

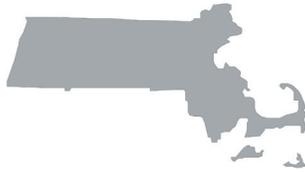


### Phillis Wheatley (1753-84)

This illustration by Scipio Moorhead appeared in the Frontispiece to her book, *Poems on Various Subjects: Religious and Moral*, published in 1773. "Distinguished" gentlemen (John Hancock among them) testified that she was the author.

# The Puritan Origins of Black Abolitionism in Massachusetts

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**Abstract:** *On the eve of the American Revolution in Massachusetts, African Americans formed the nation's first antislavery committee and helped put slavery on the road to extinction by 1783. This article argues that Puritan religious ideology significantly influenced Black activism and abolitionist rhetoric in Massachusetts. In doing so, the essay reinterprets and synthesizes two bodies of literature that most historians have treated separately: studies of Puritanism and works on Black abolitionists. This examination of Puritanism and Black abolitionists provides scholars with a new understanding of the foundations of African American intellectual history and the origins of the antislavery movement. Author Christopher Cameron is an Assistant Professor of Colonial/Revolutionary American History at the University of North Carolina Charlotte.*

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Politically and intellectually, the years 1773 and 1774 were momentous ones for African Americans in Massachusetts. In these years, they were propelled into both the national spotlight and historical memory. Phillis Wheatley (1753–1784) published her book of poems in 1773 and wrote an important letter to Samson Occom (1723–1792), a Native American Presbyterian clergyman from Connecticut, the next year. Just months later Caesar Sarter, another former slave, initiated the tradition of the black jeremiad with his “Address, To Those Who are Advocates for Holding the Africans in Slavery.” The Black jeremiad was a sermonic form Blacks adopted from white Puritans warning of God’s impending judgment on a sinful nation. In 1775, Lemuel Haynes (1753–1833), the first ordained black Congregational minister in New England, built upon Wheatley and Sarter’s work by similarly composing poems and an antislavery essay attacking slavery on religious grounds.

At the same time, groups of Blacks also began petitioning the General Court, which helped galvanize other white activists to publicly voice their opposition to slavery and spurred the legislature to pass a bill preventing Massachusetts citizens from participating in the Atlantic slave trade. While the bill failed because of opposition from the royal governor, this group of African American petitioners distinguished itself by forming the first organized antislavery committee in the country. This group never incorporated like other antislavery organizations and when speaking of Blacks in the colony referred to themselves simply as “their committee.” However, their work laid the foundation for the success of similar groups in the future.

It is no coincidence that the earliest known Black abolitionists in the country hailed from Massachusetts. The lingering influence of Puritanism on New England culture influenced both the rhetoric that Black writers employed and their very ability to exercise rights that slaves elsewhere could not. Puritan thought informed the antislavery writings of Wheatley, Sarter, and Haynes, all of whom spoke to orthodox ideas of divine sovereignty and God’s covenant with his new chosen people. Even more significant, however, was the enduring influence of Puritan religious beliefs on the legal system in Massachusetts, specifically laws regarding rights that the enslaved could exercise. By basing its legal system on the Old Testament and giving bondsmen the right to bring petitions for redress of grievances and to initiate court cases, seventeenth-century Puritanism laid the foundation for the rise of Black activism during the revolutionary period. This activism, including the aforementioned petitions and freedom suits, would seriously cripple the institution of slavery in the state and

lead to the General Court's prohibition on slave trading by Massachusetts residents.

Along with its role in the burgeoning antislavery movement, Puritanism influenced many facets of Massachusetts history during the colonial and revolutionary periods. Puritans were those persecuted members of the Church of England who decided to come to the New World in 1630 to establish what they termed a "wilderness Zion," or a godly society that could serve as an example to their brethren back in England. Unlike the Pilgrims of the Plymouth colony, the Puritans wanted to reform, not completely separate from, the Church of England. In the early years of Massachusetts, Puritans established a theocracy whereby religion became central to the affairs of state and the culture more broadly. Puritanism influenced nearly all facets of life, including the legal code, the manner of choosing leaders, the educational system, and work and family relationships.<sup>1</sup>

The story of Puritanism's influence on American politics and society is often characterized as one of decline. Scholars such as Jon Butler and Darren Staloff argue that after the annulment of the original Massachusetts Bay Charter in 1686, both the cultural and political influence of Puritans waned. Other historians suggest that Puritan ideas continued to wield a significant influence on American religion and culture well into the eighteenth century, although they focus primarily on Whites. Edmund Morgan argued in "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution" that a secularized form of Puritan religious thought informed the republican ideology of revolutionaries. More recently, Francis Bremer has argued that Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) revitalized the Puritan legacy during the Great Awakening of the 1730s, and the work of Kenneth Minkema and Harry Stout has convincingly shown the importance of Edwards' notions of virtue and benevolence to revolutionary era abolitionist thought.<sup>2</sup>

What scholars on Puritanism have been slower to recognize is its intimate connection to the origins of Black abolitionism. John Saillant does mention this connection in his biography of Lemuel Haynes, yet Haynes' Black contemporaries have received much less attention. Those scholars who have examined the connection between Puritan thought and antislavery politics focus exclusively on white activists such as Samuel Hopkins (1721–1803) and Nathaniel Appleton (1693–1784). It is precisely this neglected connection between Puritanism and African American abolitionism that this essay addresses. It complements the recent work on early abolitionism by scholars such as Richard S. Newman and Thomas P. Slaughter to argue that Puritanism provided both the rhetorical tools and the legal foundation within which Blacks could effectively organize

and campaign to abolish slavery in Massachusetts. In doing so, the essay broadens our understanding of the impact that Puritanism continued to wield in Massachusetts during the eighteenth century, the origins of the antislavery movement, and the foundations of African American intellectual history.<sup>3</sup>

## PURITANISM AND BLACK THOUGHT

The beginning of African Americans' engagement with Puritan ideas in Massachusetts came about because from the seventeenth century onward prominent ministers emphasized conversion of Africans. There were many reasons for this ministerial emphasis on conversion, not least of which was the belief that a large contingent of unconverted strangers among the Puritans might bring God's wrath on their holy experiment. Ministers such as Samuel Willard (1640–1707) and Cotton Mather (1663–1728) noted that masters had a Christian duty to tend to the souls of their bondsmen, and Congregational churches baptized both slaves and free Blacks and admitted them as members. African Americans attended and joined Puritan churches from the late seventeenth century to the era of the American Revolution and beyond, which allowed them to acquire some of the rhetorical tools with which they successfully undermined slavery in the colony.

