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## STUDIES IN AMERICAN CIVILIZATION

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# THE MINISTERS' VIEW OF CHURCH AND STATE IN EARLY MASSACHUSETTS

AVIHU ZAKAI

The head of the Church under Christ is the  
Civill Magistrate.

(Rev. John Cotton, *The Result of a Synod*)

God forbid our love for the truth should be  
grown so could that we should tolerate errors.

(Governor Thomas Dudley to Sir Richard  
Saltonstall)

You know not, if you think we came into this  
wilderness to practice those courses here which  
we fled from in England. We believe there is  
vast difference between mens inventions and  
God's institutions; we fled from mens inven-  
tion, to which we else should compelled; we  
compell none to mens inventions.

(Rev. John Cotton to Sir Richard Saltonstall)

## I

The issue of the relationship between church and state is a persistent one in the historiography of the early years of the Puritan commonwealth in Massachusetts. Historians have dealt with the relationship in many works, using titles such as "the theory of state and society," "Puritan political ideas," or "the character of the good ruler," to name only a few. My intention in this paper is to deal with this issue from the religious point of view of the clergy rather than from that of Puritan civil authorities. Consequently, I have attempted to examine the development of the premises and assumptions of Congregationalism that affected the relationship between church and state during the early and formative years of the Bay colony.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is not my aim, of course, to distinguish between Puritan political views and ecclesiastical views. My intention here is to deal with the relationship between church and state, not from the point of view of the history of political theory, but from the point of view of the creeds of Congregationalism. Historians in the past emphasized the role of Puritan political ideas in forming the relationship between church and state in the colony more than the implications of the congregational polity concerning this issue.

Among the works dealing with the relationship between church and state from the point of view of Puritan political views are: Perry Miller, "The Puritan

By the time the Great Migration began, its leaders had already accepted Congregationalism as the sole "due form" of ecclesiastical government for the Puritan colony in America and had decided that only congregational churches would be permitted to gather there. The "wilderness" offered, therefore, a unique opportunity for the clergy to develop, shape, and realize, almost without constraints, the premises of their church polity. Two of the most prominent ministers, John Cotton and John Davenport, believed that the best form of government for a Christian commonwealth was a theocracy because it assumed a special relationship between church and state or between clergy and magistracy.<sup>2</sup>

Historians have argued either that church and state were identified during the early years of the Bay colony or that they were almost completely separated.<sup>3</sup> The former argument may be found clearly, for example, in L.B. Wright's *The Cultural Life of the American Colonies*, VFJG-VGFC. "As everyone knows," says Wright, "Massachusetts Bay began as theocracy." "In New England, the Puritan modified certain inherited doctrines, nowhere more significantly than in the development of their 'Covenant Theology',

State and Puritans Society," *Errand Into the Wilderness* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956); Perry Miller, "The Theory of State and Society," *The Puritans*, Perry Miller and Thomas M. Johnson, eds. (New York: Harper and Row, 1963, 2 vols.); Edmund S. Morgan, ed., *Puritan Political Ideas* (Indianapolis, 1965); T.H. Breen, *The Character of the Good Ruler: A Study of Puritan Political Ideas in New England, 1630-1730* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970).

Aaron B. Seidman's "Church and State in the Early Years of the Massachusetts Bay Colony," *New England Quarterly* 18 (1945), 211-233, is written from a constitutional point of view, or, in his words, "an examination of the executive policy and the law of the colony." Seidman puts too much stress, as my findings show, on the Puritans' intention to separate between church and state.

2 Some twenty thousands settlers came with the Great Migration to New England during the decade of the 1630s, and eighteen churches were set in Massachusetts. See E.S. Morgan, *Visible Saints* (New York, 1963), p. 88; and T.H. Breen and S. Foster, "Moving to the New World: The Character of Early Massachusetts Migration," *IWMQ*, 3d ser., 30 (1973), 189-223.

3 The argument for the identification of church and state in early Massachusetts appears, among others, in Charles McLean Andrews, *The Colonial Period of American History* (New Haven, 1934), I, 447; Herbert L. Osgood, *The American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1930), I, 211; L.B. Wright, *The Cultural Life of the American Colonies, 1607-1763* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957); T.J. Wertebaker, *The Puritan Oligarchy* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1947).

The argument for the separation of church and state in early Massachusetts is most clearly articulated in Seidman, "Church and State," p. 233. The greater complexity of the argument is seen in Breen, *The Character of the Good Ruler*, pp. 35-86, and in D.D. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, pp. 121-155; D.B. Rutman, *Winthrop's Boston* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1965).

which distinguished three covenants: the Covenant of Grace... the Church covenant... and the Civil covenant..."; "as applied to life in Massachusetts Bay, the three covenants led to the virtual identification of Church and State" (pp. 73, 79). The argument for separation of church and state can be found in D.B. Rutman's *Winthrop's Boston, 1630-1649*. "One finds a separation of church and state... the church and the state were irrevocably drifting apart... The medieval unity of church and state, their existence as but two facets of the same society, was disappearing" (p. 276). In the following discussion I will attempt to show that neither of these arguments is true, and that the aims and thoughts of the Puritans at the Bay colony were neither to separate church from state nor to identify them. Theirs in fact was the model of the ancient Christian church and that of the Old Testament according to which they wished to shape the relationship between church and state.

Two historians of colonial New England have dealt extensively with the issue of the relationship between church and state in early Massachusetts and in part examine this issue from the point of view of the clergy—Perry Miller in his *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts* and David Hall in *The Faithful Shepherd: History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century*.<sup>4</sup> But while examining this issue through the eyes of the clergy, neither explored fully the relationship between state and church from the point of view of the creeds and premises of Congregationalism. Consequently, they do not take into account the sharp and essential distinction the Puritans made between the 'spirituality of the church' and the decisive role that the clergy, out of the insistence upon spirituality of the church, assigned to the Christian magistrate in ecclesiastical matters. The implications of this rigid distinction are essential to an understanding of the formation and shaping of the Puritan commonwealth in America. For given this distinction the churches or congregations in Massachusetts were stripped of all involvement in political affairs. Above all, they lacked any means or modes to bring about ecclesiastical uniformity and conformity among themselves. Given this "weakness" of the congregational way, the clergy in the colony consequently gave the magistrate increased authority over ecclesiastical matters and acknowledged the total dependency of the church upon him.

