worsen in the 1760s.²⁹ Hopkins still had not collected a sizeable portion of his 1761 salary when his brother Daniel wrote to the New Divinity clergyman Joseph Bellamy on April 15, 1762. He inquired whether Bellamy could get Hopkins nominated for the ministerial opening in Halifax, Nova Scotia, as "it looks to me likely that my Brother will be ousted here."³⁰

Hopkins' own response to this challenge to his authority took the form of a letter to the town, dated May 29, 1762. Hopkins thanked the town for raising his salary and then mentioned "special difficulties which have been increasing since the last grant was made, so that 'tis at least very doubtful whether the people are disposed to afford me a sufficient maintenance. . . ." He then mentioned that he had received an offer of the position in Halifax and ended by asking

27. Great Barrington Town Records, pp. 1, 3, in Town Hall, Great Barrington; North Parish Meetings, 1745-1761, November 12, 1760, Town Hall, Great Barrington.
28. Solomon Palmer to the S.P.G., June 8, 1763, copy at St. James Church, Great Barrington.
29. The parish did not even start to raise the money for Hopkins' 1749 salary until 1751. See North Parish meetings, September 25, 1751; salary disputes were the single greatest cause of conflicts between ministers and their parishioners in eighteenth century New England; see James W. Schmotter, "Ministerial Careers in Eighteenth Century New England: The Social Context, 1700-1760," Journal of Social History, IX (1975), p. 257.
30. Daniel Hopkins to Joseph Bellamy, April 15, 1762, Bellamy Papers, Hartford Theological Seminary.

the town to reaffirm its wish to have him as its minister and to insure that it would offer him "a reasonable and compleat support."³¹

The town, on June 4, 1762, reaffirmed its wish to retain Hopkins and confirmed his salary. In exchange, Hopkins dropped all claims against the town for the over forty pounds in arrears he was owed.³² But if this vote was brought about partially by the Church of England sympathizers and others dissatisfied with Hopkins holding out an olive branch in the interests of town harmony, Hopkins did not return the gesture. He continued to preach his rigid Calvinism and his doctrine of the advantages of sin, which seemed especially to irk some of his parishioners. He attacked the Church of England from the pulpit, comparing it to the Church of Rome.³³

Understandably, the Church of England sympathizers would not want to sit and listen to such tirades, but to stay away from meetings was to run the risk of being arrested for non-attendance. Hopkins even had a Church of England member arrested in the summer of 1762.³⁴ Faced with such an uncompromising position, the missionary Thomas Davies, taking over Palmer's itinerary, formed an official assembly of the Church of England on September 21, 1762.³⁵ In principle, its members now no longer had to support Hopkins financially nor attend his services.

The means of paying for the minister's salary were customarily voted upon at the end of the year. At the November 29, 1762 meeting, the Anglicans were extending no olive branches. They and others dissatisfied with Hopkins (or just dissatisfied with paying taxes) apparently raised so much protest that a vote was not attempted on the agenda item of raising money for Hopkins. But those dissatisfied with Hopkins had flexed their political muscle, and that

31. Quoted in Taylor, History of Great Barrington, p. 188.

32. Great Barrington Town Records, pp. 11-12; the amount of the arrears comes from Hopkins' claim in his later law suit against the town; see Court of Common Pleas, volume 2, p. 311, in Berkshire County Superior Court, Pittsfield.

33. Thomas Davies to the S.P.G., December 28, 1762, copy at St. James Church.

34. Ibid.

35. Taylor, History of Great Barrington, p. 197.

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being done the customary taxes for Hopkins' salary were approved at a special town meeting of December 31, 1762.³⁶

However Hopkins and his faction had not yet given up. They continued to threaten the Church of England members with jail for non-attendance, using as their legal basis the fact that the Anglicans were not yet under a specific missionary. In the Spring of 1763, Thomas Davies reported to his superiors, "they did imprison for fifteen days, two persons of as good character as any in the town; the one educated in the church the other a Lutheran, for no other reason but because they did not go to meeting."³⁷