Samuel Willard, minister at Boston's Old South Church from 1678–1707, insisted that slaves were part of Massachusetts' larger familial and religious institutions. During Willard's "occasional" sermons, those given during the midweek service and published after his death as the *Compleat Body of Divinity*, he noted that the word servant "applied to all such in a Family as are under the Command of a Master." Like many New Englanders of his time, Willard used the words "servant" and "slave" interchangeably. While there were differing degrees of servitude, Willard's sermons demonstrated that he believed servants were a part of the family in which they resided. Consequently, he argued that "there is a Duty of Love which Masters owe to their servants . . . and the poorest slave hath a right to it." This duty of love, according to Willard, meant that masters should watch over both the bodies and souls of their slaves, seeing to their physical health and conversion to Christianity.<sup>4</sup>

Cotton Mather echoed Willard's sentiments in writings during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when he specifically addressed the conversion of Blacks and the reciprocal duties between masters and slaves. In his tract *A Good Master Well Served*, Mather articulated four



**Cotton Mather (1663-1728)**

main duties that masters owed their servants, including work, food, and discipline. The fourth, and most important, was that masters “care about the souls of your servants.” Mather noted that “when any servant comes to live with you, the God of Heaven does betrust you with another precious and immortal soul; a soul to be instructed, a soul to be governed, a soul to be brought home unto the Lord.” While recognizing that not all servants would be God-fearing ones, Mather posited that masters should not allow their servants to openly sin. Like Willard, he felt that “masters indeed should be fathers unto their servants,” instructing them in piety and knowledge of the Christian religion.<sup>5</sup>

Mather’s work *The Negro Christianized* expanded on the themes in this previous essay for those who may have felt that converting African Americans to Christianity would free them or make them less valuable slaves. For masters with lingering doubts about whether conversion to Christianity would mean freedom, he assured them that “the State of your Negroes in this World must be low, and mean, and abject; a state of

Servitude . . . Something then, let there be done, towards their welfare in the World to Come.” This something, of course, was instructing them in the knowledge of God, and Mather furthered this process by recommending in the tract specific catechisms for slaves, as well as bible verses they should learn and questions about the Ten Commandments they should be able to answer. For those masters who feared that Christianity would make their slaves less diligent, Mather told them to “be assured, Syrs; Your Servants will be the Better Servants, for being made Christian Servants.” He argued that religion could only make slaves more dutiful, patient, and faithful, and would actually be a prop to the institution of slavery rather than a hindrance.<sup>6</sup>

In the early eighteenth century some masters began heeding the injunctions of Willard and Mather to treat their slaves as part of the family and see to their religious upbringing. Slaves’ conversion to Christianity in Massachusetts began in 1641 with the baptism of Reverend Stoughton’s enslaved woman. It became more widespread in the early eighteenth century when the Royal African Company lost its monopoly on slave trading and the direct importation of slaves to Boston increased. During the decade from 1690 to 1700, the Black population in Massachusetts rose from 400 to 800 people, although their proportion of the total population remained at just one percent. These numbers would nearly quadruple over the next forty years, with nearly 3,100 African Americans in the colony by 1740.<sup>7</sup>

During this same period, ministers at Boston’s First Congregational Church baptized thirty-two Blacks, some slave and some free. These baptisms included both children and adults, as in the case of “Luse Bush negro Received [*sic*] into full communion with the church and baptized and her child Peter” on September 26, 1702. This record indicates that a minister baptized Luse and the congregation accepted her as a member. Puritan churches did not confer membership easily. To achieve this status, Luse would have had to demonstrate godliness and knowledge of the scriptures. She would have also had to give an “account of saving grace” from God, or a testimony aimed at convincing the congregation that she had been converted. These accounts of saving grace often included an awareness of depravity, a struggle with this realization for a period of time, then a realization that one was among God’s elect, followed by a newfound determination to live a godly life.<sup>8</sup>

Other Congregational churches in Boston saw African Americans undergoing baptism and becoming church members, although they were not full members because they did not have voting privileges (see Table

1). At Brattle Street Church, home congregation of some of Boston's wealthiest residents, twenty-four Blacks underwent baptism from 1709 to 1736. Over the same period, a total of thirty-three were baptized at the Old South Church, Samuel Willard's former congregation. Cotton Mather was also successful in bringing slaves into the Christian fold. He baptized four Blacks alone in 1698, and from 1716 to 1736 sixteen more Blacks received the sacrament in his church, including his own slave, Ezor, and Ezor's son Abraham. As at the First Congregational, Mather's church both baptized African Americans and admitted them into membership in the congregation. Undergoing baptism and becoming members in these churches suggests that ministers saw Blacks as spiritually eligible for salvation and that masters were heeding the advice of men such as Mather and Willard to care for the souls of their enslaved people, allowing for the influence of Puritan religious ideas to spread among the Black populace.<sup>9</sup>

This influence became apparent during the Great Awakening in Massachusetts, the period from which we have the first written accounts of African Americans' religious ideas. During the five-year period from 1739 to 1744, both Brattle Street Church and Old South Church saw a rise in Black baptisms, and probably church attendance, with thirty-four receiving the sacrament in the former congregation and twenty-six in the latter. While there are not extant records from all congregational churches during this period, the preceding sample from the four primary Congregational churches in Boston shows that nearly 175 African Americans were either baptized or admitted to church membership before and during the Great Awakening. In the years after the revival period, 1745–1775, at least seventy-eight more Blacks were baptized in both the Old South Church and Brattle Street Church, individuals who came of age during the time of the American Revolution and the antislavery movement in Massachusetts. These numbers represent three to four percent of Blacks in the colony being baptized or admitted to church membership by 1745. However, this sample comes from Boston churches; thus, the proportion of Black Christians was closer to fifteen percent of the Black population in what would become an important area of abolitionist activity twenty years after the Great Awakening.<sup>10</sup>

According to Francis Bremer and Elizabeth Reis, the Great Awakening was both an attempt to, and had the effect of, reviving the Puritan legacy of the seventeenth century. And this period indeed saw the prominence of Puritan religious thought on some African Americans. After New Lights, or supporters of revivals, in Ipswich, Massachusetts, formed the Congregational Church of Chebacco, an enslaved woman named Flora

**Table 1: Black Baptisms and Admissions to Membership in Congregational Churches, 1700-1776**

<b>Old South</b>	<b>1709-1738</b>	<b>1739-1744</b>	<b>1745-1775</b>
Male	23	9	18
Female	10	17	21
Children	12	10	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Brattle Street</b>	<b>1709-1736</b>	<b>1739-1744</b>	<b>1745-1776</b>
Male	14	19	21
Female	10	15	18
Children	3	9	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>First Congregational</b>	<b>1700-1731</b>	<b>1741-1749</b>	<b>1750-1774</b>
Male	15	5	0
Female	17	0	2
Children	22	5	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Second Congregational</b>	<b>1702-1736</b>	<b>1739-1744</b>	<b>1745-1776</b>
Male	10	2	1
Female	8	1	2
Children	4	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

Sources: Richard D. Pierce, ed. "The Records of the First Church in Boston, 1630-1868," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts: Vol.39* (Boston: The Society, 1961), 101-113; Richard D. Pierce, ed. "The Records of the First Church in Boston, 1630-1868," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts: Vol.40* (Boston: The Society, 1961), 370-425. Second Church Record Book (Vol. 4: Baptisms and Admissions, 1689-1716 and Vol.5: Baptisms and Admissions, 1717-1741), Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston. *The Manifesto Church: Records of the Church in Brattle Square Boston, With Lists of communicants, Baptisms, Marriages, and Funerals: 1699-1872* (Boston: The Benevolent Fraternity of Churches, 1902), 100-187. Old South Church Records, Microfilm Reel 4, Congregational Library, Boston.