On the basis of such a distinction, my findings differ from Miller on two main issues: the ability of the churches in the colony, through synod or consociation of churches, to use disciplinary means in ecclesiastical matters;

4 Perry Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, 1630-1650* (Gloucester, Mass., 2nd ed. 1965). Miller in his *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), Book IV, "Sociology," deals, roughly speaking, with the issue of church and state from the point of view of the "covenant theology"; my intention is to deal with church government. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, I.

and the development and rise of the magistrate's power on ecclesiastical matters. Concerning synod or consociation of churches, Miller argues that they "proved a complete success as an instrument of discipline" (p. 250) in reforming ecclesiastical matters. Yet, by the very premises of Congregationalism, the synod or consociation of churches could only give advice to congregations and could never interfere in the affairs of a particular church; nor were they thought to be an instrument of discipline. Concerning the magistrate's power in ecclesiastical affairs, Miller suggests that "there was no law on the books at that time to justify this interference with a church's 'liberty' of electing officers" (p. 158). Yet Miller fails to see that Congregationalism emphasised the 'liberty' of the congregation only in relation to spiritual authority, not in relation to civil authority. A magistrate could, and did, impose his will on spiritual matters because his was a "commission from God." This is why John Cotton claimed that "the head of the church under Christ is the Civill Magistrate."

My differences from Hall may be summed up in this way: Hall emphasizes that the Puritans "acting in accordance with Reformed doctrine denied the ministers any thing but spiritual power" (p. 286); yet at the same time he stresses that the ministers "had a real (political) power and made use of it" (p. 131). On the other hand, Hall's insistence on the separation between the spiritual kingdom and the temporal kingdom in the early years of the colony leads him to argue that "most ministers and colonists did not want to see the state telling any church what to do" (p. 124). My findings of the ministers' views and of the authority of the magistrate over the churches as a whole and over the particular churches, point to a contrary view.

## II

"Of English-speaking communities," R.H. Tawney wrote in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*,

that in which the social discipline of Calvinist church-state was carried to the further extreme was the Puritan theocracy of New England. Its practice had more affinity with the iron rule of Calvin's Geneva than with the individualistic tendencies of contemporary English Puritanism. In that happy, bishopless Eden... men desired only to worship God 'according to the simplicities of the gospel and to be ruled by the laws of God's word'... those who escaped the judgment of Heaven had to face the civil authorities and the church, which, in the infancy of the colony, were the same thing.<sup>5</sup>

5 R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study* (New York: The New American Library, 1954), pp. 111-112.

For many years American colonial historians have agreed with Tawney's interpretation of the identification of church and state and theocracy in early Massachusetts. C.M. Andrews argued that for the Puritans in the Bay, church and state "were inextricably interlocked, admitting no such thing as a separation of church and state."<sup>6</sup> H.L. Osgood stressed that in the early years of the colony, church and state "became practically identified" and that until 1660 "the theocratic element distinctly predominated."<sup>7</sup> While there exists no need today to prove that church and state in the colony were identified by the Puritans as one and the same thing, still there is a need to clarify the concept of "theocracy."

The meaning of the concept of theocracy has changed through time. According to *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, theocracy is

a form of government in which God (or a deity) is recognized as the king or immediate ruler... a system of government by a sacerdotal order, claiming a divine commission...

This is the meaning intended by Tawney and Osgood: a state in which the priests exercise political power, or more precisely, a state ruled by ministers. This meaning of theocracy is in fact a modern one. According to the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*

The term 'theocracy' was coined by Josephus... to denote a certain kind of national polity. Any tribe or state that claims to be governed by god or gods may be called a 'theocracy.'

To understand the difference between the two meanings of theocracy is essential, for the first implies that the sacerdotal order exercises dominant political power, while the latter does not require that ministers assume political power. It was this older meaning of theocracy rather than the modern one that was used by the ministers of the Bay colony.

"A Defence of Theocracy" was the title of the Reverend John Davenport's sermon in 1638. The sermon reveals that theocracy, in its ancient meaning, was considered an ideal form of government. Davenport preached that

*theocratic*, or to make the lord God our Governor, is the best Form of Government in a Christian commonwealth, and which men that are free to chuse (as in new Plantation they are) ought to establish.<sup>8</sup>

6 Andrews, *The Colonial Period of American History*, I, 447.

7 Osgood, *The American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century* I, 211.

8 John Davenport, "A Defence of Theocracy (-638)," in A.B. Hart, ed., *Era of Colonization, 1492-1689, American History as Told by Contemporaries*, vol. I (New York: Macmillan, 1906), pp. 330-333.

Throughout the sermon there is no evidence that Davenport thought that theocracy necessitated the political rule of the clergy. In the following passage, he declared theocracy to be "that form of Government where"

1. the people that have the power of chusing their Governors are in Covenant with God,
2. Wherein the men chosen by them are godly men, and fitted with a spirit of Government,
3. In which the Laws they rule by are the Laws of God,
4. Wherein laws are excuted, Inheritance allotted, and civil differences are composed, according to God's appointment,
5. In which men of God are consulted with in all hard cases, and in matters of religion . . .

Theocracy, according to the sermon, puts greater responsibility on the civil authority. The civil magistrates must be those "who are fittest to serve to Christ's ends for the good and welfar of his church," and "all Civil administrations should serve to holy ends." According to Davenport, theocracy did not invest ministers with political power but emphasized the necessity for the transformation of the office and the duty of the civil authority so that it would rule according to God's words and will. Ministers were not the only group in the colony who thus perceived the role of the civil authority in the colony. "Godly civill government," wrote one magistrate, "shall have a great share" in transforming "the Kingdome of the Earth" to "the Kingdom of our Lord Christ."<sup>9</sup> This was the primary mission of the Great Migration: "For we chose not the place for the Land, but for the government, that our Lord Christ might raigne over us, both in Church and Common-wealth."<sup>10</sup>

The following discussion indicates that there was no intention by the ministers in the Bay colony to assume political power; the church, in fact, voluntarily left the political realm to the civil authority in the colony in order to renew the ancient meaning of the church as a spiritual entity. This voluntary withdrawal from state affairs, combined with the view that it was the duty of the state to uphold "the true church," were among the basic premises of Congregationalism in its attempt to erect the church upon the model of the ancient churches in early Christendom.

