

GENDER AND DISSENT IN COLONIAL NEW ENGLAND: ANNE HUTCHINSON AND THE ANTINOMIAN CONTROVERSY

«Assent and you are sane;
Demur, -you're straightway dangerous
And handled with a chain.»

EMILY DICKINSON

When Anne Hutchinson arrived to settle in the Massachusetts Bay Colony at the age of forty-three, few could have predicted that her presence would catalyze the forces of Antinomian dissent that nearly tore the fledgling colony apart three years later in 1637. Hutchinson's father, Francis Marbury, was a clergyman known for his Puritan leanings, who on several occasions received reprimands from the Church of England regarding his dissenting opinions; her mother, Bridget Dryden, was from a distinguished family of Canon's Ashby in Northamptonshire. The atmosphere of the Marbury menage has been characterized as one of tolerance and liberality, in which ethical and religious questions were debated freely but without the fanaticism which would blacken so much of the subsequent history of Puritanism. In 1605 the Marburys moved to London, and at the age of twenty-one, Anne Marbury was married to William Hutchinson, the son of a wealthy businessman. The young couple went to live in Alford, and in the following twenty-two years had no fewer than fourteen children¹. Such a background would seem to have prepared Anne Hutchinson for a life, not of violent intellectual debate and overt rebellion, but rather of placid housewifery.

In 1633 the Hutchinsons' eldest son, William, emigrated to the colony of Massachusetts Bay along with John Cotton, a young clergyman of St. Botolph's whose sermons Anne Hutchinson had found interesting. The reports from young William on the possibilities of making a new life in the New World must have seemed doubly attractive in the context of the turbulent reign of Charles I, the absolutist Stuart king who would later be tried and executed by the

¹ See *Anne Hutchinson*, in «Dictionary of American Biography», vol. 9, London, Oxford University Press, 1932, p. 432.

followers of Oliver Cromwell. Thus in 1634 Anne Hutchinson and her family set sail for America in the ship *Griffin*, arriving in September of the same year ².

Contemporary accounts reveal that one Puritan chronicler viewed the New World as a «hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men» ³. Although no record survives of Anne Hutchinson's first impressions of the New Continent, it seems safe to assume that they may not have been so negative, given the pragmatic optimism which seems to have been one of the primary facets of her character. One of her chief detractors, Thomas Welde, acknowledges in his brief book *A Short Story of the Rise, Reign, and Ruin of the Antinomians* that «...her usuall conversation was in the way of righteousness and kindnesse». However, Welde goes on to observe, «...she had in a short time insinuated her self into the heart of much of the people (yes of many of the most wise and godly) who grew into so revrent an esteeme of her as a Prophtetesse, raised up of God for some great worke now at hand... so as she had more resort to her for counsell about matters of conscience, and clearing up mens spirituall estates, then any Minister (I might say all the Elders) in the country» ⁴.

It is possibly due to her activities as a midwife that Hutchinson became known for her kindness and practical assistance to women in difficulties. As might be expected from someone who was a thorough student of the Bible and who was known for her intellectual acumen, she soon began to take part in the religious life of the community ⁵. Initially, she invited groups of women to informal sessions at her home, where the sermons of the previous Sunday were discussed. These sessions were soon expanded to allow men to attend as well, and attracted an average attendance of sixty or more persons, including the influential young governor Henry Vane, several prominent merchants, and other powerful members of the colony. Significantly, as the numbers of these gatherings grew, the nature of the topics discussed began to change: rather than simply recapitulating and discussing the sermons of the previous Sunday, Anne Hutchinson criticized their content and authenticity, thus challenging the authority of the local theocracy ⁶.

The virulent response of the Puritan power structure to the controversial opinions which Anne Hutchinson expressed would ultimately lead to her banishment from the colony and subsequent death. In this article, in order to

² *Ibidem*, p. 436.

³ BRADFORD, William — *Of Plymouth Plantation*, in «Concise Anthology of American Literature», 2nd ed., New York, Macmillan, 1985, p. 31.