At this point, Hopkins' opponents were no longer feeling conciliatory. The mood in Great Barrington could be gauged by the October 4, 1763 meeting. The question of paying for Hopkins' salary was the first item on a six-item agenda. It was recorded as being voted in the negative, and the meeting was adjourned without any other item being covered. It was obviously a long and stormy session. On December 9, 1763, at a special town meeting called to reconsider the question of Hopkins' salary, the Anglicans contrived, for the first time, to have one of their stalwarts, John Williams, installed as moderator. When the vote for raising the money was counted, the town meeting minutes record, "the Moderator declared that it was not a vote for said sum. Whereupon a Large Number of the Voters arose and insisted that it was clearly a Vote, and after polling the Moderator and said party disagreed, and the Meeting finally broke up in Great Tumult and Noise and nothing further was done."³⁸

The Anglicans had other plans for their money. They envisioned a church which "on Account of its Architecture, Beauty, Expense, and Regularity, would be reckon'd no mean country Church, even in England." On December 14, 1763, John Burghardt deeded a plot of land in town to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Thereafter, John Williams donated the largest sum of money for the

36. Great Barrington Town Records, pp. 17-20.

37. Thomas Davies to the S.P.G., June 25, 1763, June 4, 1764, copies at St. James Church.

38. Great Barrington Town Records, pp. 17-20.

building, with Isaac Van Deusen and others also giving generously.³⁹ Perhaps the Anglicans were benevolent after dominating the last town meeting and preparing for the construction of their church, for in the next "very peaceable" town meeting on January 3, 1764, Hopkins' salary was approved. Hopkins wrote to Bellamy the next day that the town had even resolved that his salary was to be raised "every year during my continuance among them without any further voting about it."⁴⁰

In December 1763, an Anglican missionary from Simsbury, Connecticut, Roger Viets, had solemnized the marriage of a Great Barrington couple without obtaining from the town clerk a certificate of intention of marriage. By doing so, Viets, who of course was not settled in Great Barrington, broke an old Massachusetts law intended to discourage ministers from intruding on each others' territory. This fact was duly noted, although apparently not commented upon, by the town clerk, who happened to be Mark Hopkins, as he handed Viets an *ex post facto* certificate on December 3, 1764.⁴¹ What shortly thereafter ensued is best told in Viets' words:

I was arrested at my next visit [to Great Barrington] on the 30th of January in the midst of my Congregation and in my Robes, soon after the conclusion of the Morning Service, and conveyed within one or two hours to the County Gaol, where I continued eight days . . . and then gave bond. . . . I employ'd three Attorneys and attended the Court, but the Action has never entered in the County Clerk's Book against me. . . . The Judges of the Court treated me with Kindness and Complaisance, and I have Reason to think they

39. Roger Viets to the S.P.G., June 25, 1764, copy at Jt. James Church; the deed is at he church also, as the deposition of Gideon Bostwick in a lawsuit of 1771 in which the information about Williams is given; the Van Deusen manuscript tells of the other contributions.

40. Great Barrington Town Records, p. 16; Hopkins to Bellamy, January 4, 1764, Bellamy Papers, Hartford Theological Seminary Foundation.

41. Viets to the S.P.G., June 14, 1764, copy at St. James Church.

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were very far from beginning or furthering the Prosecution."⁴²

The abortive prosecution of Viets represented the last assault of the Hopkins faction on the Anglicans. What support there was for these endeavors was fast waning. Thomas Davies noted in a letter of June 4, 1764, "the Dissenters Threatening at Great Barrington has not been executed, the Dissenters being better advised." At the November 26, 1764 town meeting, it was agreed that the taxes of Anglicans could go to the support of their own minister.⁴³ After three stormy years, Great Barrington had reluctantly accepted itself as a pluralistic town.

However, Hopkins' troubles in Great Barrington had not ended. In 1765, there was a dramatic change-over in the highest town offices. Mark Hopkins was voted out as town clerk, a position he had held since the town was formed, and an Anglican replaced him. An Anglican was the town treasurer, and the offices of town selectmen and assessors, which for the last two years had been filled by Congregationalists, were taken by Anglicans or those otherwise disaffected with Hopkins.⁴⁴ This shift in the balance of power in town left no recorded disturbance in 1765, but it evidently was not a tranquil one. Just before the election of town officers in 1766, Hopkins was writing to his fellow New Divinity clergyman Joseph Bellamy:

Town affairs engross the thoughts of many. The battle [a town meeting] is to come next Monday, they say. If the Tories get the victory, which they are zealous to do, the town will be in ruins, and I must soon leave preaching here, it is probable.⁴⁵

42. Ibid.; in the index to the records of the Court of Common Pleas, Berkshire County Superior Court, the case of Mark Hopkins vs. Roger Viets is marked as a non-entry.