9 Edward Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence, 1628-1651*, ed. J.F. Jameson (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1952), I, 146.

10 *Ibid.*

### III

The cornerstone of Congregationalism at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries was the emphasis upon the independence of each particular church in order to achieve the highest purity of faith and life. The model for these early congregationalists was the voluntary gathering of the ancient Christian churches, consisting only of true believers whose churches, though independent of each other, were directly related through the covenant with God. For the early congregationalists, including those who came to Massachusetts, the primary motivation

was not a desire to establish a novel polity, but to foster the spiritual development of the believer by his separation from communion with the non-faithful whom all the State churches allowed a place in the church.<sup>11</sup>

Only true believers, or "visible saints," could gather and establish a church, the others, who had no proof of their being elected by God, were excluded from membership. Each particular church, as a result of its covenant with God, stood in direct relationship to God. According to Hooker,

A Church Congregation is the first subject of the keys. Each Congregation compleatly constituted of all Officers, hath sufficient power in her self, to exercise the power of the keyes, and all Church discipline, in all censures thereof.<sup>12</sup>

In *The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, Cotton also declared that each particular church "is the first subject of the power of the keys" and has "independent power in the exercise thereof."<sup>13</sup>

The implications of this kind of church polity are revolutionary from the point of view of the concept of a national church, such as the Church of England which claimed to possess the means of salvation. Congregationalism contributed to the breakdown of the notion of national church by arguing that each particular congregation, over which any kind of ecclesiastical power was denied, held the means and modes of salvation. "In the Old Testament indeed," says Cotton, "we read of a national church . . . but we read of no such national church or high priest, or court in the New Testament."<sup>14</sup>

11 Williston Walker, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1960), p. 14.

12 Thomas Hooker, "Summary of Congregational Principles, 1645," in *ibid.*, p. 144.

13 John Cotton, "The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, 1644," in Larzer Ziff, ed., *John Cotton on the Churches of New England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 124.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 128.

In Massachusetts, from its beginnings, only the Congregationalist church was permitted to exist. "And the generall Court," says Thomas Lechford, who was in the colony in the late 1630' "will not allow of any Church otherwise gathcred."<sup>15</sup> From the time of the creation of the church in Salem in 1629, many churches, but only congregationalist, were established there. Thus, the problem faced by the ministers was how to sustain both the independence of each church and the conformity and unity within the ecclesiastical polity of the colony.

#### IV

Congregationalism was a church-state in the early years of the Bay colony only in the sense that Congregationalist churches were allowed to be created; it was not, however, a church-state in the sense that each congregation was dependent on an hierarchical ecclesiastical order. Who, then, was to be charged with maintaining the conformity of all the churches in the colony to the congregational way? The lack of an ecclesiastical order above the particular churches and the inability of a minister to interfere with another church's affairs indicate that this task could not be assumed by the clergy. As will be seen in the following discussion, the civil authority would acquire this responsibility and role. It was, therefore, the very premises of Congregationalism's rigid insistence on the independence of each particular church that led to the involvement of the magistrate in the colony's religious affairs.

The establishment of new settlements and the creation of a new congregation went hand in hand in the early years; it seeming "as unnatural for a right N.E. man to live without an able minister as for a Smith to work his iron without a fire."<sup>16</sup> The formation of the new body of believers occurred under the eyes of ministers of others churches who oversaw and ascertained that the congregational way was adhered to. The creation of a new congregation was not observed only by ministers:

Also it is the duty of the Magistrates (in regard of the good and peace of the civil government) to be present, at least some of them (not only to prevent the disturbance which might follow in the Commonwealth by any, who under pretence of Church-covenant might bring in again those cursed opinions . . . to the great dammage of the people) but also to countenance the people of God in so pious a work.<sup>17</sup>

15 Thomas Lechford, *Plain Dealing or News from New England* (London, 1642), ed. J. Hammond Trumbull (Boston, 1867), p. 16.

16 Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence*, I, 214.

17 *Ibid.* p. 215.

The Elders of other churches also witnessed the creation of the new body, and after the ordination of its Officers, the Elders of the neighboring congregations would

give the New Officers the right hand of fellowship, taking them by the right hand, every one severally, or else, sometimes, one . . . in the name of all the rest, gives the right hand of fellowship, with a set speech unto them.<sup>18</sup>

Of all those involved, the role of the magistrates in the process of the creation of a new congregation was decisive. In 1642, with the creation of Woburn's church, the ordination of the minister, Rev. Thomas Carter, was censured by the magistrates who were present for not conforming to the congregational way. Instead of adhering to the imposition of hands by elders or ministers as required in a congregational minister's ordination, the imposition of hands upon Carter was performed by lay members: "Two persons in the name of the Church laid their hands upon his head, and said, We ordain thee Thomas Carter to be Pastor unto this Church of Christ."<sup>19</sup>

The alternative of having ministers from other churches perform this ceremony was rejected after being discussed in Woburn, because it was feared that the independence of the church to be created would be diminished. Winthrop writes:

Some advised, in regard they had no elder of their own, nor any members very fit to solemnize such ordinance; they would desire some of the elders of the others churches to have performed it; but other supposing it might be an occasion of introducing a dependency of churches, etc., and so presbytery, would not allow it.<sup>20</sup>

Paradoxically, because ministers could not interfere in the affairs of other churches, and because there was no ecclesiastical court to deal with such matters, it was the magistrates who censured Thomas Carter in Woburn.

The Rev. Thomas Welde describes the relationships between the churches in the colony. In the case of the creation of a new congregation,

the churches indeed send messengers (commonly their elders) to lend them a word of counsell if they need. . . . The messengers never arrogated to themselves such power . . . as to forbid their enterance into church state. The most they do . . . is, to desire leave to be faithfull in

18 Lechford, *Plain Dealing*, p. 14.

19 Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence*, I, 217.

