

but a common goal which all must seek together, with church and state working side by side. It was a goal of godliness, and it needed godly men to reach it, but not those, like Williams, who pulled too hard and left the rest behind. If such wild ones could not be tamed, it was best to cut them loose, lest they overturn the whole enterprise. Williams had proved impossible to tame. Perhaps if Winthrop, with all his conciliatory skill, had been governor, it might have been done, and Massachusetts would have been the gainer. Since it was not done, the colony was better off without so great a dissenter.

X Seventeenth-Century Nihilism

On September 18, 1634, two hundred passengers disembarked at Boston's bustling, cluttered landing place and picked their way through the dirty streets. The squalor of the place was enough to make them quail, but they reminded themselves that it was holy ground, where they might worship God without bishops or kings or Romanizing ritual. Among the arrivals who strengthened their resolution with this thought were William Hutchinson and his wife Anne.

Winthrop described Hutchinson as "a man of a very mild temper and weak parts, and wholly guided by his wife." But a man with a wife like Anne Hutchinson could scarcely not have been guided by her. All we know about Anne Hutchinson was written by other hands than hers, for the most part by writers whose main purpose was to discredit her. Yet the force of her intelligence and character penetrate the libels and leave us angry with the writers and not with their intended victim.

Winthrop, who was one of the libelers, tells us at the outset that she was "a woman of a ready wit and bold spirit." This was an absurd understatement. Though Winthrop, in common with his century, believed that women's minds could not stand the strain of profound

theological speculation, Anne Hutchinson excelled him not only in nimbleness of wit but in the ability to extend a theological proposition into all its ramifications. And like so many of the men and women of this time—like Roger Williams, for example—she was ready to trust her mind and to follow in whatever path it might lead her. In 1634 the path had led to Boston.

She was not, by intention at least, a Separatist; she had once been tempted in that direction but did not succumb. She had nevertheless determined that she must not attend a church where the minister failed to teach the doctrines of divine grace in their undiluted purity. Until 1633 she had listened to the sermons of the Reverend John Cotton at Boston in Lincolnshire and had known them for true preaching. She had also admired her brother-in-law, the Reverend John Wheelwright. But when Cotton and Wheelwright were silenced by the bishops, "there was none in England," she said, "that I durst heare." After Cotton departed for New England, she persuaded her husband to follow him.

In singling out John Cotton as her spiritual leader, Mrs. Hutchinson showed, by Puritan standards, excellent taste. Cotton had already won a reputation in England before he left, and the Boston church chose him as teacher shortly after his arrival in New England in September 1633. Here his fame rose steadily. Indeed, his wisdom was so revered that Hugh Peter, who was later to be honored as Cromwell's chaplain, urged that Cotton be commissioned to "go through the Bible, and raise marginal notes upon all the knotty places of the scriptures." Nathaniel Ward, the testy pastor of Ipswich, held himself unworthy to wipe John Cotton's slippers. And Roger Williams observed that many people in Massachusetts "could hardly believe that God would suffer Mr. Cotton to err."

Winthrop himself was one of Cotton's admirers and frequently took occasion to record the minister's opinions

with approval. He valued most in Cotton what Mrs. Hutchinson did—the man's evangelical preaching of God's free grace. All New England Puritans believed in this doctrine, which they usually described in terms of a covenant between God and man whereby God drew the soul to salvation. Strictly speaking, there was nothing a man could do to lay hold of this "covenant of grace." If God predestined him to salvation, God would endow him with faith and fulfill the covenant. But the doctrine could be applied in a variety of ways, and the New England ministers had been suggesting the need to "prepare" oneself so as to facilitate the operation of God's saving grace when and if it should come.

Under the spell of this suggestion it was easy to develop notions of the kind that good Puritans always denounced as "Arminian"—whenever they could recognize them. Though preachers always took care to state that human efforts counted for nothing in the scale of eternity, it was easy to draw the opposite (Arminian) conclusion from their insistence on "preparation," easy to slip into Arminian ways of thinking without realizing it. The history of New England theology for a century and a half after the founding is the history of this steady tendency toward Arminianism, punctuated by periodic reassertions of the Calvinist dogma of divine omnipotence and human helplessness.