(1723–?) gave a testimony to the church evincing some of these Puritan ideas. Flora was enslaved to Thomas Choate and had been a lay exhorter during the early part of the Great Awakening, yet she fell into sin and felt that her moral shortcomings hurt the revival cause. According to Flora, her chief sins as an exhorter were “spirituall Pride, Ingratitude, Unwatchfulness and Levity or Lightness,” the same sins that Puritan ministers had decried for years in their writings on the declining piety of New Englanders. Her confession was the means by which she would become a church member. It revealed a realization that she was a sinner, along with a subsequent feeling of grace, which she felt God helped her achieve by “bringing home to [her] soul some Texts of holy Scripture.” Flora further wrote that while in a state of sin “God gave me a Spirit of Prayer, out of the Deep I cry’d to him . . . and the Lord heard, to my Surprize & Astonishment, he ran to my Relief.”<sup>11</sup> Her language demonstrates the influence of Puritan ideas on Blacks in Massachusetts, as her surprise that God reached out to her evinced a feeling of depravity on her part and absolute sovereignty on the part of God, both staples of Puritan rhetoric.

Less than twenty years after Flora’s testimony to the church, another series of revivals swept over the community of Ipswich, initiating conversions that further spread the influence of Puritan religious ideas among African Americans. Among these new Black converts in the 1760s was Phillis Cogswell, a forty-year-old slave of Jonathan Cogswell (1722–1776). Cogswell initially began attending church during the revivals of the 1740s, but she had never become a full member and felt her piety decline over the years. Her decision not to join a church changed with the onset of the Seacoast Revivals of the 1760s, however.

Like Flora, Cogswell had to give a testimony to the Congregational Church of Chebacco in order to become a member. Her wording similarly evinced the influence of Puritan religious discourse on her worldview. In discussing her awareness of depravity she wrote, “I was made sensible my heart was nothing but Sin, and that I had never done any Thing but sin against God and it would have been just with God to cast me into hell.” After the recognition of her sinful state came the relation of God’s mercy, when “Christ appeared lovely to my soul.—Sin appeared odious to me, and I tho’t I should never sin any more.” Phillis Cogswell’s testimony highlights the importance of Christianity to Blacks in the colony and the growing influence of Puritanism on their religious rhetoric. Just as Flora and Cogswell adopted the Calvinist language of sinners, so too would later Black abolitionists adopt a Puritan rhetoric of freedom.<sup>12</sup>

Among these abolitionists, none was better known than Phillis Wheatley, who reformulated Puritan religious ideas into a critique against slavery. Wheatley's poetry evinced the influence of Puritan covenant theology, a school of thought that came into being during the seventeenth century when Puritan leaders such as John Winthrop sought to explain the relationship of New England with God. For most Puritans of that era, "a good covenanted society prospers in the world," according to religious historian Perry Miller, while "a bad one gets what it deserves." Comparing themselves to the ancient Israelites, early Puritans believed that God inflicted property loss, Indian wars, fires, and storms on a sinful nation in proportion to its crimes. These afflictions would be felt even more by regions such as New England, where it was believed God had established a special relationship with the inhabitants, helping them in their quest to purify the Church of England.<sup>13</sup>

In her poem "On the Death of General Wooster," Wheatley subtly employed covenant theology to argue against slavery, asking "how, presumptuous shall we hope to find/Divine acceptance with th' Almighty mind—/While yet (O deed ungenerous!) they disgrace/And hold in bondage Afric's blameless race?" In these few lines Wheatley argued that America would not be successful in the revolutionary war of the 1770s if it continued to enslave Blacks because this practice was immoral and a breach of New England's covenant with God. This would not be the case if Americans abolished slavery, she argued, telling the colonists to "Let virtue reign—And thou accord our prayers/Be victory our's, and generous freedom theirs." Once the colonists became virtuous enough to abolish slavery, according to Wheatley, they would achieve success in the war with Britain.<sup>14</sup>

An earlier letter to Native American minister Samson Occom made the same argument. Here she wrote that:

in every human Breast, God has implanted a Principle, which we call Love of Freedom; it is impatient of Oppression, and pants for Deliverance . . . God grant Deliverance in his own Way and Time, and get him honor upon all whose Avarice compels them to countenance and help forward the calamities of the Fellow Creatures.

Wheatley subtly notes that like White revolutionaries, Blacks were getting tired of being held in slavery and might soon take matters into their own hands. She was not looking for revenge, according to the letter, but

merely to convince slaveholding colonists that it was a sin to hold Africans in bondage and they should emancipate their slaves or face undesirable consequences.<sup>15</sup>

While Wheatley's denunciation of slaveholding did not approach in manner or tone those of seventeenth-century Puritan jeremiads, that of her contemporary Caesar Sarter certainly did. Like Wheatley, Sarter had been enslaved for a number of years before gaining his freedom. In August 1774 he published an essay that represents the first instance of the Black jeremiad in America. Sarter's essay attempted to broaden the scope of Puritan covenant theology, which for most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had seemed consistent with slavery, as Cotton Mather's writings indicate. Attacking those of his readers who were fighting for freedom while holding slaves, he asked:

would you desire the preservation of your own liberty? As the first step let the oppressed Africans be liberated; then, and not till then, may you with confidence and consistency of conduct, look to Heaven for a blessing on your endeavors.

Sarter clearly connected the revolutionary struggle to emancipation for slaves, but went even further in another passage, arguing that God will be on the side of the oppressed Africans. "Why, in the name of Heaven," he asked:

will you suffer such a gross violation of that rule by which your conduct must be tried, in that day, in which you must be held accountable for all your actions, to, that impartial Judge, who hears the groans of the oppressed and who will sooner or later, avenge them of their oppressors!<sup>16</sup>

The colonists not only had to fear the wrath of God in this life, according to Sarter, but were also endangering their immortal souls by engaging in a practice that to him was so clearly opposed to the spirit of Christianity.