43. Thomas Davies to the S.P.G., copy at St. James Church; Great Barrington Town Records, p. 32.

44. Great Barrington Town Records, p. 34.

45. Hopkins to Bellamy, March 16, 1766, Hopkins Papers, Andover-Newton Theological School.

The town meeting took place on March 21, 1766. The results of the previous years' election were confirmed. This was sufficiently disturbing to a group of inhabitants for them to petition the General Court to have the results overturned. The General Court, for reasons not now discernible, agreed to nullify the meeting. It scheduled a new town meeting for July 16 and appointed Major Joseph Hawley of Northampton, an ardent Whig, as moderator. This meeting lasted three turbulent days. As an eighteenth century Anglican clergyman expressed it, "after exerting himself for three days in behalf of his oppressed brethren," the Major "was obliged to declare that the episcopalians had a great majority of legal votes." The March slate of town officers was reaffirmed.⁴⁶

Hopkins and his faction had again tried and failed to control the direction of town events, and Hopkins' position in Great Barrington was made yet more tenuous. Hopkins recognized this in a letter to Bellamy on July 26, 1766:

Last week we had a town meeting which lasted three days. The spirits of each party were raised to a very high degree. In the issue, the Tories carried the day, and have got all town affairs in their hands, just as they had before; with this aggravation, that now they have a vastly higher degree of resentment against me and the party that adheres to me, than before. They say they will uphold a great part of my salary, if not all, and it appears they intend to get me out of town.⁴⁷

At the October 27, 1766 town meeting, the "Tories" carried out their threat about Hopkins' salary and cut his pay back to its 1750s level of forty-five pounds.⁴⁸

46. Great Barrington Town Records, pp. 42, 45-48; Journal of the Honorable House of Representatives of His Majesty's Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England (Boston 1766), pp. 54, 67, 84, 87, 95-96. The petition itself, which gave the reason why the elections should be overturned, seems to have disappeared; Samuel Peters, A General History of Connecticut (London 1781, reprinted New Haven 1829), p. 286.

47. Quoted in Park, Memoir of Hopkins, p. 69.

48. Great Barrington Town Records, p. 51.

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Besides cutting Hopkins' salary, the town was continuing in its old habit of leaving his salary in arrears. By the end of 1768, Hopkins was claiming to the town that he was owed 138 pounds in back pay from 1761 to 1767.⁴⁹ But by this time, Hopkins had already decided to leave Great Barrington. In 1767 he had asked his church members to call a church council to dismiss him.⁵⁰ They refused, but they spent two futile years of trying to raise support for Hopkins, including a lawsuit against the town and an attempted private subscription for him.⁵¹ They finally agreed he should go and a church council dismissed him on January 18, 1769.⁵² Hopkins took over a parish in Newport, Rhode Island, the next year, leaving behind a lawsuit in which he claimed he was owed four hundred pounds, rather than the original 138 pounds. The Massachusetts Superior Court awarded him 135 pounds in 1771.⁵³

Hopkins' stay in the Berkshires was not as unproductive as the account of his ministry alone would make it seem. A steady stream of writings was making him a leader of the New Divinity Calvinists. By the end of the 1760s, the theology that had grown out of Jonathan Edwards' impulse was being termed "hopkintonian, with the term first used in a derogatory sense."⁵⁴ Hopkins was even considered as a possible successor to Jonathan Edwards in the Princeton presidency, but was rejected "by reason of the country style in which Mr. H. lived, and the correspondence of his manners to such a state."⁵⁵ Hopkins converted Edwards' successor at Stockbridge,

49. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

50. Park, Memoir of Hopkins, p. 70.

51. Hopkins to Bellamy, May 4, 1768, Bellamy Papers, Hartford Theological Seminary Foundation.

52. West, Sketches of Hopkins, p. 48.

53. Court of Common Pleas, vol. 2, pp. 311-313; Superior Court of Judicature, 1771, pp. 86-87, in Mass. Archives, Boston. Hopkins, ever luckless in financial affairs, by 1776 was owed well over one hundred pounds in back salary by his congregation in Newport. See Joseph Conforti, Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement (Washington, D.C., 1981), p. 212, n. 40. Conforti's book is an excellent account of Hopkins' long career as a minister, theologian, and reformer.