⁴ WELDE, Thomas — *A Short Story of the Rise, Reign, and Ruin of the Antinomians*, in «Winthrop's Journal: History of New England 1630-1649», vol. I, ed. James K. Hosmer, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908, p. 252. The only texts written from the perspective of an eyewitness at the trial of Anne Hutchinson are this brief treatise by Welde and John Winthrop's *History of New England*. Both Winthrop and Welde offer us a clear indication of the attitudes of the ruling Puritan elite regarding the Antinomian controversy and related issues.

⁵ Cf. RUGG, Winifried — *Unafraid: A Life of Anne Hutchinson*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1930, pp. 76-99.

⁶ See *Anne Hutchinson*, in «Dictionary of American Biography», vol. 9, London, Oxford University Press, 1932, pp. 436-437.

contextualize the violence which pervades Puritan rhetoric on the subject of the Antinomian controversy and particularly on the person and moral character of Anne Hutchinson herself, I shall analyze the historical role of women in Puritan culture and focus on certain categories related to gender in Puritan religious typology. Secondly, I shall examine the principal theological and social issues at stake in the Antinomian debate, focusing on Anne Hutchinson's role and the openly misogynist arguments deployed by her accusers. In conclusion, the aftermath of the controversy and its implications will be briefly discussed.

In his book *A Search for Power: The «Weaker Sex» in Seventeenth-Century New England*, Lyle Koehler has examined existing stereotypes of masculinity and femininity in Puritan discourse and ideology. According to Koehler, the Puritan emphasis on man's powerlessness before God created deep-seated feelings of anxiety among Puritan men which led them to propound exaggerated notions of male superiority⁷. There is ample documentary evidence regarding Puritan prejudice toward women. A prominent Puritan called Nicholas Noyes, for example, modestly characterized men as the «Magnanimous, Masculine, and Heroicke sexe»⁸, whereas according to John Winthrop, Anne Hutchinson's judge and chief accuser, women were «poore fraile creatures»⁹. Elnathan Chauncy, another well-known Puritan, went so far as to assert, «Ye soule consists of two portions inferior and superior; the superior is masculine and eternal. Ye inferior foeminine and mortal»¹⁰. This unusual vision of the anatomy of the spirit had its counterpoint in Puritan ideas on science. In *A Short History of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, Theodore Cianfrand has discussed the Puritan hypothesis that the time of gestation for male infants was longer than that required for female babies, as the former supposedly represented a more sophisticated and highly developed form of life¹¹. Lyle Koehler, in the above-mentioned study, draws our attention to the Puritan belief that the male fetus received its soul on the fortieth day after conception, whereas the female fetus (presumably due to its lesser status) had to wait eighty days¹².

Once in the world, the lot of the Puritan girl child did not improve. Educational curricula for young girls were organized differently from those destined for boys: while girls were taught cooking, weaving, reading (sacred texts), and spinning, boys studied Latin, spelling, reading, and maths. As might be expected, both sexes were required to study religion¹³. The records of one

⁷ KOEHLER, Lyle — *A Search for Power: The «Weaker Sex» in Seventeenth-Century New England*, Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1980, p. 28.

⁸ NOYES, Nicholas — *Sewall and Noyes on Wigs*, in «Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts», Boston, vol. 4 (1917), p. 120.

⁹ WINTHROP, John — *John Winthrop to Margaret Tyndal, March, 1618*, quoted in KOEHLER, Lyle — *op. cit.*, p. 28.

¹⁰ See KOEHLER, Lyle, — *op. cit.*, p. 28.

¹¹ CIANFRANI, Thomas — *A Short History of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, Springfield, III., Thomas Publishing, 1960, p. 174.

¹² KOEHLER, Lyle — *op. cit.*, p. 29.

¹³ AXTELL, James — *The School upon a Hill: Education and Society in Colonial New England*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1974, pp. 31, 40.

colonial town indicate that only seven of approximately two hundred schools in the area specifically allowed girls to attend classes¹⁴.