John Cotton was the first of a long line of preachers—among whom the most eminent was Jonathan Edwards—to make this reassertion. He did not make it in the unequivocal terms that Edwards did, and perhaps for that reason he did not end as Edwards did by being expelled from his church. Instead he pulled his congregation back from their Arminian wanderings and won their gratitude. Winthrop counted himself as one of those whom Cotton had rescued. He noted in January 1637, that "the Doctrine of free justification lately taught here took me in as

drowsy a condition, as I had been in (to my remembrance) these twenty yeares, and brought mee as low (in my owne apprehension) as if the whole work had been to begin anew. But when the voice of peace came I knew it to bee the same that I had been acquainted with before . . .” Probably most members of the Boston church reacted to Cotton’s preaching as Winthrop did. It woke them from their Arminian napping and sharpened their sense of God’s free grace, but it did not make them feel in the end that their previous religious experiences had been false.

But the evangelical preaching of divine omnipotence and human helplessness has always produced extravagant results, for these doctrines may too easily be translated into a denial of any connection whatever between this world and the next. Puritanism allowed only a tenuous connection at best; it allowed a man to look at his life here as evidence of his prospects in eternity, but it gave him no opportunity to affect his eternal condition. When John Cotton warned his listeners away from the specious comfort of preparation and reemphasized the covenant of grace as something in which God acted alone and unassisted, a bold mind might believe that life in this world offered no evidence at all of eternal prospects. And Mrs. Hutchinson was nothing if not bold.

After her arrival in Boston her admission to the church was delayed for a time because one of her fellow passengers had been disturbed by some unorthodox opinions she had expressed on shipboard. But John Cotton evidently recognized her theological talents and her zeal, and within two years she was admitted and won the admiration of a large part of the congregation. It was not uncommon at this time for small groups to hold weekly meetings for religious discussions, in which the sermon of the previous Sunday furnished the starting point. Mrs. Hutchinson, who had gained a wide acquaintance in Boston by serving as a midwife, soon found herself the

center of one of these meetings, held in her home. She would explain, to the best of her ability, what her beloved Mr. Cotton had said on Sunday and would then go on to expand some of his doctrines.

In these weekly meetings she carried the principles of divine omnipotence and human helplessness in a dangerous direction, toward the heresy known to theologians as Antinomianism. Since man was utterly helpless, she reasoned, when God acted to save him He placed the Holy Ghost directly within him, so that the man’s life was thereafter directed by the Holy Ghost, and the man himself, in a sense, ceased to be. At the same time she concluded that human actions were no clue to the question of whether or not this transformation had taken place. The fact that a man behaved in a “sanctified” manner, breaking none of the laws of God, was no evidence that he was saved. In Puritan terminology this meant that “sanctification” was no evidence of “justification,” that men’s lives in this world offered no evidence of their prospects in the next. The orthodox Puritans never claimed that the correspondence was perfect: hypocrisy together with the thousand imperfections of human vision could deceive the most skillful examiner. But it was usually possible to recognize sanctification, and that sanctification resulted from justification was not to be doubted at all. Mrs. Hutchinson doubted and denied it. She was, it seemed, an Antinomian.

Winthrop first became alarmed by her teachings in October 1636, a few months after the departure of Roger Williams. He noted her errors and began a list of the awful conclusions that must ensue from them, but stopped and left a large blank in his journal, overcome perhaps by the train of horrors he saw before him. Before they were through with Mrs. Hutchinson the guardians of New England orthodoxy enumerated nearly a hundred dangerous propositions that could be deduced from her views. It is not possible to tell which propositions she actually en-

dorsed and which were simply attributed to her, but the list is a formidable one, and strikes at the heart of the Puritan experiment.