54. Parks, Memoir of Hopkins, p. 194.

55. Patten, Reminiscences of Hopkins, p. 44.

Stephen West, from a liberal inclination towards Arminianism and with him founded the Berkshire Association of Congregational Ministers in 1763. This group helped keep the Berkshires a bastion of Calvinism.⁵⁶

Hopkins was to go on to greater prominence as a religious leader, but Great Barrington did not recover so smoothly from the turmoil of the 1760s. The Anglicans sent one of their members, Gideon Bostwick, a Yale graduate, to England in 1769 to be ordained, and he returned in 1770 as a missionary for the Berkshires and neighboring New York. Bostwick served faithfully until his death in 1793, but thereafter it took the Episcopalians twelve years to find a successor. The Congregationalists were bereft of a minister settled for any length of time until 1806.⁵⁷

Hopkins paid a last visit to Great Barrington around 1794. He desired to preach one more time to his congregation, and William Patten, his companion, recorded the melancholic discovery that ensued:

Dr. Hopkins inquired if his former meeting house could not be fitted for the purpose for one Sabbath; but it was found to be impracticable, as the windows were broken, the door had fallen down, and the floor had been occupied by sheep. . . . It was further said, that if a meeting should be appointed anywhere else, there would be but little interest taken in it. It was common for those who regarded the Sabbath and public ordinances to go to other towns to enjoy them, while others devoted the day to visiting, to sitting in taverns, to horse racing, and other amusements. . . .⁵⁸

For at least one visitor in the 1790s, the lack of a religious focus for the community was indicative of a deeper malaise. Timothy Dwight, passing through in 1798, recorded that "The soil of Great Barrington is excellent; yet we saw very few marks of thrift or prosperity. The houses are in many instances decayed; the Episcopal

56. Richard Birdsall, Berkshire County: A Cultural History (New Haven 1959), pp. 43, 53.

57. Taylor, History of Great Barrington, pp. 387, 390.

58. Patten, Reminiscences of Hopkins, pp. 55-56.

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church barely decent, and the Congregational church ruinous. . . . Few places can boast of a better soil, or more delightful situation; yet few, I suspect, have been less prosperous or less happy."⁵⁹

The crisis of the 1760s left a deep wound in the religious life of the town, and perhaps even in its spirit. Was that crisis inevitable? Hopkins felt that it came about because in a community lukewarm about religion, a number of inhabitants "apparently and some of them professedly" saw joining the Church of England as a way to avoid paying for the support of the Gospel.⁶⁰ But that assessment overlooked the efforts of the Anglicans to build their church and to settle Gideon Bostwick, nor did Anglican church membership decline in the 1770s when they were the only denomination in Great Barrington to be regularly paying towards the support of a minister.⁶¹ Hopkins had the challenge, unusual in New England, of having to deal with a non-British ethnic group, yet Sheffield with its own small group of Dutch settlers, went through no such crisis. It is easy to imagine that had the North Parish in 1743 found a minister with either more interpersonal skills or less doctrinal rigidity, the Church of England would have been slower in finding a footing in Great Barrington.

Given the chemistry between the town and its minister, a crisis was predictable. When it was clear that a large percentage of the town was alienated from Hopkins' ministry, as was the case by 1762, why did Hopkins and his party persist in their tactics of pulpit denunciations, threats, arrests for non-attendance, and even the indictment of a minister? Common sense would dictate that such an approach would be self-defeating, as indeed it was. Perhaps in that case what was at stake went deeper than the dictates of common sense could reach.

59. Timothy Dwight, Travels in New England and New York (London 1823), II: 361. For a similar observation, see Field, A History of Berkshire County, pp. 233-234.

60. West, Sketches of Hopkins, p. 48.

61. Although Bostwick was subsidized by the S.P.G., the Anglicans in Great Barrington paid him a salary of twenty pounds in 1771, an amount comparable to what they would have been assessed toward Hopkins' salary in 1760. See Records of St. James Church, 1770-1793, p. 10.