It has repeatedly been demonstrated that in Puritan society, the most highly valued characteristics in women were those related to passivity and submissiveness. Thus, according to the Puritan Joseph Beacon, «The greatest Nuisance in Nature is an immodest impudent Woman»¹⁵. The definition of what constituted immodesty or impudence was presumably left to enlightened persons like Beacon himself. One Puritan clergyman described the ideal woman as displaying «Eminence in Modesty, reserve, purity, temperance, humility, truth, meekness, patience, courtesie, affability, charity, goodness, mercy, and compassion»¹⁶. It should be pointed out, however, that wit and intelligence (not to mention such «manly» qualities as physical strength or business acumen) are not listed among the characteristics that such a paragon of feminine virtues should possess: indeed, intellectual activity of any sort on the part of women was perceived as potentially harmful and overly taxing, due to the frailty of feminine reason. In a poignant and oft-quoted text dating from the year 1645, John Winthrop states that Ann Hopkins, the young wife of the governor, had gone mad as a result of too much reading:

«Mr. Hopkins, the governor of Hartford upon Connecticut, came to Boston, and brought his wife with him, (a godly young woman, and of special parts), who was fallen into a sad infirmity, the loss of her understanding and reason, which had been growing upon her divers years, by occasion of her giving herself wholly to reading and writing, and had written many books. Her husband, being very loving and tender of her, was loath to grieve her; but he saw his error, when it was too late. For if she had attended her household affairs, and such things as belong to women, and not gone out of her way and calling to meddle in such things as are proper for men, whose minds are stronger, etc., she had kept her wits, and might have improved them usefully and honorably in the place God had set her»¹⁷.

As Koehler points out in the abovementioned study, it should be noted that in the Massachusetts Bay Colony unmarried Puritan women as well as widows were allowed to own property. After marriage, however, husbands had supervisory control over the property and behavior of wives, and the obligations of husbands toward their wives were based, not on equality before the law,

¹⁴ SMALL, Walter Herbert — *Girls in Colonial Schools*, «Education», XXII (1902), pp. 532-534.

¹⁵ BEACON, Joseph — «Solitary Meditations», in *Miscellanies on various Subjects, Translations and Collections out Diverse Authors (1688)*, Houghton Library, Harvard University. Quoted in KOEHLER — *op. cit.*, p. 29.

¹⁶ COLMAN, Benjamin — *The Duty and Honor of Aged Women: A Sermon on the Death of Abigail Foster*, Boston, B. Green, 1711, p. 11.

¹⁷ WINTHROP, John — *History of New England, 1630-1649*, vol. II, ed. James K. Hosmer, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908, p. 225.

but on women's alleged weakness and need for wise (male) guidance. Puritan legislation reinforces the the image of women as irresponsible minors by holding husbands responsible for wives' infractions of minor civil and religious regulations, such as compulsory church attendance on the Sabbath. In such cases, the Puritan husband was allowed to choose between paying a fine on behalf of his erring wife or punishing (i.e. beating) her at home¹⁸.

As one might expect in the context of such a deeply misogynist culture, Puritan women were not permitted to vote in civil elections, and in church affairs they fared little better. Women could neither vote or ask questions in church assemblies, and the only circumstances in which their voices could be heard in church was to sing hymns or (in some, but not all, congregations) to request membership¹⁹. This prohibition was based, in part, on the statement of St. Paul in I Timothy 2: 11-14: «Let the women learn in silence, with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression»²⁰.