20 John Winthrop, *History of New England from 1630-1649*, ed. James Savage

interposing their counsell, and that only when they see very great cause: and withall leave them to their Christian liberty.<sup>21</sup>

In his discussion of the gathering of the Weymouth church in January, 1639, Winthrop says that the church was created "with the approbation of the magistrates and elders."<sup>22</sup> The power of the elders was limited only to advice; the magistrates, however, did not hesitate to interfere in the affairs of a particular church. Two such examples are the censuring of the ordination of Carter above and the famous example of the Antinomian controversy.

The Antinomian controversy revealed sharply the weakness of the congregationalist way in the Bay colony. The theological conflict was between the issue of "covenant of works," upheld by the majority of the ministers in the colony, and "covenant of grace," the stand of Anne Hutchinson's faction in the Boston church.<sup>23</sup> The unity and conformity of the Massachusetts churches was at stake, and the problem of dealing with a particular church whose majority dissented from the prevailing views in the colony had to be resolved.

When the controversy developed, it was the magistrates, or more specifically, the Massachusetts General Court, who called a Synod to be assembled in the summer of 1637 in order to deal with the opinions of the Antinomians. The Synod met in Newtown, now Cambridge, and consisted of "not only the ministers and messengers of churches, but the magistrates also, who Mr. Welde says . . . were not only hearers but speakers also, as they thought fit."<sup>24</sup> Among those present was the governor, John Winthrop, who seemed "to have a controuling power" over the Synod.<sup>25</sup> Because of the stress upon the independence of each congregation, the actual power of the Synod, as illustrated in the case of the Antinomians, was limited to giving advice or counsel. Synods, says Hooker,

have allowance to counsell and admonish other Churches, as the case may require . . . but they have no power to excommunicate. Nor do their constitutions binde formaliter & juridice.

21 Thomas Welde, cited in Lechford, *Plain Dealing*, p. 15, n. 7.

22 Winthrop, *History of New England*, I, 346.

23 William K.B. Stoever, "Nature, Grace and John Cotton: The Theological Dimension in the New England Antinomian Controversy," *Church History* 44 (March 1975), no. 1, pp. 22-33; Stoever shows that the theological issues of this controversy "went to the center of the Puritan enterprise" in Massachusetts Bay; thus, one cannot separate between theological and civil issues.

24 Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay*, 2nd ed. (London, 1765), p. 67.

25 *Ibid.*, n. 68.

The most Synods could do, according to Hooker, was to "renounce the right hand of fellowship" with a church that deviated from the true way.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, Congregationalism had no efficient means for dealing with a local church which differed from the others. Later, the historian Hutchinson clearly defined and explained the meaning and role of the Synod in Newtown concerning the Antinomians: "This spiritual court did not pronounce particular persons to be hereticks, but it determined what was heresy, and made the way plain for the secular power to proceed."<sup>27</sup> When the court decided to banish the leaders of the Antinomians, despite their constituting the majority of the Boston church, it was not a decision of an ecclesiastical court, but rather of the civil authority, whose justification was that Anne Hutchinson and her faction "disturb the civil peace."<sup>28</sup> The premises of Congregationalism left no other way of handling such a case. In order to preserve the independence and spirituality of each congregation, the ministers were willing to pay the price entailed in delegating the responsibility for maintaining unity and conformity in the colony to the magistrates.

The Antinomian crisis also revealed to what extent ecclesiastical order in the colony was dependent upon the civil authority. The clergy in Massachusetts happily welcomed dependence upon the state as an aid to purifying the particular churches, though each one was thought to be sufficient unto itself from the point of view of possessing means and modes of salvation. Thus the power of the magistrates over the churches rose in the Puritan commonwealth in Massachusetts in its early years. Among the five conditions necessary in a "theocracy," as enumerated above by Davenport, only one points directly to the role of the ministers, while the remaining four deal with religious society as a whole: the covenant with God, the magistrate as a godly man, the laws of God as a guide to the ruler and their execution according to God's will. The purity of the church had to be sustained by religious society. Here, again, the issue of the relationship of church and state is crucial.

## V

The distinctions made by the early congregationalists between the spiritual realm and the temporal realm, between church and state, led historians to conclude that the Puritans separated church from state. Hall, for example, states that

Cotton and his colleagues reckoned on practicing in New England a

26 Thomas Hooker, "Summary of Congregational Principles," p. 147.

27 Hutchinson, *History of the Colony*, p. 69 n.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

theory of church and state that all Puritans inherited from Calvin. The basis of this theory was the notion that church and state formed separated kingdoms.

Elsewhere, Hall describes the insistence of the preachers in New England that "church and state be equal and separated."<sup>29</sup> As applied to seventeenth-century Congregationalism, however, this notion is somewhat misleading. Winthrop S. Hudson, in his article, "Protestant Concept of Church and State," cautions historians about confusing the concept of separation of church and state with "the doctrine of 'the spirituality of the church'."<sup>30</sup> Hudson's distinction is an important one for it points clearly to the intention of the Puritans in Massachusetts in distinguishing between church and state, while considering both as means for the same religious end. They contended that both church and state should develop a common mission on earth with a single aim—the glory of God. By contrast, separation between church and state implies that each has a unique aim to fulfill which differs from the other's. Such a view was unacceptable to the Puritans in America, for they wanted to set up a "city upon the hill," to establish a religious society and commonwealth according to God's words. "In New England," wrote Perry Miller, "the fundamental law was the Bible. The magistrates were to have full power to rule men for the specific purposes to which society was dedicated."<sup>31</sup>

Although the pursuit of the spirituality of the church rather than the separation of state and church was their primary concern, the founders of Massachusetts Bay left the church bereft of any worldly means to maintain order, unity and conformity in religious affairs. Both ministers and magistrates favored laying upon the civil authority the duty of preserving the well-being of churches in the colony.

In the Cambridge Synod and Platform, 1646–1648, the clergy in the colony clearly declared that from the point of view of Congregationalism, they pursued not separation of state and church, but, instead, the dependence of the church upon the state. "The Cambridge Platform," says Williston Walker,

is the most important monument of early New England Congregationalism, because it is the clearest reflection of the system as it lay in the mind of the first generation . . . after nearly twenty years of practical experience. The Platform . . . urges the right of the civil magis-

29 Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, pp. 122–213.