What that issue might have been can be gleaned from the next crisis that Great Barrington faced in the 1760s: rising tension with Great Britain. Hopkins was a patriot, as would befit a Congregational minister. In 1766, he was complaining that those dissatisfied with him were Tories. Indeed, Solomon Palmer was writing to his superiors in the S.P.G. at the end of 1766, as the furor over the Stamp Act was dying down, "the Professors of the Church of England. . . in the late Tumults and Commotions [maintained] a quiet and peaceable behavior." Palmer added, as a contrast, "I wish the Disposition of our Dissenters, with respect to the Authority of the British Parliament, as it relates to them, and the Civil and Ecclesiastical establishments, was as well known in England as it is here."⁶²

Events of the next decade would further demonstrate that the Church of England in Great Barrington, as elsewhere, had a Loyalist slant. On August 16, 1774, a revolutionary mob consisting of men from all over the county and a sizeable contingent from Connecticut, tied Bostwick to a tree and flogged him, destroying the property of another prominent Anglican and Tory, David Ingersoll, Jr., and took Ingersoll back to Connecticut as a prisoner. Undeterred, in 1775 Bostwick was to defy the local Committee of Safety regarding prayers for the King. In 1777, the selectmen compiled a list of the residents of the town who had been "Endeavoring . . . to Counteract the United Struggles of this and the United States for the Preservation of their Liberties and privileges." Of the nineteen persons on the list, seventeen were Church of England members.⁶³ There was a relationship, then, between Great Barrington's local crisis of the 1760s and the far greater one into which it was being pulled.

In that relationship may lie an explanation for why Hopkins and his party pursued the Church of England with such a self-defeating animus. New England towns in the eighteenth century had an unusual degree of ethnic and religious homogeneity, being almost

62. Palmer to the S.P.G., December 15, 1766, in Kenneth Cameron, ed., The Church of England in Pre-Revolutionary Connecticut: New Documents and Letters Concerning the Loyalist Clergy and the Plight of their Surviving Churches (Hartford, 1976), p. 143.

63. Peters, A General History of Connecticut, pp. 284-285; see also Taylor, History of Great Barrington, pp. 202, 231-232, 242; Bostwick to the S.P.G., June 2, 1775, copy at St. James Church; Great Barrington Town Records, p. 183.

entirely of British stock and overwhelmingly Congregational. They placed a high value on harmony and consensus, and they could not deal with dissent or difference very easily.⁶⁴

If Massachusetts in general had but little tolerance for difference, the Church of England strained at that small amount. By the eighteenth century, New England had a widely-accepted historically and religiously defined sense of mission growing out of the Puritan "errand into the wilderness" of the previous century. "Heaven is giving us an opportunity to plant a noble body of free churches in America and has charged us with a part to act for posterity," as Ezra Stiles put it in his *Discourse on Christian Union*.⁶⁵ The establishment of Anglican churches in New England was a direct threat to this heavenly charge. Behind their creation was the long-term goal of transplanting across the Atlantic the church hierarchy from which the Puritans had fled, and which still hindered the civil liberties of dissenters in England. Resistance to Anglican activities in New England was of long standing, but it was reaching a high point in the early 1760s as Anglican missionaries increased their work in New England, and renewed efforts were made in England for a colonial bishop. Agitation over the Anglicans merged into the political crises of the latter 1760s.⁶⁶ John Adams was to write in 1815: "The apprehension of Episcopacy contributed. . . as much as any other cause, to arouse the attention not only of the inquiring mind but of the common people and urge them to close thinking on the constitutional authority of parliament over the colonies."⁶⁷

The Congregationalists in Great Barrington in the early 1760s were in a multifaceted dilemma. There was the pragmatic problem that the financial basis of their church was threatened. But beyond this, they were in the position, extraordinary for colonial Massachusetts, of losing control of their town and having to accept a pluralistic community. Furthermore, they were losing control to a

64. For the ethos of the eighteenth century New England town, see Michael Zuckerman, Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century (New York 1970).

65. Ezra Stiles, A Discourse on Christian Union (Boston 1761), p. 92.

66. See Carl Bridenbaugh, Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities and Politics, 1689-1775 (New York 1962).

67. Adams to Jedediah Morse, December 2, 1815, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 233.

group that threatened the very purpose of New England. Thus, the establishment of a Church of England in Great Barrington was resisted by some with an intensity that foreshadowed the greater resistance to the overreaching of English secular power -- the revolutionary mob that assaulted Bostwick and Ingersoll in 1774 had as one of its auxiliary motives vengeance for the treatment of Hopkins in the previous decade.⁶⁸ Ironically, in Great Barrington in the 1760s, it was the Anglicans and their sympathizers who were fighting for the kind of pluralistic society that lay in America's future.

68. Peters, A General History of Connecticut, p. 211.