The misogyny present in Pauline discourse is reflected in the rigid categories of Puritan typology. It has often been observed that Puritan theology, in its wholesale and often indiscriminate rejection of Roman Catholicism de-emphasized (and in some cases, entirely suppressed) anything related to the cult of Our Lady. For many women in pre-Tudor England, the Virgin Mary was virtually the only role model available of a woman, who, although gentle and nurturing, represented a source of immense power to effect miraculous cures or to intercede on the behalf of sinners. Puritanism, however, stigmatized this sort of attitude as «Papist Mariolatry», and characterized women as the daughters of Eve, the temptress, or as wicked Jezebels whose main purpose in life was to lead astray the sons of Israel²¹. Like Eve, women were seen as particularly threatening to the divine (and earthly) status quo and were viewed as lesser beings who were highly susceptible to the attractions of heresy. Writing some decades after the Antinomian crisis, Cotton Mather comments that the so-called weaker sex is «more easily gained by the devil». He continues, «Indeed, a poyson does never insinuate so quickly, nor operate so strongly, as when women's milk is the vehicle wherein 'tis given»²². Puritan intolerance of dissent in any shape or form, however trivial, has been exhaustively documented²³. It is

¹⁸ See KOEHLER, Lyle — *op. cit.*, pp. 44-48.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 44.

²⁰ *The Holy Bible (King James Versions)*, Cleveland, The World Publishing Company, s.d., pp. 199-200.

²¹ Cf. LANG, Amy Schragger — *Prophetic Woman: Anne Hutchinson and the Problem of Dissent in the Literature of New England*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987, pp. 54-56.

²² MATHER, Cotton — *Magnalia Christi Americana*, vol. II, Hartford, Silas Andrus, Roberts & Burr, 1829. The original was published in 1702.

²³ See SLOTKIN, Richard — *Regeneration through Violence: The Myth of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*, Middletown, Conn., Wesleyan University Press, 1973; HALL, David — *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1972; and BERCOVITCH, Sacvan — *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1975, among others.

SUSAN PARSONS PEREZ CASTILLO

however significant that in the case of Anne Hutchinson, Puritan intolerance and misogyny (which is, after all, a particularly pernicious and primitive form of intolerance) converged in an attempt to silence the voice of one of the few individuals courageous enough to challenge not only the very basis of Puritan authority but also the Puritan vision of America as the City on the Hill.

In the decades in which the loosely knit group of doctrines known as Calvinism were in the process of being reformulated and systematized in order to ensure their internal coherence and rational plausibility, two chief currents of thought emerged to contest some of the central tenets of Calvinist dogma. The Arminians, on the one hand, reacted against what they perceived as the quietist apathy which would be the inevitable result of a theology of predestination: if one's salvation depends, not on human endeavor but on divine election, there seems to be no point in making an effort to behave virtuously. Indeed, the Arminians perceived the concept of predestination in its most extreme form as opening the door to every manner of vice; if human beings cannot ensure salvation by their own initiative and moral uprightness, one might as well sin gleefully and be done with it. In order to avoid this sort of abdication of moral responsibility, the Dutch theologian Arminius and his followers supported the idea that the efficacy of divine grace is contingent on human will, in that grace can be accepted or squandered by the individual. In this case, argued the Arminians (in what seemed to many a *non sequitur*) «if we do what we can, and improve the natural abilities we have, and the means we do enjoy God will not deny to give us the grace supernatural we want»²⁴.

The Antinomians, on the other hand, held certain views in common with orthodox Calvinist Puritanism. For both groups, according to God's covenant with Adam, perfect obedience to God's dictates would ensure salvation. This covenant of Works had, however, run aground on the treacherous shoals of human will, manifested in Adam's disobedience. In spite of this, sinful mankind had been given a second opportunity for redemption through the Covenant of Grace, according to which salvation was freely offered to humanity through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. In addition, the Antinomians were in agreement with orthodox Puritans on the concept of divine election, in that they believed that those chosen-elected-for salvation were chosen by God, and that the True Church consisted only of these elect.