30 Winthrop S. Hudson, "Protestant Concept of Church and State," *Church History* 35 (June, 1966), n. 2, p. 229.

31 Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, eds., *The Puritans: A Source-Book of their Writings*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), I, 187.

trate to interfere in matters of doctrine and practice, because Congregationalism then believed that such right was his.<sup>32</sup>

The articles of the Platform concerning the relationship of the church and state reveal how radical was the ministers' view on that issue.

It is the duty of the Magistrate, to take care of matter of religion, & to improve his civil authority for the observing of the duties commanded in the first, as well as the second table. They are called Gods. The end of the Magistrates office, is not only the quiet & peaceable life of the subject, in matters of righteousness & honesty, but also in matters of godliness, yea of all godliness.<sup>33</sup>

In the case of a congregation which inclined to different ecclesiastical views and ways, the clergy left no doubt about the role they expected the magistrates to play:

If any church one or more shall grow schismaticall, rending it self from the communion of other churches, or shall walke incorrigibly or obstinately in any corrupt way of their own, contrary to the rule of word; in such case, the Magistrate is to put forth his coercive power as the matter shall require.<sup>34</sup>

There were many examples in which magistrates interfered in religious affairs of churches in the early years of the commonwealth, in order to maintain unity and bring to conformity with the congregational way. In 1631,

the governor, and deputy, and Mr. Nowell, the elder of the Congregation at Boston, went to Watertown to confer with Mr. Phillips, the pastor, and Mr. Brown, the elder of the congregation there, about an opinion, which they had published, that the churches of Rome were true churches. The matter was debated . . . and, by the approbation of all the assembly, except three, was concluded an error.<sup>35</sup>

Winthrop, then the governor, did not give us a full account of the case and how he convinced the Watertown church; what is important, however, is the fact that the civil authority, not the clergy, took steps to correct the "error." The case of Watertown as well as other cases in which the civil authority interfered in church matters exemplify a situation in which the clergy in the

32 Walker, *Creeds and Platforms*, p. 185.

33 "The Cambridge Platform,"; *ibid.*, p. 236.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 237.

35 John Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal: History of New England, 1630–1649*, ed. James K. Hosmer. (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1946), I, 66. All citations from this work are from this edition.



colony almost always conformed to the decisions of the magistrates. The clergy's acceptance of civil authority in religious matters contrasts sharply with the stance of non-conformity of those ministers in England before they came to the colony. Once the congregational polity became dominant in the colony, the premises of Congregationalism dictated that the clergy not be permitted to enforce unity and conformity in ecclesiastical matters. "Once," wrote Hall of the clergy in the colony, "they had prophesied against the standing order. Now they are spokesmen for the reigning values, men whose principles became translated into practice."<sup>36</sup>

A striking example of the conformity of the clergy to the magistrates' decision concerned the quantity of ministers' lectures. When the civil authority asked the ministers to reduce the number of their lectures, the latter acquiesced:

It being found, that the four lectures did spend too much time, and proved over burdensome to the ministers and people, the ministers with the advice of the magistrates, and with the consent of their congregation, did agree to reduce them to two days.<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, when ministers tried to interfere in political affairs, the magistrates did not hesitate to assert their authority. In 1632, the ministers of Watertown raised their objections to the magistrates' decision to tax each town in the colony for the fortification of Newtown, later Cambridge. It was not long before the governor summoned the ministers and others from Watertown to discuss the issue.

Being come before the governor and council, after much debate, they acknowledge their fault, confessing freely, that they were in an error, and made a retraction and submission under their hand, and were enjoined to read it in the assembly the next Lord's day.

Savage's note on the case is worth reading:

In the objection of these gentlemen of Watertown, there was much force, for no power was by the charter granted to the governor and assistants to raise money by levy, assessment or taxation.<sup>38</sup>

## VI

The transformation of the clergy from non-conformism in old England to conformism to the civil authority in the colony is due both to the premises of Congregationalism and the changing conditions under which the ministers

<sup>36</sup> Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, p. 121.

<sup>37</sup> Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal*, I, 135.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74. Savage's note appears on this page.

operated. Once Congregationalism dominated the church of the colony, both clergy and magistrates defended the Massachusetts polity against any attempt by the English Crown either to bring the congregations there to conformity with the Anglican Church or to establish in the colony any different kind of church. The combined efforts of clergy and magistracy to defend and sustain the congregational way led Robert Child, who tried to initiate a movement against the established order, to call the clergy "masters rather than ministers."<sup>39</sup> Child was fully justified, because the clergy had not intended to separate church and state but rather to renew the ancient meaning of theocracy in which church and state "may be close and compact, and coordinate one to another."<sup>40</sup>

John Cotton clearly defined the way in which the clergy in the colony viewed the relationship between ecclesiastical and civil power:

It is very suitable to God's all-sufficient wisdom . . . not only to prescribe perfect rules for the right ordering of a private mans soule . . . but also for the right ordering of mans family, yea, of the commonwealth too, so far as both of them are subordinate to the spiritual ends, and yet avoide both the churches usurpation upon civill jurisdictions, *in ordine ad spiritualia*, and the commonwealth invasion upon ecclesiastical administrations, *in ordine* to civill peace, and conformity to the civil state. Gods institutions (such as the government of church and commonwealth be) may be close and compact, and coordinate, and yet not confounded.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, his words reveal the aim which the clergy wanted the new colony to fulfill:

It is better that the commonwealth be fashioned to the setting forth of God's house, which is his church; than to accommodate the church frame to the civill state.<sup>42</sup>

As Davenport, so Cotton too thought of theocracy "as the best form of the government in the commonwealth, as well as in the church."<sup>43</sup> Cotton's words are found in an answer to a letter from Lord Say and Seal in 1636. Although the letter has disappeared, its contents may be surmised from Cotton's answer, that Lord Say and Seal accused him and other ministers

<sup>39</sup> Robert Child, cited in Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, p. 121.