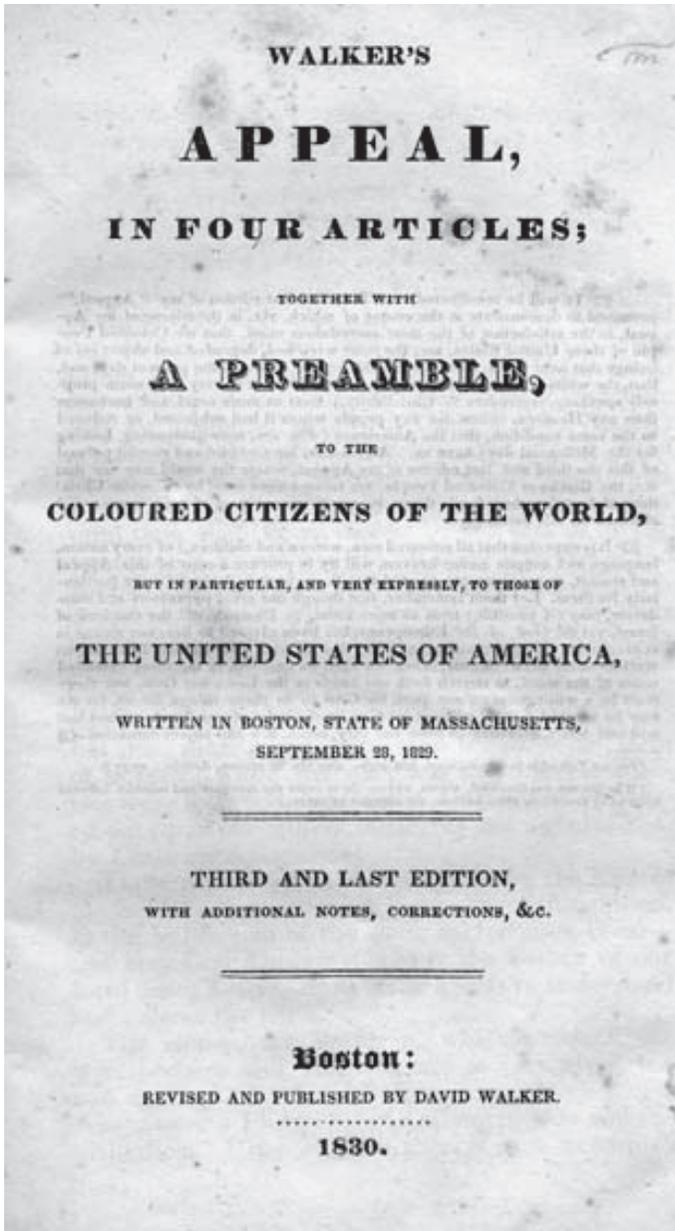
Sarter's essay was similar in function to the old Puritan jeremiad. The jeremiad was a sermonic form that Puritans employed as a means of joining social critique to spiritual renewal, and was a ritual whose roots stretched back to the period before Puritans arrived in the New World. In his 1630 shipboard *Arbella* sermon, for example, John Winthrop warned his listeners that

if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken . . . we shall shame the faces of many of God's worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into curses upon us till we be consumed out of the good land whither we are going.

Winthrop's statement is indicative of the fusion of religion and politics in the eyes of early Puritans, as he felt that being true to God was essential for the colony's political success. For White Puritan ministers the jeremiad articulated a worldview whereby God was intimately involved in earthly affairs. This outlook would have accorded well with traditional African cosmology, as historians have noted a lack of distinction between sacred and secular realms in African thought. Although scholars of the Black jeremiad focus on more well-known activists such as Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) and David Walker (1785–1830), echoing the prevalent bias in antislavery studies toward nineteenth century activists, Sarter placed himself squarely within the Puritan tradition of calling for spiritual renewal and a return to America's original promise of being a city on a hill when he claimed that God, the "impartial judge," hears the groans of the oppressed slaves and will "sooner or later avenge them of their oppressors."<sup>17</sup>

Lemuel Haynes built upon Wheatley and Sarter's work by similarly employing covenant theology to argue against slavery. Lemuel Haynes had been an indentured servant on a farm in Granville, Massachusetts, until 1774, when he joined the militia and marched to Lexington, later serving with the Continental army in Roxbury, Massachusetts. In a poem entitled "The Battle of Lexington," Haynes wrote that "For Liberty, each Freeman Strives/As it's a Gift of God/And for it willing yield their Lives/And Seal it with their Blood." When reflecting upon the colonists' early troubles in the war, he argued that "Sin is the Cause of all our Woe/That sweet deluding ill/And till we let this darling go/There's greater Trouble still."<sup>18</sup> He did not refer specifically to the sin of slavery here, but his later antislavery activism suggests it was on his mind.

After finishing his service in the Continental army, Haynes returned home to Granville, Massachusetts and penned an antislavery sermon that was among the first to use the rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence and continued the tradition of the Black jeremiad that Caesar Sarter began. Haynes wrote "Liberty Further Extended" because he felt that



David Walker's 1830 *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*

Credit: University of North Carolina Library

As Tyrony had its Origin from the infernal regions, so it is the Deuty, and honner [*sic*] of Every son of freedom to repel her first motions. But while we are Engaged in the important struggle, it cannot be tho't impertinent for us to turn one Eye into our own Breast, for a little moment, and See, whether thro' some inadvertency, or a self-contracted Spirit, we Do not find the monster Lurking in our own Bosom.

Haynes advanced many arguments against both slavery and the slave trade in this essay. Speaking of the former he noted that all are equal in the sight of God, while he used emotional appeals to address the latter:

What must be the plaintive noats [*sic*] that the tend[er] parents must assume for the Loss of their Exiled Child? Or the husband for his Departed wife? And how Do the crys of their Departed friends echo from the watry Deep!"

For these crimes Haynes argued that a just God must have vengeance on the colonists and slave traders. Just as Caesar Sarter had done, Haynes inquired of the colonists "what will you Do in that Day when God shall make inquisition for Blood...Believe it, Sirs, there shall not a Drop of Blood, which you have Spilt unjustly, Be Lost in forgetfulness."<sup>19</sup> Like his contemporary Black writers, Haynes evinced the influence of Puritan covenant theology on his antislavery thought and adroitly used the sermonic form of the jeremiad to strengthen his arguments.

## PURITAN LAW AND FREEDOM SUITS

While the rhetorical influence of Puritan thought on Black writers was significant, even more so were the rights that Puritans granted to slaves in early New England. These laws helped slaves to gain their freedom through lawsuits and to organize an antislavery movement during the revolutionary period. Massachusetts' first law regarding slavery reveals the importance that Puritan religious ideas had in shaping the institution. In 1641 the colony officially authorized slavery in its legal code, the *Body of Liberties*. "There shall never be any bond slaverie, villinage or captivitie amongst us," it reads in part:

unless it be lawfull captives taken in just warres, and such strangers as willingly selle themselves or are sold to us. And

these shall have all the liberties and Christian usages which the law of God established in Israell concerning such persons doth morally require.

The first sentence of the statute expressly authorized slavery when the captives were the result of just wars, such as the 1637 Pequot War, or were outsiders sold to them, such as Africans in the Atlantic slave trade. By guaranteeing slaves “the liberties and Christian usages which the law of God established in Israell” in the second sentence, Puritan magistrates



**Lemuel Haynes (1753-1833)**

Lemuel Haynes served in the American Revolution and then became a leading Calvinist minister in Vermont. He wrote extensively, criticizing the slave trade and slavery. Haynes argued that slavery denied black people their natural rights to “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” He wrote: “Liberty is equally as precious to a black man, as it is to a white one, and bondage as equally as intolerable to the one as it is to the other.”

demonstrated the influence of the Old Testament on their ideas about slavery and their recognition that the slaves amongst them were not merely property but human beings before the law. These liberties included protection from arbitrary punishment, especially punishment leading to death.<sup>20</sup>

A revision to the Massachusetts legal code and a case of magistrates returning enslaved Africans to their homeland further highlights the influence Puritan thought wielded on ideas about slavery in the colony. The 1646 *Body of Liberties* provided that

every man whether Inhabitant or foreigner, free or not free shall have libertie to come to any publique Court . . . and either by speech or writeing to move any lawfull, seasonable, and materiall question, or to present any necessary motion, complaint, petition.