The chief differences between the Puritan orthodoxy of Massachusetts Bay and the Hutchinsonians centered essentially on the ways in which the theological concepts of the Covenant of Grace and of divine election were to be applied to life in colonial America. The Puritan leaders were concerned with harnessing the spiritual and physical energies of the colonists in order to create an ideal society, the City on a Hill which would be the earthly embodiment of divine perfection. In this perspective, the function of religious and civil institutions should be those of sustaining and strengthening the bonds between God and his chosen people, the Puritans. The logical corollary of this viewpoint is that church membership would become a prerequisite for participation in

²⁴ Quoted in MILLER, Perry—*The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, p. 368.

community affairs. However, in the convoluted intermingling of the sacred and the secular which was typical of Puritanism, it was in turn held that full involvement with the Church organization (and consequently in civil government) was reserved only to the Elect. However, church affiliation did not necessarily constitute proof of Election. Given the fact that the possibility of playing a meaningful role in community matters (and thus exercising power, not only in matters related to religion but also in the political and economic spheres) was restricted to those belonging to the Elect, the issue of how exactly to determine one's Elect status—one's divine credentials, as it were—assumed vital importance. The Puritans, as Amy Schrager Lang has pointed out, resolved the issue through the concept of *visible sainthood*, in which election was manifested by public «relation» or confession of one's own private conversion experience, whose authenticity was determined by the Puritan congregation²⁵. Salvation or justification (to use the Puritan term) was also felt to be revealed by individual deeds, demonstrating the capacity of the individual to perform good works on a continuing basis. Thus by incorporating some facets of Arminian doctrine (namely the importance of human will in the search for salvation) in an uneasy compromise with conventional theology on the Covenant of Grace, the Puritan patriarchs were enabled to channel the energies of the colonists toward what would later become the federal covenant, namely the construction of a perfect millennial society where God's will would be made manifest through his chosen people in the promised land of America.

The logical contradictions inherent in such a perspective are not difficult to discover. Anne Hutchinson, described by her adversary John Winthrop as «a woman of ready wit and bold spirit»²⁶, incurred the wrath of the local power structure by pointing out some of the inconsistencies of Puritan rhetoric at the weekly gatherings which took place at her home. If, she asked, it was only the absolute gift of grace through Christ that enabled human beings to do good, inherent righteousness and the merit accruing therefrom existed in Christ alone, and not in sinful mankind²⁷. Thus to classify people on the basis of outward behavior is fallacious, and the Puritan concept of Visible Sainthood makes no sense whatsoever. If, on the other hand, grace is manifested in individual hearts, it is only the individual human being who can determine its presence or absence²⁸.

The implications of Hutchinson's analysis were far-reaching, in that they clearly demonstrate the gulf lying between the Antinomian and orthodox positions regarding the nature of the sources of civil power and personal authority. For the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay, decisions on matters relating to secular and religious matters were validated by reference to Scriptural precedent, used not only to justify the enterprise of colonization as a divine mission but also to legitimize the power of the magistrates. Thus election (and subsequent access to personal and collective power) was made manifest by good behavior, which

²⁵ See LANG, Amy Schrager — *op. cit.*, pp. 17-20.

²⁶ WINTHROP, John — *op. cit.*, p. 195.

²⁷ See WINTHROP, John — *op. cit.*, p. 195.

²⁸ For a discussion of the concept of Visible Sainthood, see LANG, Amy Schrager — *op. cit.*, pp. 34-36.

in turn was defined by the Puritan power structure as submission to the authority of the existing hierarchy. As a result, as one historian has pointed out, «A community of saints did not mean a community of equals»²⁹. In his *Journal*, John Winthrop develops the distinction between «natural» and federal liberty, affirming that the former (characterized as «common to beasts and other creatures») will cause men to slide into bestiality, whereas federal liberty represents «the proper end and object of authority, and cannot subsist without it... it is a liberty to that only which is good, just, and honest... This liberty is maintained and exercised in a way of subjection to authority»³⁰. In this Orwellian (or oxymoronic) rhetorical gambit, freedom is identified with submission and obedience to authorities such as (needless to say) Winthrop himself.