Mrs. Hutchinson's first principle, "that the person of the Holy Ghost dwells in a justified person," was dangerously close to a belief in immediate personal revelation. It threatened the fundamental conviction on which the Puritans built their state, their churches, and their daily lives, namely that God's will could be discovered only through the Bible. In combination with the belief that sanctification offered no evidence of justification, it undermined the whole basis for moral endeavor which Puritan theologians had constructed since the time of Calvin. What reason for a man to exert himself for the right if he may "stand still and waite for Christ to doe all for him"? What reason for a church of saints, if "no Minister can teach one that is anoynted by the Spirit of Christ, more than hee knowes already unlesse it be in some circumstances"? What reason for a state ruled by the laws of God, if "the Will of God in the Word, or directions thereof, are not the rule whereunto Christians are bound to conforme themselves"?

These views were not necessarily separatist. Rather they were a seventeenth-century version of nihilism. But to make matters worse, Mrs. Hutchinson and her friends developed a new and especially invidious form of separatism, too. Though she denied that sanctification could be evidence of justification, she did maintain that any justified person could discern, presumably at the direction of the Holy Ghost within him, whether or not another person was justified. On the basis of this almighty insight Mrs. Hutchinson and her followers confidently pronounced any person they encountered as "under a covenant of grace" (really saved) or "under a covenant of works" (deluded and damned because relying on good works instead of divine grace), so that "it began to be as common here," Winthrop says, "to distinguish between

men, by being under a covenant of grace or a covenant of works, as in other countries between Protestants and Papists." The wholesale destructiveness that might result from Mrs. Hutchinson's self-assurance became apparent when she hinted to her admirers that all the ministers in Massachusetts, with the exception of her two old favorites, John Cotton and John Wheelwright, were under a covenant of works and therefore unfit to preach the gospel.

Winthrop saw trouble ahead when he first took notice of Anne Hutchinson's views in October 1636. The weekly meetings at her house were steadily swelling, and the people who attended them walked the streets of Boston wearing the expression of devotees. Those rapt faces, Winthrop knew, carried a threat to the colony's commission. But there was no law against religious gatherings, and Mrs. Hutchinson was careful to state her heresies in equivocal language. It would be difficult to prove anything against her.

By the end of October 1636, her followers felt strong enough to seek an official spokesman for their doctrines in the Boston church. Because Mrs. Hutchinson was a woman, no one would think of proposing her for a church office, but her brother-in-law would do as well. John Wheelwright had arrived in June, with a reputation as an able preacher and with the additional recommendation of having been silenced by the bishops in England. Mrs. Hutchinson, of course, endorsed him, and he endorsed her. At a church meeting on October 30 it was moved that he be made a teacher, though the congregation possessed two other ministers—John Cotton as teacher and John Wilson as pastor. Winthrop grasped the chance to act and immediately opposed the election of a third minister, particularly one "whose spirit they knew not, and one who seemed to dissent in judgment."

As a member of the church, Winthrop had the right to a voice in its affairs, but no more than any other member, and he was up against a growing majority of the Boston church, which included the largest single concentration of freemen in the colony. He was also up against the popular young governor, Henry Vane, who was on his feet at once to say that Wheelwright's doctrines were no different from those of Cotton. Cotton himself neither admitted nor denied the similarity, but obviously was in sympathy with the majority.

More was at stake here than the welfare of the Boston church, and Winthrop, calling on his own reserve of popularity, was able to persuade the meeting not to elect Wheelwright. But the victory cost him many friends, even though he protested that he meant no personal slight to Wheelwright, and "did love that brother's person, and did honor the gifts and graces of God in him." In the weeks that followed, Wheelwright took himself off to the scattered settlement at Mount Wollaston, leaving behind a congregation that grew ever more resentful of Winthrop and his ally, the pastor John Wilson. Wilson, as pastor, had played second fiddle ever since John Cotton had arrived, but Mrs. Hutchinson's infectious contempt reduced his influence in the congregation to the vanishing point. He and Winthrop were left almost alone to console each other.