By giving both free and unfree individuals the right to bring cases in court and petition for redress of grievances, Puritan authorities recognized in part the humanity and rights of slaves that colonies such as South Carolina summarily denied, a recognition based on the scriptural basis of their views on slavery. Events regarding kidnapped slaves in 1645 similarly highlight this influence of religion on ideas about slavery. During that year a Mr. Smith of Boston traveled to the coast of Africa where he attacked a village, killing one hundred people and kidnapping two Africans to sell as slaves. Smith brought the Africans back to Boston, where colonial magistrates freed them because Smith had kidnapped them, an unacceptable method of attaining slaves under the 1641 statute, and had done so on the Sabbath, which should have been a day of rest for him. This case further demonstrates that Puritan law recognized certain rights that Africans enjoyed as human beings and foreshadows the later opportunities that Blacks would have to gain their freedom through the legal system.<sup>21</sup>

Puritan ministers supported the magistrates' recognition of slave rights in the colony with their own injunctions for masters to treat their bondsmen with respect. Samuel Willard wrote that no master "hath an Arbitrary Power over his servant, as to life and death." Willard's belief drew from the book of Exodus, which mandates punishment for those who take the life of a slave. Slaves were to practice patience and submission at all times, yet if a servant "be injuriously treated, he may make his Orderly application to the Civil Magistrate, whose Duty it is impartially to afford

him a redress, upon a clear Proof of it.” Cotton Mather similarly enjoined slaves to obey their masters in all things, except when their masters told them to do something sinful.<sup>22</sup> Although both Willard and Mather supported the system of slavery, as did the magistrates who drew up the laws regarding bondage, their concessions to slaves’ humanity paved the way for freedom suits and organized Black abolitionism.

One of the most well known freedom suits in Massachusetts history came from an enslaved man named Adam in 1701. In 1694 John Saffin (1626–1710), a wealthy landowner and magistrate of the Massachusetts Bay colony, drew up a document placing his slave Adam under the service of his tenant, Thomas Shepard, for seven years. At the end of this period Saffin promised to:

make free my said Negro man named Adam, to be fully at his own dispose and liberty as other Freemen are or ought to be . . . Always Provided that the said Adam my servant do in the mean time go on chearfully [sic], quietly, and industriously in the lawful business that either my self or my Assigns shall from time to time reasonably set him about or employ him in.

According to Saffin, he rented Adam to Shepard because “knowing the said Negro to be of a proud, insolent and domineering spirit . . . I thought to work upon his natural Reason; and for his own benefit to oblige him to obedience . . . I promised him his Freedom.” After two years it was clear that Adam was not performing his duties as Saffin or Shepard hoped, thus Shepard encouraged Adam by giving him a piece of land on which to plant tobacco, where Adam made three pounds a year. Despite these allowances, Adam grew “so tolerably insolent, quarrelsome and outrageous [sic],” according to Saffin, “that the Earth could not bear his rudeness.” Shepard asked Saffin to take Adam back one year before his term was to expire, which Saffin did. Yet in March of 1700, Adam left Saffin’s house and proceeded to go about Boston at his leisure.<sup>23</sup>

Adam’s departure from Saffin’s house occurred while the latter was on a trip. Upon Saffin’s return Adam told him that he must go and see judge Samuel Sewall (1652–1730), who produced the court document Saffin had drawn up in 1694 and informed him that he should free Adam as promised. Saffin replied that Adam had not fulfilled his side of the bargain and did not deserve his freedom. Adam then sued Saffin, and the case eventually went before the Superior Court of Judicature, on which Sewall sat. The court awarded Adam his freedom in 1703 based upon

the earlier promise of manumission, despite Saffin's having brought forth at least five witnesses testifying that Adam was, among other things, "a very disobedient, turbulent, outrageous and unruly Servant in all respects these many years." Allowing slaves such as Adam the right to bring cases in court and petition may have been an indirect way for Puritans to avoid having to punish those masters who crossed the biblically sanctioned line from regular punishment to overly severe chastisement.<sup>24</sup>

Adam's case and those of subsequent plaintiffs demonstrates that for some slaves in Massachusetts, the legal system was an effective means to freedom. On March 5, 1762, Jenny Slew (1719-?) of Ipswich, Massachusetts, the slave of John Whipple, sued her master for her freedom, claiming that while her father was Black, her mother was White, thus Whipple had illegally held her in slavery and she should be immediately freed. After repeated continuations, the Inferior Court of Common Pleas in Newburyport heard Slew's case in September 1765. This court rejected Slew's claim to freedom, but she immediately appealed and won her case before the Superior Court of Judicature at Salem in 1766 on the grounds that her mother was White. Slew was awarded four pounds damages and court costs and gained her freedom.<sup>25</sup>

A few years later, in May 1768, an enslaved woman named Margaret petitioned the Middlesex County Inferior Court of Common Pleas for a writ of replevin, or the recovery of personal chattel, arguing that William Muzzy of Lexington had unjustly detained her in slavery. Margaret won her freedom in 1770. One year later, an enslaved man named Caesar successfully sued his master in the Essex County Inferior Court of Common Pleas, arguing both a specific point of law (his master promised to free him in a contract) and that slavery was contrary to reason and the laws of God. While both of these cases only involved individuals and did not lead to a general emancipation of slavery, they illustrate the extent to which the legal rights granted by Puritans during the seventeenth century were helping slaves during the revolutionary period gain their freedom.<sup>26</sup>

The most important freedom suit in Massachusetts history began in 1781 and, like Adams' case in 1701, also involved a promise of manumission, although the later case was decided on the question of slavery's constitutionality in Massachusetts. Quok Walker (1753-?) was the son of Mingo and his wife, Dinah, all three of whom James Caldwell purchased in 1754, when Quok was just nine months old. In 1763, James Caldwell died, passing along ownership of Quok Walker to his wife, Isabell, who later married Nathaniel Jennison (1732-?). Upon Isabell's death in 1773 Walker again changed hands and was now the property of

Nathaniel Jennison. According to Walker, however, both James Caldwell and Isabell Jennison had promised to free him, promises which Nathaniel Jennison refused to honor. In April 1781, Walker ran away to work for John and Seth Caldwell, the younger brothers of his original owner.<sup>27</sup>

Nathaniel Jennison soon found Walker in his new situation, beat him and took him back to his home. Walker then sued Jennison for assault, in effect claiming the right to be secure in his own person, while Jennison sued John and Seth Caldwell for 1,000 pounds, claiming that the brothers enticed his slave away. Walker won his case against Jennison, while Jennison won his case against Caldwell, both in the same court. These decisions were clearly contradictory, but came about because of their timing. In the latter case, Jennison produced a bill of sale for Walker, leading to his victory against the Caldwells. But in the former case, Walker's attorneys argued for his freedom on both moral grounds and the earlier manumission promise. As juries throughout the state had done for close to twenty years, they came down on the side of liberty and declared Walker a free man in June 1781.<sup>28</sup>

After these two decisions, both Jennison and the Caldwells appealed their losses; however, Jennison's appeal of the fine for assault and the decision to free Walker was dismissed because his lawyer did not file the correct paperwork. In September 1781, the case *Caldwell v. Jennison* was heard and the court overturned the earlier decision, which had held John and Seth Caldwell liable for damages to Jennison. In the end, after all of the legal wrangling, Quok Walker won his freedom by successfully suing Nathaniel Jennison for assault. The court had initially made a contradictory ruling when it said John and Seth Caldwell were liable to Jennison for the loss of Walker's employment, but the court's overturning this decision supported the decision that granted Walker his freedom.<sup>29</sup>