Antinomian ideas about the locus and nature of power in Puritan society were radically different. For Anne Hutchinson and her followers, one's identity (and authority) as one of the Elect was conferred by individual revelation and had nothing to do with observance of external laws or submission to civil and ecclesiastic authority³¹. Therefore, for the ministers and magistrates to characterize themselves as powerless before God while simultaneously asserting their own power was contradictory and at worst hypocritical. The Antinomians did not hesitate to point this out, and Anne Hutchinson took matters one step further by actually accusing the leading ministers of Massachusetts Bay, with the exceptions of John Cotton and John Wheelwright, of preaching a Covenant of Works rather than a Covenant of Grace³².

With this, the fat was well and truly in the fire. In 1636, Hutchinson was summoned to an interrogation before the ecclesiastical authorities of the colonies and accused of propagating two dangerous doctrinal errors: that the Holy Ghost lives within a justified (Elect) person, and that sanctification (virtuous behavior) is in no way evidence of justification³³. Hutchinson, in an astute rhetorical move, characterized herself as completely powerless without Christ. Thus self-abnegation paradoxically becomes self-assertion, and neatly circumvents the structures of the Puritan patriarchal hierarchy. In addition, Hutchinson's violation of social codes regulating the conduct considered appropriate for women and her assumption that her intellectual judgment was as every bit as valid (if not more so) than that of her accusers was particularly infuriating to the Puritan authorities, and thus led to accusations that she had not fulfilled her divinely ordained womanly role³⁴. At this time, John Cotton began to withdraw his support from the Antinomian faction.

In September 1637 a synod or assembly or church authorities was called to deal with the problems created by the Antinomian controversy. A close reading of John Winthrop's *Journal* reveals that the decisions of the synod functioned essentially to shore up crumbling civil and religious authority. In an

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 38.

³⁰ WINTHROP, John — *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 246.

³¹ See WINTHROP, John — *op. cit.*, p. 240.

³² See RUGG, Winifried — *op. cit.*, pp. 112-118.

³³ WINTHROP, John — *op. cit.*, p. 195.

³⁴ See KOEHLER, Lyle — *op. cit.*, p. 222.

NOTAS DE INVESTIGAÇÃO

entry made on Monday, September 7, 1637, Winthrop cites the following policy statements produced by the synod:

«1. That though women might meet (some few together) to pray and edify one another; yet such a set assembly... where sixty or more did meet every week, and one woman (in a prophetic way, by resolving questions of doctrine, and expounding scripture) took upon her the whole exercise, was agreed to be disorderly, and without rule.

2. Though a private member might ask a question publicly, after sermon, for information; yet this ought to be very wisely and sparingly done, and that with leave of the elders;

3. That a person, refusing to come to the assembly, to abide the censure of the church, might be proceeded against, though absent»³⁵.

It is quite obvious that these strictures had Anne Hutchinson as their target. Women, like children, were to be seen but not heard; and members of the colony, whatever their sex, were not to ask controversial questions or make trouble for those in power. If they were so foolish as to do so, they could be tried *in absentia* by the Puritan clergy, in elemental and flagrant disregard of the traditions of English Common Law and conventional jurisprudence, according to which the accused had a right to know the charges of which he/she is accused and to defend himself/herself.

The Puritan hierarchy hoped that with these measures, the controversy would die out. In this, they were disappointed; as Winthrop laconically notes in his *Journal*, «it fell out otherwise»³⁶. Thus in March of the following year the General Court was convened to deal with the offenders. In proceedings which have been characterized as «a legal travesty»³⁷, Hutchinson was accused of twenty-nine different heresies. The most salient charges were related to declarations that she had allegedly made: that Christians were not bound to the Law as a rule of life; that there is no such thing as inherent righteousness; that election is directly revealed to the individual believer, and that sanctification does not constitute evidence of justification³⁸. She was also accused of violating the Fifth Commandment to honor one's father and mother. According to the Westminster Catechism, cited by Winthrop to support his point, «father and mother» in the Fifth Commandment are «all superiors in age and gifts, especially those over us in authority»³⁹. The pastor of Salem, Hugh Peter, ridiculed what he perceived as Hutchinson's unfeminine behavior, saying «you have stepped out of your place, you have rather bin a Husband than a Wife and a preacher

³⁵ WINTHROP, John — *op. cit.*, p. 224.