<sup>40</sup> John Cotton, "Copy of a Letter from Mr. Cotton to Lord Say and Seal in the Year 1636," in Hutchinson, *History of the Colony*, p. 497.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 498.

in the colony of having created a "theocracy" in its modern meaning, exactly as Tawney and Osgood did many years later:

When your Lordship doubteth that this course will draw all things under the determination of the church, *in ordine ad spiritualia* (seeing the church is to determine who shall be member, and none but a member may have to do in the government of the commonwealth) . . . be pleased . . . to conceive, that magistrates are neither chosen to office in the church, nor do govern by directions from the church, but by civil laws, and those enacted in general courts, and executed in courts of justice, by the governors and assistants. In all which, the church (as the church) has nothing to do: only, it prepareth fit instruments both to rule, and to choose rulers, which is no ambition in the church, nor dishonor to the commonwealth.<sup>44</sup>

Cotton tried to convince his noble critic that in Massachusetts, as in the time of the early Christian churches, "the church submitteth itself to all the laws and ordinances of men, in what commonwealth soever they come to dwell."<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, Cotton assured him that

these three things do not undermine, but do mutually and strongly maintain one another . . . authority in magistrates, liberty in people, purity in the church. Purity, preserved in the church, will preserve well-ordered liberty in the people, and both of them establish well-balanced authority in magistrates.<sup>46</sup>

That the clergy had nothing to do with the election of magistrates in Connecticut is shown also by Thomas Hooker. Preaching at Hartford on May 31, 1638, Hooker chose the text of Deut. 1:13: "Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them ruler over you." To choose magistrates, according to Hooker, is the duty of the people rather than the clergy. He told his audience that "the choice of public magistrates belong unto the people, by God's own allowance."<sup>47</sup> From the point of view of the civil authorities in the colony, there was a rigid refusal to allow the church to interfere in government matters. Writing in the summer of 1638, Winthrop told Hooker that "to refer the decision of a civil question or controversy to the whole churches, cannot be safe, nor warranted by any rule."<sup>48</sup> Like Cotton, Winthrop was against both any church usurpation of

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 498-499.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 500.

46 *Ibid.*

47 Thomas Hooker, "Abstracts of Two Sermons by Rev. Thomas Hooker," *Collections* (Connecticut Historical Society, 1860), I, 19-21.

48 Winthrop, cited by Hooker, in "Rev. Thomas Hooker's Letter, in Reply to Governor Winthrop," *ibid.*, p. 10.

civil jurisdiction as well as civil usurpation of ecclesiastical powers. The assurance that the magistrates would enforce "godly rule" was, according to Winthrop, a result of the magistrates being "regulated to direct all their ways by the rule of the gospel."<sup>49</sup>

By stressing that each congregation holds "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," the Massachusetts way deprived the churches in the Bay colony of all means of exercising political power. According to Cotton,

these keys are neither sword nor scepter; no sword, for they convey not civil power of bodily life and death; nor scepter, for they convey not sovereign or legislative power over the church, but stewardly and ministerial.<sup>50</sup>

Consequently, the clergy in the colony stressed the doctrine of the church's dependence upon the civil authority. "We willingly acknowledge," he wrote, "a power in the civil magistrates, to establish and reform religion, according to the word of God." As magistrates are "nursing fathers and mothers to the church," the church is "subject to the power of the sword in matters which concern civil peace." Civil peace, according to Cotton, includes "*the establishment of pure religion, in doctrines, worship, and government*, according to the word of God: as also the reformation of all corruptions in any of these." Again, Congregationalism put a limitation upon the church's power concerning religious order and delegating the decisive role to the magistrates in such cases:

It is true, the establishment of pure religion, and reformation of corruptions pertain also to the churches and synodical assemblies. But they go about it only with spiritual weapons, ministry of the word, and church censures upon such as are under church power. But the magistrates address themselves thereto, partly by commanding, and stirring up the churches and ministers thereof to go about it in their spiritual way: partly also by civil punishments upon the wilfull opposers, and disturbers of the same.<sup>51</sup>

In contrast to Perry Miller's suggestion, Independent (Congregationalist) divines in England during the 1640s did not differ from their brethren in America concerning the role of the magistrate in religious matters. Philip Nye, for example, one of the leaders of the Independent divines in the Westminster Assembly of Divines defined clearly what role the magistrate should have in ecclesiastical matters:

49 *Ibid.*, p. 17, n. 8.

50 Cotton, "The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, 1644," p. 88.

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 152-156.

Though we affirm the Church-Government is *independent* and immediately derived from Christ; yet we affirm also, that the Civil Magistrate is even therein (that is, in Ecclesiastical Matters) Supreme Governor civilly. And though nothing may be imposed on the Christian Churches against their Will, by any *spiritual* Authority . . . yet we affirm withall, that the Civil Magistrate may impose on them spiritual Matters, by Civil Power, yea whether they like or dislike, if it be good in his eyes, that is if he judge it within his Commission from God.<sup>52</sup>

Thus dialectically, the doctrine of the spirituality of the church led to direct involvement of the civil authority in church affairs. By denying the church any temporal means, Congregationalism in the Bay brought about the power of the civil authority in ecclesiastical matters. In addition,

the church is not to refuse subjection to the civil magistrate, in the exercise of some spiritual administrations, which may advance and help forward the public good of civil state according to God.

Among those "spiritual administrations," says Cotton, is a lawful proclamation of a fast, or calling for a synod. "If the magistrate call for a synod, the churches are to yield him ready subjection here in the Lord." Finally, the church must also yield to the civil authority, according to Cotton, in the following instance: "wherein the church is not to refuse subjection to the *civil magistrate*, is in patient suffering their unjust persecutions without hostile or rebellious resistance." Submission to the state in the face of persecution is due to the church's having "received the power of the keys, not of the sword, to the power of the keys they may and ought to administer, but not of the sword."<sup>53</sup>

Do Cotton's words justify the interpretation that church and state became identified? Not at all. They indicate, rather, the voluntary withdrawal of the church from state and political affairs. A comparison of the churches in the colony with the Church of England shows clearly that the congregationalists in the colony tried to create a totally different relationship between church and state. In his *Economic Problems of the Church*, Christopher Hill writes of the English Church:

It would have to consider the church as political, judicial, and educational organization. Bishops formed a solid government phalanx in the House of Lords. They had nearly a majority of the votes there under Elizabeth, never less than a quarter under James. They were civil

52 Philip Nye, cited in D. Nobbs, "Philip Nye on Church and State," *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 5-6 (1935-1940), 55. Perry Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts*, p. 273.