These four cases represent just over thirteen percent of the thirty freedom suits in Massachusetts between 1700 and 1783, almost all of which were decided in favor of the slave. The last suit by Quok Walker helped seriously undermine slavery in the state in 1783 when Chief Justice William Cushing (1732–1818) charged the jury in Nathaniel Jennison's criminal assault case that "I think the idea of slavery is inconsistent with our own conduct and the Constitution; and there can be no such thing as perpetual servitude of a rational creature." Joanne Pope Melish notes that most, but not all, Massachusetts residents interpreted this decision as having effectively abolished slavery, and indeed the federal census of 1790 indicated that no Blacks in the state were slaves. While these suits occurred over a century after the Puritans' first statutes on slavery, the

foundation these statutes laid and the practice of treating slaves as human beings before the law were key elements in the abolition of slavery in the state, an abolition brought about partly by the agency of Blacks who were willing to challenge their bondage in court.<sup>30</sup>

## BLACK PETITIONING AND ORGANIZED ABOLITIONISM

Another key right granted to slaves under the 1646 statute, the right to petition for redress of grievances, became central to the rise of organized abolitionism among Blacks and the prohibition on slave trading in the state. On January 6, 1773, slaves in Boston—only one of whom, Felix, signed their name—submitted the first of at least five petitions that decade to the General Court. While some of the petitions spoke more to natural rights than religious ideas, the latter were present in each one. This first entreaty to the legislature evinced the influence of Jonathan Edwards' conceptions of virtue. The petitioners noted that slaves in the province were "virtuous and religious, although their condition is in itself so unfriendly to Religion, and every moral virtue except Patience." The idea that slavery was destructive of virtue was one that Edwards articulated in his work, where he defined liberty as the freedom to act morally without any constraints, and the Calvinist ministry of the revolutionary era similarly argued for the necessity of freedom to virtue. Thus, the petitioners were able to effectively align their Calvinist-influenced religious ideas with common currents of political discourse.<sup>31</sup>

The petitioners further displayed the influence of Puritan discourse on their own religious and political thought by saying that they would attempt to practice virtue to the best of their ability. "We have no Property! We have no Wives! No Children! We have no City! No Country," they wrote. "But we have a Father in Heaven, and we are determined, as far as his Grace shall enable us, and as far as our degraded contemptuous Life will admit, to keep all his Commandments." By saying they would keep God's commandments if his grace allowed them to, they employed a distinctly Calvinist approach, one that attributed any change of heart in a sinner to God's irresistible grace, and not to the efforts of people.<sup>32</sup>

The petitioners were able to distribute their entreaty and its arguments against slavery in a few different media outlets to reach as wide an audience as possible. They persuaded the author of *The Appendix*, an antislavery tract, to insert the entire text of their petition into his essay for publication. The "lover of constitutional liberty," as the author called himself, assisted the slaves in circulating their work, noting that: "Great

Success is expected from this Petition, since Those, who are the Guardians of our Rights, are led and influenced by the true Principles of Liberty.” In addition to placing their work in *The Appendix*, the petitioners managed to get it noticed in another antislavery essay, this time in *The Massachusetts Spy*. The anonymous author of the essay addressed the Massachusetts General Court: “having seen a petition that is intended to be laid before you in the name of many slaves living in Boston and other towns of this province, praying that you would be pleased to take their unhappy state and condition under consideration.”<sup>33</sup>

While this petition was aired in multiple venues, it did not lead to any legislative action. Thus, in April 1773 the committee of Massachusetts slaves, this time with four signatories, submitted another petition arguing for the abolition of slavery and urging the legislature to do so as soon as possible. Instead of beginning this entreaty with a blessing to God, the petitioners mentioned the many efforts made “by the legislative of this province in their last sessions to free themselves from slavery.” Pointing out the inconsistency of fighting for freedom while keeping slaves, they wrote:

we expect great things from men who have made such a noble stand against the designs of their fellow-men to enslave them. We cannot but wish and hope Sir, that you will have the same grand object, we mean civil and religious liberty, in view in your next session.<sup>34</sup>

The petitioners got their wish, as members of the House of Representatives ordered that a committee be formed to discuss an abolition law and appointed John Hancock, Samuel Adams, and Robert Treat Paine to do so. Three days later, however, the committee reported that the petition should be tabled until the next session. At the start of the next session, in January 1774, the slaves’ petition was again read, along with another memorial from them, and both the House and Council passed a bill in March 1774 to prevent the importation of slaves into the colony. The bill would have become law had Governor Thomas Hutchinson signed it. But instead, he dissolved the General Court on March 9, 1774, the day after receiving the bill from the legislature, because armed hostilities between the English and the colonists had recently arisen.<sup>35</sup>

Although the slaves’ petition was yet again unsuccessful in achieving their ultimate goal, they did establish the type of organization that would prove central to the fight against slavery until the Civil War, namely an

antislavery committee. While the first petition mentioned that it came from many slaves, the April petition noted specifically that it was “in behalf of our fellow slaves in this province, and by order of their Committee.” Four individuals signed this petition: Peter Bestes, Sambo Freeman, Chester Joie, and Felix Holbrook. Of these four nothing is known besides their status as slaves in the province and as political activists in the abolitionist movement, although Felix Holbrook may be the same Felix who signed the January 1773 petition. Two years before the formation of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society in 1775, the group that many historians have called America’s first antislavery committee, Massachusetts Blacks had already established an organization replete with a strategy (petitioning) for achieving abolition and contacts throughout the state to help disseminate their ideas.<sup>36</sup>

In 1775, Prince Hall (1735–1807), one of Boston’s leading Black abolitionists and community activists, founded the Black Masons. This group similarly availed themselves of the right to petition established under early Puritans and thereby helped abolish the slave trade in the state. After the Revolution, merchants in Massachusetts resumed their participation in the international slave trade. Even with most believing slavery had ended in the state after Quok Walker’s 1783 case, vessels continued to sail to Africa, sell slaves in the West Indies, and bring back goods such as sugar and molasses to distill into rum. Some captains, however, did not bother to go to Africa and instead kidnapped Blacks in America to sell in the West Indies. This is exactly what occurred in Boston in January 1788, when a Captain Hammond enticed three members of the African Masonic Lodge aboard his ship to sell as slaves in Martinique. As a response to this act, Prince Hall and twenty members of the African Masonic Lodge presented a petition to the General Court on February 27, 1788. “Your Petitioners are justly alarmed at the enhuman and cruel Tretment that Three of our Brethren free citizens of the Town of Boston lately Received,” they noted.<sup>37</sup>

Even before Hall submitted this petition to the legislature, he was working to publicize the kidnapping to sympathetic Whites in Boston and elsewhere in the country. Minister Jeremy Belknap noted that “I had some conferences with Prince on the subject” of the petition, and the kidnapping story appeared in newspapers as far as New York, including the February 26, 1788 edition of *The New-York Packet*. Months after it was submitted, Ebenezer Hazard of New York wrote to Belknap and told him, “I now return to you Prince Hall’s petition. It will appear in one of our newspapers on Monday, when a trial will come on between one of

our masters of vessels and a member of the society for promoting the manumission of slaves, who accused the former of kidnapping negroes.” The full text of Hall’s petition, signed by him, also appeared in the April 24, 1788 edition of *The Massachusetts Spy* in Worcester.<sup>38</sup>