³⁶ WINTHROP, John — *op. cit.*, p. 239.

³⁷ See *Anne Hutchinson*, «Dictionary of American Biography», vol. 9, London, Oxford University Press, p. 436.

³⁸ See WINTHROP, John — *op. cit.*, pp. 244-246.

³⁹ Quoted in RUGG, Winifried — *op. cit.*, p. 163.

than a Hearer; and a Magistrate than a Subject»⁴⁰. Presumably her chief transgression was to have rejected prevailing gender roles and stereotypes of woman as passive, obedient, and above all, silent. Although at this point in the proceedings Hutchinson probably no longer held any illusions about the fairness of her accusers, she nonetheless defended herself with spirit⁴¹, leading Winthrop to exclaim, «We are your judges, and not you ours». When the court attacked her for teaching women, Hutchinson replied, «do you think it not lawful for me to teach women... then why do you call me to teach the court?»⁴².

Hutchinson freely admitted that she had indeed made the affirmations of which she was accused. She then inquired, with more than a little irony, how it was that the Elders of the church could come to her pretending to desire enlightenment on questions of doctrine, when their real purpose was to entrap her; in a telling thrust, she compared her accusers' speech to that of the Pharisees' interrogation of Jesus⁴³. This invocation of whitewashed sepulchres was perhaps lacking in diplomacy (though not in accuracy) and the Elders voted to admonish her. The only dissenting votes were those of Hutchinson's sons, who were publicly criticized for supporting their mother against her accusers and thus presumably «hardening her in her sin»⁴⁴. After this, Anne Hutchinson was condemned to house arrest under the custody of John Cotton.

In the following session of the General Court, Hutchinson made a tactical retreat, recanting all of her previous views except those related to the Covenant of Works⁴⁵. This, however, was not enough for her accusers. In the words of John Winthrop, «in her answers to the severall articles, shee gave no satisfaction, because in diverse of them shee answered by circumlocutions, and seemed to lay all the faults in her expressions»⁴⁶. What some historians have termed a tactical misstep came when Hutchinson denounced the elders, prophesying that God would ruin them and their posterity for their cruelty to her. When asked how she had come about this knowledge, she replied, «By an immediate revelation»⁴⁷. This, for the ministers, constituted the final proof of her heresy. Perhaps the most unfair of all the accusations was the one which came from her former mentor, John Cotton. Linking the rejection of Puritan dogma to the violation of sexual norms, he remarked «though I have not herd, nayther do I thinke, you have bine unfaithfull to your Husband in his Marriage Covenant, yet that will follow upon it»⁴⁸. All the available histo-

⁴⁰ HALL, David D. — *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*, Middletown, Conn., Wesleyan University Press, 1968, pp. 382-383.

⁴¹ In the words of Winthrop, her adversary, «shee still persisted in her error, giving froward speeches to some that spake to her», WINTHROP, John — *op. cit.*, p. 248.

⁴² Quoted in KOEHLER, Lyle — *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁴³ Cf. WINTHROP, John — *op. cit.*, pp. 246 ss.: «shee told thim that hee spake like the Pharisees, who said that Christ had a devill».

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 248-249.

⁴⁵ WINTHROP, John — *op. cit.*, p. 249: «shee did acknowledge her errour in all the Articles (except the last)».

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 249-250.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 240.

⁴⁸ HALL, David — *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*, Middletown, Conn., Wesleyan University Press, 1968, pp. 371-372.

NOTAS DE INVESTIGAÇÃO

rical evidence shows that this accusation was completely unfounded; Hutchinson was known to have a harmonious relationship with her husband William, and was characterized as an exemplary mother. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to infer that this kind of insinuation would make it much more difficult for Hutchinson's partisans to stand by her, as to defend her could be represented as supporting free love and adultery.