Winthrop as usual was sure that people would see things his way if they would only listen to reason, and as usual he set down in black and white the reason he hoped they would listen to. Fortunately, before presenting this document to his opponents he sent a copy to his friend Thomas Shepard, the pastor at Cambridge, who saw at once that Winthrop was no theologian. Though Winthrop knew better than his opponents the necessity of living in this world, he was no match for them in speculating about the next. His arguments, if one may judge from Shepard's criticisms (Winthrop's text is lost), were studded with ex-

pressions that smacked of Arminianism; "and so," Shepard warned him, "while you are about to convince them of errours, they will proclayme your selfe to hold foorth worse." Winthrop, who was no Arminian, probably destroyed his composition, and Boston remained deluded and defiant.

Though Winthrop could make no headway within his church, the rest of the colony was beginning to take alarm. The members of the Boston faction, like most religious fanatics, were not content to march quietly along their shortcut to Heaven. They hoped to entice the rest of the colony along it and thought the best way was to visit other congregations and heckle the ministers. This method did not prove as effective as Mrs. Hutchinson's winning words. The General Court began to take notice of the problem, and Governor Henry Vane found his popularity ebbing outside Boston as rapidly as Winthrop's had inside. In a petulant fit of tears Vane offered to resign, and the General Court obligingly agreed to let him. This so alarmed his Boston adherents, who enjoyed having a champion in the governor's chair, that they coaxed him hard to stay, and he finally allowed himself to be persuaded.

By the beginning of 1637 the colony was divided into two hostile camps, the one centering in Boston, the other spread out around it, each constantly sniping at the other. In January the General Court ordered a fast, so that the people might mourn their dissensions. But empty bellies seldom beget brotherly love, and when John Wheelwright showed up at the afternoon lecture by Cotton, he rose up at its conclusion to launch a momentous sermon of his own against those enemies of the Lord who thought that sanctification was an evidence of justification. These holy-seeming men, he said, must be put aside. They were under a covenant of works, and "the more holy they are, the greater enemies they are to Christ." True believers must

hew them down: "we must lay loade upon them, we must kille them with the worde of the Lorde."

Wheelwright was speaking figuratively and not actually proposing a bloodbath, but he made it plain that he thought most of the existing ministers and probably most of the magistrates, too, could be dispensed with. Someone took down his words, and at the next meeting of the General Court, in spite of the protests of Vane and a few others, he was convicted of sedition. The sentence was deferred till the following session, which the court appointed to be in Cambridge, away from the immediate source of trouble.

This meeting, held the following May, was the regular time for election of officers. When it assembled, a petition from Boston was presented against the conviction of Wheelwright. Governor Vane wanted to deal with the petition before proceeding to election, but Winthrop and the other magistrates insisted on having the election first. When the votes were cast, it was found that Vane had not only failed of reelection but had been left out of the government altogether. The freemen had finally decided to recall the man who was best qualified to restore the peace. Winthrop was back in the governor's chair with Dudley once again as deputy governor. "There was great danger of a tumult that day," Winthrop noted, "and some laid hands on others," but seeing themselves outnumbered, the Bostonians finally decided that this was not the time to hew down the unholy holy and departed for home.

Winthrop now had the authority to crush the opposition, and it was certainly his inclination to bring the whole unhappy business to as speedy an end as possible. But to suppress or banish so large a segment of the population would be to effect the very separation he wished to avoid. His principal weapon must still be persuasion. Instead of dealing with Wheelwright at once, he again deferred sentence and arranged for a general day of humiliation and

for a synod of ministers to be held in the late summer to discuss the points at issue and provide the court with a well-defined statement by which to judge the current heresies. Wheelwright was told that the court was still convinced of his guilt, "but if, upon the conference among the churches, the Lord should discover any further light to them than as yet they had seen, they should gladly embrace it." Nor did Winthrop deal with the opposition for their riotous behavior and insolent speeches on election day. Though there had been ample provocation for an indictment, the court hoped that by refraining from this and by deferring Wheelwright's sentence, "their moderation and desire of reconciliation might appear to all."