Hall’s February 1788 petition and two others submitted to the legislature that same month by Quakers and a group of Boston ministers spurred the General Court into action. On March 26, 1788, the legislature passed “An Act to prevent the Slave-Trade, and for granting Relief to the Families of such unhappy Persons as may be kidnapped or decoyed away from this Commonwealth.” The law recognized Hall’s complaint that Blacks were continually subject to kidnapping, noting that “By the African trade for slaves, the lives and liberties of many innocent persons have been from time to time sacrificed to the lust of gain.” They went on to mandate stiff fines for all those involved in trading slaves to any state in America or any nation, including a fifty pound fine for every African sold as a slave and a two hundred pound fine for every vessel outfitted for the slave trade.<sup>39</sup>

Hall’s petition succeeded in securing both the abolition of the slave trade in Massachusetts and the return of the three members of his Lodge: Wendham, Cato, and Luck. When these three were shipped to Martinique, they refused to work as slaves, despite serious floggings, and the public attention prompted Governor John Hancock to write the governor of Martinique to have the three men released and sent back to Boston. The governor fulfilled Hancock’s request, and the Masons were returned to Boston in late July 1788. According to Jeremy Belknap, their return “caused a jubilee among the blacks,” although the captain of the ship was never apprehended. Prince Hall took them to see Belknap, who had been instrumental in getting them returned and the trade abolished, and for Belknap, their appreciation was “much more than a balance for all the curses of the African dealers, distillers, &c., which have been liberally bestowed upon the clergy of this town for promoting the late law against their detestable traffick.”<sup>40</sup> Belknap’s words indicate the true importance of Hall’s efforts which, combined with those of other abolitionists, contributed to the abolition of the slave trade in Massachusetts.

## CONCLUSION

Historians have correctly noted that abolition in Massachusetts was a gradual process brought about by many factors.<sup>41</sup> These factors included the important work of White activists in publishing tracts and pamphlets, preaching sermons, debating the morality of slavery, and assisting in

lawsuits. Yet the antislavery activity of Black activists was also vital in changing public opinion on the institution, so that after the Quok Walker cases, most believed it was unprofitable to hold slaves that might gain their freedom through the courts. Through petitions, lawsuits, and publications such as poems and antislavery essays, African Americans in the Bay State helped put slavery on the road to extinction and secure a law preventing individuals from participating in the Atlantic slave trade.

Black antislavery activists in Massachusetts who cut their teeth on the state-wide abolitionist movement would soon turn their sights to ending slavery and racial discrimination throughout the nation. Puritan rhetoric continued to inform the religious and political writings of Black activists after the February 1788 abolition law, including figures such as John Marrant (1755–1791), Paul Cuffe (1759–1817), David Walker, and Maria Stewart (1803–1879). Marrant contributed to the growth of a Black public sphere in the late 1780s, while Cuffe cultivated relationships for his emigration schemes with ministers such as Jedidiah Morse (1761–1826) and Samuel Mills (1783–1818) of Andover Theological Seminary. Both Morse and Mills saw themselves as defenders of Calvinist orthodoxy—which was strongly linked to Puritan ideas—in the wake of the Unitarian onslaught. Stewart and Walker, like Wheatley and Sarter had earlier done, both evoked Puritan covenant ideas in their writings and employed jeremiads in their critiques of slavery and racism. These facts show us that even past the revolutionary era, Puritan religious ideas continued to inform the work of Black abolitionists in Massachusetts, as the rhetoric of original sin and God’s covenant with his chosen people, along with the sermon form of the jeremiad, continued to be important tropes in Black antislavery thought during the antebellum period.

HJM

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Any study of Puritanism should begin with the classic work of Perry Miller. See especially his *New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1939); for the origins and growth of Puritanism see Francis J. Bremer, *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), 62-63; Darren Staloff, *The Making of an American Thinking Class: Intellectuals & Intelligentsia*

in *Puritan Massachusetts* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 169-188; Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 24 (1967): 3-43; Francis Bremer, *Puritanism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 103; Kenneth P. Minkema and Harry S. Stout, "The Edwardsean Tradition and the Antislavery Debate, 1740-1865," *The Journal of American History* 92 (2005): 47-74.

<sup>3</sup> John Saillant, *Black Puritan, Black Republican: The Life and Thought of Lemuel Haynes, 1753-1833* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). David S. Lovejoy, "Samuel Hopkins: Religion, Slavery, and the Revolution," *The New England Quarterly* 40 (1967): 227-243. Bernard Rosenthal, "Puritan Conscience and New England Slavery," *The New England Quarterly* 46 (1973): 62-81. For other works on early abolitionism see Richard Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008). Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 115-180.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Willard, *A Compleat Body of Divinity in Two Hundred and Fifty Expository Lectures on the Assembly's Shorter Catechism wherein The Doctrines of the Christian Religion are unfolded, their Truth confirm'd, their Excellence display'd, their Usefulness improv'd; contrary Errors & Vices refuted & expos'd, Objections answer'd, Controversies settled, Cases of Conscience resolv'd; and a great Light thereby reflected on the present Age* (Boston: B. Green and S. Kneeland, 1726), 614.

<sup>5</sup> Cotton Mather, *A Good Master Well Served* (Boston: B. Green and J. Allen, 1696), 16, 17, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Cotton Mather, *The Negro Christianized: An Essay to Excite and Assist that Good Work, the Instruction of Negro-Servants in Christianity* (Boston: B. Green, 1706), 14, 21.

<sup>7</sup> See John Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal: "History of New England," Volume 2: 1630-1649* (New York: Elibron Classics, 2005), 26, for his observation in 1641 of the baptism of "A Negro woman belonging to Rev. Stoughton of Dorchester, Massachusetts, being well approved by divers years of experience for sound knowledge and true godliness." For the increased importation of slaves to Boston after the Royal African Company lost its monopoly in 1698 see Philip Gould, *Barbaric Traffic: Commerce and Antislavery in the Eighteenth Century Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 15. For population statistics see United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States* (Washington, DC, 1961), series z 1-19, series A 1281-80, 13, 756.

<sup>8</sup> Richard D. Pierce, ed. "The Records of the First Church in Boston, 1630-1868," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts: Vol.39* (Boston:

The Society, 1961), 101-113; Richard D. Pierce, ed. "The Records of the First Church in Boston, 1630-1868," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts: Vol. 40* (Boston: The Society, 1961), 370-425. For requirements for church membership see Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 18.

<sup>9</sup> Second Church Record Book (Vol. 4: Baptisms and Admissions, 1689-1716 and Vol. 5: Baptisms and Admissions, 1717-1741), Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston. *The Manifesto Church: Records of the Church in Brattle Square Boston, With Lists of Communicants, Baptisms, Marriages, and Funerals: 1699-1872* (Boston: The Benevolent Fraternity of Churches, 1902), 100-187. Old South Church Records, Microfilm Reel 4, Congregational Library, Boston.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* *The Manifesto Church: Records of the Church in Brattle Square Boston*, 100-187. For the black population of Boston in 1742 see Lorenzo Johnston Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), 338.