The verdict of the Puritan authorities was, as one might expect, excommunication. When the pastor John Wilson commanded her to withdraw herself from the congregation as though she were a leper, Anne Hutchinson reacted with characteristic courage, saying that she viewed her excommunication as the greatest happiness that ever befell her. At the door, she declared, «The Lord judgeth not as man judgeth, better to be cast out of the Church than to deny Christ»⁴⁹. The reactions of the Puritan power structure to Hutchinson's sentence are perhaps best exemplified by the words of Thomas Welde:

«This American Jesabel kept her strength and reputation, even among the people of God, till the hand of Civill Justice laid hold on her, and then shee began evidently to decline, and the faithfull to bee freed from her forgeries... when she might have expected (as most likely shee did) by her seeming repentance of her errors, and confessing her undervaluing of the Ordinances of Magistracy and Ministry, to have redeemed her reputation in point of sincerity, and yet have made good all her former work, and kept open a back doore to have returned to her vomit again, by her paraphrasticall retractions... such was the presence and blessing of God that this subtilty of Satan was discovered to her utter shame and confusion»⁵⁰.

Shortly thereafter, Hutchinson went into exile on an island in Naragansett Bay which her husband and followers had purchased from the Indians. In the inimitable tone of Christian charity which permeates his writing, John Winthrop made the following entry in his *Journal* on Hutchinson's departure:

«Thus it hath pleased the Lord to have compassion of his poore churches here, and to discover this great imposter, an instrument of Satan so fitted and trained to his service for interrupting the passage (of the) Kingdom in this part of the world, and poysoning the Churches here planted, as no story records the like of a woman»⁵¹.

After leaving the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Hutchinson, far from manifesting contrition or lapsing into despondency, landed right in the middle of yet another controversy. Shortly after her arrival in Rhode Island, she joined with the poorer residents of the town of Portsmouth to protest against several facets of the policy of William Coddington, the local governor, namely

⁴⁹ WINTHROP, John — *op. cit.*, pp. 251, 264.

⁵⁰ WELDE, Thomas — *op. cit.*, p. 254.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 251-252.

his unfair system of land allotment, his authoritarian rule, and his pro-Puritan stance⁵². In 1642, William Hutchinson died, and Anne Hutchinson moved with part of her family to Long Island, settling on the shore of Pelham Bay. There, in August of September of 1643, she and all but one of her family were massacred by the Indians.

It is probable that the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay saw the Indian attack on the Hutchinson family (and particularly on Anne Hutchinson herself) as the result of divine intervention. In subsequent texts on the subject of the Antinomian controversy, she has been characterized as a predecessor of movements such as the Great Awakening, or castigated as having opened the door to hermeneutic anarchy⁵³. Perhaps her most lasting legacy, however, is the record of the courage which one lone woman faced the collective verbal and psychological violence of the Puritan theocracy of Massachusetts Bay without bending or breaking, showing other dissenters just how questionable the motives and logical consistency of the local civil and ecclesiastic hierarchy really were. The Antinomian movement may have failed, ironically enough, due to an emphasis on individualism which would nullify its capacity for collective intervention. Nonetheless, one of Hutchinson's Portsmouth supporters, Randall Holden, suggested that she had helped create the possibility of a sort of world in which «the great and terrible word *magistrate* ...hath no great lustre in our ordinary acceptation»⁵⁴. As history has been known to demonstrate, there are worse epitaphs.

Susan Parsons Pérez Castillo

⁵² See WILLIAMS, Roger — *Complete Writings*, vol. VI, pp. 95-96.

⁵³ See, for example, EDWARDS, Jonathan — *The Works of President Edwards*, vol. IV, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1957, pp. 127-130, and CHAUNCEY, Charles — *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England: A Treatise in Five Parts*, Boston, 1743, p. 26.

⁵⁴ HOLDEN, Randall — *Letter to the Massachusetts General Court, September 15, 1643*. «Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 3. I (1825), pp. 13-15.