53 Cotton, "The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, 1644," pp. 154-156.

servants and administrators, and under Land they came to hold key posts in the government.<sup>54</sup>

In New England, on the other hand, the church, modelled on the ancient Christian churches which lacked political means and power, was stripped of all involvement in political affairs and was totally under the power of the civil authority. Moreover, like the ancient Christian churches, the congregational churches in the Bay did not develop any ecclesiastical order. The ministers in the colony thought that the "weakness" caused by a lack of an hierarchical ecclesiastical order could be corrected by the magistrates' use of coercive means.

## VII

The power over church affairs invested by the colony's clergy in the magistrates astonished many puritans in England. In writing to the ministers of the Boston church, Cotton and Wilson, Sir Richard Saltonstall, a settler who went back to England in 1631, was critical of the role of the magistrates in religious affairs.

It does not a little grieve my spirit to hear what sad things are reported daily of your tyranny and persecutions in New England, as that you fine, whip and imprison men for their consciences. First you compell such to come into your assemblies as you know will not joine with you in your worship, and when they shew their dislike thereof or witness against it, then you stirre up your magistrates to punish them for such (as you conceive) their publicke affronts. Truly, friends, this your practice of compelling any in matters of worship to do what whereof they are not fully persuaded, is to make them sin . . . and many are made hypocrites thereby, conforming in their outward man for fear of punishment.<sup>55</sup>

There was great misunderstanding among the Puritans in England about the aim and mission of the Bay commonwealth. Those in England thought that the colony could be a refuge for many other non-conformist churches. Saltonstall, for example, went to Holland where he was asked by several non-conformist English churches who had fled from England to write to the governor of Massachusetts

54 Christopher Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church, from Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (London: Panther Books, 1971), p. x.

55 Sir Richard Saltonstall, "Copy of a Letter from Sir Richard Saltonstall to Mr. Cotton and Mr. Wilson" (no date), in *A Collection of Original Papers Relative to the History of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay*, compiled by Hutchinson (Boston, 1769), p. 406.

to know if those who differ from you in opinion, yet holding the same foundation in religion, as Anabaptists, Seekers, Antinomians, and the like, might be permitted to live among you.<sup>56</sup>

The governor at that time, Dudley, made it clear to Saltonstall that the colony was founded only for the "true church," not to be a refuge for "religious errors and sins": "God forbid our love for the truth should be grown so could that we should tolerate errors."<sup>57</sup> The congregationalists came to the American "wilderness" in order to build a shelter for "the true church," not to repeat the religious depravations in England and Europe.

There were also many misunderstandings between the Puritans in the Bay and those in England concerning the Massachusetts way of shaping the relationship between church and state and the role of the magistrates in religious matters. Cotton, in his answer to Saltonstall's criticism of the colony, explained what guided the ministers of the colony and what their views of the state in its relation to the church were.

You know not, if you think we came into this wilderness to practice those courses here which we fled from in England. We Believe there is vast difference between mens inventions and God's institutions; we fled from mens invention, to which we else should have compelled; we compell none to mens inventions.<sup>58</sup>

Cotton's distinction between men's inventions and God's institutions helps in understanding the transformation of the clergy from non-conformism in England to conformism in the colony. According to the ministers in the colony, the power of the magistrates in religious matters was not a sin against conscience, because the civil power served to bring men to God's true institution. "You think," wrote Cotton to Saltonstall,

to compel in matter of worship is to make men sinn according to Rom. 14.23. If the worship be lawfull in itself, the magistrate compelling him to come to it compelleth not to sin, but the sin is in his will that need to be compelled to a christian duty. . . . For a governor to suffer any within his gates to prophane the sabbath, is a sin against the 4th commandment . . . and if he requires them to present themselves before the Lord, the magistrate sin not, nor does the subject sin so great a sin if he did refraine to come.<sup>59</sup>

56 *Ibid.*, p. 402.

57 Thomas Dudley, cited by Saltonstall, *ibid.*

58 John Cotton, "Copy of Mr. Cotton's Answer to a Letter from Sir Richard Saltonstall" (no date), *ibid.*, p. 406.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 404.

The question of compelling men in religious matters is not only an issue of the conscience of the one compelled by the magistrate, but concerned the magistrate's conscience as well.

If the magistrate connive at his absenting himself from sabbath duties the sin will be greater in the magistrate than can be in the other passive coming.<sup>60</sup>

The ministers in the colony had many examples of this in both the Old and New Testaments.

Their aim was indeed to create a theocracy as it appeared in the Bible, in which the secular authority rather than the priests maintained religious society. Thus, when Saltonstall warned the ministers in Boston that compelling men in matters of conscience would lead to hypocrisy, Cotton's response to him was that in a religious society, which the Puritans in the Bay wanted to form, hypocrisy is better than sinning against God.

But (say you) it does but make men hypocrites, to compell men to conform the outward man for fear of punishment. If it did so, yet better to be hypocrites than profane persons. Hypocrites give God part of his due, the outward man, but the profane person gives God neither outward nor inward man.<sup>61</sup>

The magistrates' power in religious matters was the essence of Cotton's controversy with Roger Williams. Williams attacked, in his *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution*, the orthodox theory of religious persecutions; he denounced any role of the civil authority over men's consciences and developed the view of separation between church and state. By and large, Cotton's views of the role of the magistrates in religious affairs was not unique to the congregationalists in America. Williams found few, even in England, who sided with his novel ideas and his book was commanded by order of the Commons, 9 August 1644, to be publicly burned. On the other side of the ocean, Williams' view and his "lively experiment" in Rhode Island were attacked not only by Massachusetts, but also by the Baptists who fought for toleration in New England. In *New England Dissent, 1630-1833*, William G. McLoughlin states:

Despite the valiant effort of Williams, almost no one in colonial New England ever praised his experiment, sought his advice, quoted his books, or tried to imitate his practices. Even in Rhode Island he was often assailed as unsound, and to the other New England colonies, Rhode Island was always a prime example not of the virtues but of

60 *Ibid.*, p. 405.