<sup>11</sup> "The Confession of Flora Negro To the New-Gathered Congregational Ch[urc]h in Chebacco" in Erik R. Seeman, "'Justise Must Take Plase': Three African Americans Speak of Religion in Eighteenth Century New England," *William and Mary Quarterly* 56 (1999): 408, 410. The original manuscripts of this confession and that of Phillis Cogswell are located in the John Cleaveland Papers, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA. I have checked Seeman's transcription against the originals for accuracy. For the Great Awakening and its relationship to Puritanism see Bremer, *Puritanism*, 103 and Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 164-193.

<sup>12</sup> Phillis Cogswell, "Conversion Narrative of Phillis Cogswell, Negro" in Seeman, "Justise Must Take Plase," 413.

<sup>13</sup> Miller, *The New England Mind*, 482. For the belief in God's special relationship with New Englanders see Lovejoy, "Samuel Hopkins," 236-237.

<sup>14</sup> Wheatley, "On the Death of General Wooster," *Complete Writings*, ed. Vincent Carretta (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 93.

<sup>15</sup> "Phillis Wheatley to Samson Occom, 11 February 1774," *Complete Writings*, 153.

<sup>16</sup> Caesar Sarter, "Address, To Those who are Advocates for Holding the Africans in Slavery," *The Essex Journal and Merrimack Packet* (Newburyport, MA), August 17, 1774, 1.

<sup>17</sup> John Winthrop, *A Model of Christian Charity* in Michael P. Johnson, ed. *Reading the American Past: Selected Historical Documents, Volume 1: To 1877* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005), 59. For the jeremiad as it applies to White Puritans see Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), xi. Historian David Howard-Pitney's study of the Black jeremiad begins with an analysis of the ideology of Frederick Douglass. See *The Afro-American Jeremiad: Appeals for*

*Justice in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990). Wilson Jeremiah Moses does place early Black abolitionists such as Richard Allen and Prince Hall within this tradition of Black protest, but does not discuss Sarter's essay, perhaps because of its publication in an obscure, Newburyport, Massachusetts newspaper. See his *Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms: Social and Literary Manipulations of a Religious Myth* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), ch.3. For a discussion of African cosmologies see Yvonne Chireau, *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 27, 38.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Newman, ed. *Black Preacher to White America: The Collected Writings of Lemuel Haynes, 1774-1833* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1990), xix-xxv. Lemuel Haynes, "The Battle of Lexington," *ibid*, 12, 15.

<sup>19</sup> Lemuel Haynes, "Liberty Further Extended," *ibid*, 17, 22-23.

<sup>20</sup> "Bond-Slavery," *The Laws and Liberties of Massachusetts* (reprinted from the 1648 edition), ed. M. Farrand (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), 4. For the biblical basis of some of the Puritans' views on slavery see Exodus 21:20: "And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall surely be punished" and Exodus 21:16: "And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death," KJV.

<sup>21</sup> "A Coppie of the Liberties of the Massachusetts Collonie in New England," Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 8 (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1843), 218; For Mr. Smith's case see *Winthrop's Journal, Volume 2*, 252-3.

<sup>22</sup> Willard, *A Compleat Body of Divinity*, 614; Mather, *A Good Master Well Served*, 10.

<sup>23</sup> John Saffin, *A Brief and Candid Answer to a Late Printed Sheet, Entitled, The Selling of Joseph* (Boston, 1701), 6, 8-9. For Adam's story also see Abner C. Goodell, Jr. "John Saffin and His Slave Adam," *Transactions 1892-94, Vol. I of Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* (Boston: The Society, 1895), 87-112.

<sup>24</sup> Saffin, *A Brief and Candid Answer*, 7-8, Quote on pg. 9.

<sup>25</sup> *Slew V. Whipple, 1766* in Roger Bruns, ed., *Am I Not a Man and a Brother: The Antislavery Crusade of Revolutionary America, 1688-1788* (New York: Chelsea House, 1977), 105-6.

<sup>26</sup> For the case of Margaret v. Muzzy see L. Kinvin Wroth and Hiller B. Zobel, eds., *Legal Papers of John Adams, Volume 2: Cases 31-62* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 58-59. For Caesar v. Taylor see *ibid*, 59-60.

<sup>27</sup> Robert M. Spector, "The Quock Walker Cases (1781-83)—Slavery, its Abolition, and Negro Citizenship in Early Massachusetts," *The Journal of Negro History* 53 (1968): 12-13.

<sup>28</sup> Zilversmit, "Quok Walker, Mumbet, and the Abolition of Slavery in Massachusetts," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 25 (1968): 614-617, 622-624.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> For the statistics on freedom suits in Massachusetts see Emily Blanck, "Seventeen Eighty Three: The Turning Point in the Law of Slavery and Freedom in Massachusetts," *The New England Quarterly* 75 (2002): 27. William Cushing, "Commonwealth v. Jennison, Chief Justice Cushing to the Jury, 1783," in Bruns, ed. *Am I Not a Man and a Brother*, 475. Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and 'Race' in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press), 1998. 64.

<sup>31</sup> "Petition of Massachusetts Blacks to the Legislature, 6 January, 1773," in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States, Volume I: From the Colonial Times Through the Civil War* (1951; New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1990), 6. Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 457-8.

<sup>32</sup> "Petition of Massachusetts Blacks to the Legislature, 6 January 1773," 6. For Jonathan Edwards' conception of infused grace from God see E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 115-117.

<sup>33</sup> Lover of Constitutional Liberty, *The Appendix: Or, Some Observations on the Expediency of the Petition of the Africans* (Boston: E. Russell, 1773), 4-5. A Customer, "Essay on Slavery," *Massachusetts Spy*, January 28, 1773, 3.

<sup>34</sup> "Petition of Massachusetts Blacks to the Legislature, 20 April 1773," in Aptheker, ed., *A Documentary History*, 7.

<sup>35</sup> *Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts, 1773-1774* (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1981), 85, 104, 221-237. For Hutchinson dissolving the General Court see "Samuel Dexter to Jeremy Belknap, 26 February 1795," Belknap Papers, Part II in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Vol. III* 5<sup>th</sup> series (Boston: The Society, 1877), 388. See also Douglas Egerton, *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 56.

<sup>36</sup> "Petition of Massachusetts Blacks to the Legislature, 20 April 1773," 8. Gary Nash posits that after the Revolution the Pennsylvania Abolition Society would flower "into the first corporate group in the English-speaking world dedicated to the eradication of slavery." See his *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1988), 43.

<sup>37</sup> Jeremy Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, 9 March 1788, in *Belknap Papers, Part II*, 25; "Petition of Massachusetts Blacks to the Legislature, 27 February 1788," in *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, 20.

<sup>38</sup> Jeremy Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, 2 August 1788, in *Belknap Papers, Part II*, 55; *New York Packet*, February 26, 1788, 2. Ebenezer Hazard to Jeremy Belknap, 5 April 1788, in *Belknap Papers, Part II*, 28-29; *Massachusetts Spy*, April 24, 1788, 1-2.

<sup>39</sup> *The Perpetual Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, from the Commencement of the Constitution, in October, 1780, to the Last Wednesday in May, 1789* (Boston: Adams and Nourse, 1789), 235.

<sup>40</sup> Jeremy Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, 2 August 1788, 55.

<sup>41</sup> Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 64-65. Margot Minardi, *Making Slavery History: Abolitionism and the Politics of Memory in Massachusetts* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 9, 18.