61 *Ibid.*

the horrors of religious liberty. Those who fought hardest for religious freedom in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, and New Hampshire considered Rhode Island an embarrassment rather than an asset to their cause. During and after the colonial period, Rhode Island, "the licentious Republic" and "sinke hole of New England," was an example to be shunned.<sup>62</sup>

The Massachusetts clergy's model of the magistrate was patterned after the great leaders of the Old Testament, as Sacvan Bercovitch shows in *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*. Winthrop, "Nehemias Americanus," was described by Cotton Mather "as a saint, as a model magistrate, and as the leader of a great enterprise."<sup>63</sup> According to Bercovitch, who discusses the role of the magistrate in Puritan society in Massachusetts, the civil ruler had two functions, one natural, the other divine. In relation to the latter,

the ruler stands above the body politic, absolute and immutable, a God-man impervious to the vicissitudes of secular time. Thus his very right to govern distinguished the ruler individually from himself (in the Puritan sense of 'self'), and historically from the community he governs. His magisterial office makes him part of the history of salvation; their role as subjects keeps the members of the community within providential history.<sup>64</sup>

The magistrate, in his divine function, is "as Vicar of Christ, he is divine, a 'christomimetes'—literally the 'actor' or 'impersonator' of Christ."<sup>65</sup> This view of the magistrate's function is not unique to the Puritans in New England. The idea that civil governments were established by God went far back to the early years of Christianity.

In the early years of the colony, both the clergy and magistrates appeared well acquainted with each other's roles. From the point of view of the ministers, wrote Ezekiel Rogers, "godly wisdom should teach us both not to intermeddle where we have no call, and to know what respect belongs to Christian Magistrates."<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, when members of the Boston church in 1637 tried to call Winthrop to account for his role in banishing the Antinomians from the colony, Winthrop informed them "that a church has not power to Call any Civil Magistrate, to give Account of his Judicial pro-

62 William G. McLoughlin, *New England Dissent, 1630-1833: The Baptists and the Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), I, 8.

63 Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), p. 1.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

65 *Ibid.*

66 Ezekiel Rogers, cited by Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, p. 132.

ceeding in any Court of Civil Justice."<sup>67</sup> "Christ his kingdom," Winthrop told them, "is not of this world." There is a distinction between the power of the church and that of the civil government:

for as he is King of Kings and Lord of Lords he has set up another kingdom in this world, wherein magistrates are his officers, and they are to be accountable to him, for their miscarriage in the way and order of this kingdom.

If magistrates and clergy did not maintain this proper distinction, and if the church usurped the civil authority and vice versa, the result would be

Christ kingdom divided, one Ordinance against another, not to moderation but to destruction: and here is no means to reconcile them: but if the rule of Christ be observed, Resist not evil, and submit yourself to the higher power.<sup>68</sup>

## VIII

The evidence thus shows that the clergy in the early years of the colony followed Winthrop's demand: "submit yourself to the higher power." There were no intentions on the part of the clergy to establish a theocracy as a form of government in which they would assume and exercise political power. On the contrary, the ministers knew and accepted that in a commonwealth the church must submit to "the higher power": "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1). The clergy, in fact, acknowledged the decisive role of the civil authority over the churches as a whole and over each particular church as well. This important role and power held by the magistrates in church and religious affairs is due, as I have tried to explain, to the premises of Congregationalism concerning the independence and self-sufficiency of each particular church, the lack of an ecclesiastical order in the congregational polity, and the view of the divine function of the magistrates.

According to David Hall, "most ministers and colonists did not want to see the state telling any church what to do."<sup>69</sup> The evidence, however, does not sustain this view. Magistrates interfered in the ordination and appointment of ministers and coerced religious views and practices. Since the con-

67 Winthrop, "John Winthrop's Essay Against the Power of the Church to Sit in Judgment on the Civil Magistracy," *Winthrop Papers* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1943), III, 505.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 506.

69 Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, p. 124.

gregational churches as spiritual entities lacked temporal means and power, only the state could take the responsibility for the purity and unity of the churches in the early years of the colony. The clergy in fact welcomed the civil intervention in church affairs and thought it was the duty of "the godly ruler" to defend and protect "the true church." Additional evidence is available: in 1630, when Roger Williams was invited by the Salem church to serve there as a minister "the governor and council interposed with their advice, and prevented his settlement at that time."<sup>70</sup> He went to Plymouth and came back to Salem in 1634 to serve as pastor; there, again, he angered the magistrates. Thus, in October 1635, in a meeting of the General Court, he was sentenced "to depart out of our jurisdiction."<sup>71</sup>

Examination of the views clergymen held of the state and the rule of the magistrates in the early years of the Puritan commonwealth indicates that the pursuit of the spirituality of the church did not lead to separation between state and church. The secular sword and the spiritual sword were but two means for achieving the same end. There was only a distinction between the means, not a separation of the ends of church and state. On the other hand, there was no identification between church and state. The definition of "civil peace" by the Puritans in the colony, which included both religious and church matters, led historians to argue that church and state were identified in early Massachusetts. Yet, as Perry Miller notes:

In order to understand Puritanism, we must go . . . to an age when the unity of religion and politics was so axiomatic that very few men would even have grasped the idea that church and state could be distinct. For the Puritan mind it was not possible to segregate a man's spiritual life from his communal life.<sup>72</sup>

When the magistrates thought that their primary duty and obligation was to fulfill the will of those who elected them rather than to fulfill God's will, the unity between religion and politics began to decline. But in the early years of the colony, as Winthrop assured Hooker, "the magistrates are members of the churches here, and by their covenant are regulated to direct all their ways to the rule of the gospel."<sup>73</sup> The clergy, in turn, acknowledged and praised the "godly rule" of the magistrates:

<sup>70</sup> Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay*, p. 37.

<sup>71</sup> Lawrence Shaw Mayo, *John Endecott, A Biography* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), p. 92.

<sup>72</sup> Miller, "The Puritan State and Puritan Society," *Errand Into the Wilderness*, p. 142.

<sup>73</sup> Winthrop, cited in "Rev. Thomas Hooker Letter, in Reply to Governor Winthrop," *Collection* (Connecticut Historical Society), I, 17, ed. note.

We cannot but with thankfulness acknowledge the goodness of God in our gracious magistrates, and their assistance to us in the work of the Lord. . . . Though they sometimes consult with us in matter of conscience; yet they take our counsel no further than they see it cleared from the word.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Cotton, *The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared, 1648*, in Larzer Ziff, ed., *John Cotton on the Churches of New England*, pp. 258-259.