The ministers from the beginning had tried to win Cotton away from his heretical admirers, but he held firmly to the top of the fence. He did not endorse Mrs. Hutchinson's consignment of the other ministers to perdition, but he refused to believe that she and Wheelwright held the heresies imputed to them. At the same time he himself disapproved the current doctrine of preparation and maintained that more rigorous views had helped to effectuate a marked awakening of the spirit in Boston.

During the summer months Winthrop's dignity and patience were repeatedly taxed by the sulking saints of that town. Until shamed into it, Boston made no move to provide him with the sergeant halberdiers who customarily accompanied the governor to the first day of General Court and to Sunday meeting. Rather than press the point, he used his own servants and politely declined when at last the town left-handedly offered men but not sergeants. His comings and goings from Boston were also pointedly ignored, in marked contrast to the honor accorded him by other towns, which sent a guard to escort him into and out of their territory. And Henry Vane, until his departure for England on August 3, conducted himself with unabashed schoolboy discourtesy, refusing the invitation to

sit in the magistrates' seats at the Boston church, though he had sat there ever since his arrival in the colony, refusing to attend a dinner party at Winthrop's home and instead carrying off the intended guest of honor, a visiting English nobleman, to dine on Noddle's Island with Samuel Maverick.

Although Winthrop set much store by his official dignity, he did not allow himself to be goaded into further re-cremations. Once more he put his pen to work, and this time Thomas Shepard found little to criticize beyond the fact that he was too charitable to his opponents. But the charity was calculated. If he could not win over the leaders of the opposition, he might at least draw away their less extravagant followers.

At the same time he did not propose to allow them to increase their numbers by bringing over like-minded friends from England, where the Reverend Roger Brierly of Grindleton Chapel had recently been achieving notoriety by preaching doctrines similar to those of Mrs. Hutchinson. Winthrop feared that the Grindletonians, as Brierly's followers were called, would shortly be gravitating to Massachusetts, and he accordingly sponsored an order of court forbidding anyone to entertain strangers for more than three weeks without permission of the magistrates. This arbitrary restriction of immigration was denounced by Henry Vane as unchristian. Winthrop defended it but enforced it with his usual flexibility by granting the immigrant friends and relatives of Mrs. Hutchinson and Wheelwright four months in which to decide upon a location for settlement outside the colony.

On August 30 the ministers convened in a synod—all those of Massachusetts, including Wheelwright and Cotton, together with a delegation from Connecticut. For twenty-four days they defined to each other the dreadful doctrines that were polluting the air above Boston, and reached a remarkable unanimity. Even John Cotton, faced

with a solid phalanx of his colleagues, squeezed his views into line. Wheelwright alone remained aloof. Close to a hundred heretical propositions were meticulously described and condemned, though the synod tactfully declined to attribute them to specific persons. The unanimous opinion of this body of experts must have given pause to many who had flirted with the new ideas, but a hard core of devotees in Boston continued a noisy defiance.

Winthrop could see no further avenue of persuasion and in November decided that it was time for action. Wheelwright was summoned again before the General Court and upon his refusal to give up teaching his heresies was banished. But Winthrop knew that Wheelwright was not the main source of the trouble. When the court had finished with him, they sent for his sister-in-law.

What followed was the least attractive episode in Winthrop's career. Anne Hutchinson was his intellectual superior in everything except political judgment, in everything except the sense of what was possible in this world. In nearly every exchange of words she defeated him, and the other members of the General Court with him. The record of her trial, if it is proper to dignify the procedure with that name, is one of the few documents in which her words have been recorded, and it reveals a proud, brilliant woman put down by men who had judged her in advance. The purpose of the trial was doubtless to make her conviction seem to follow due process of law, but it might have been better for the reputation of her judges if they had simply banished her unheard.

Mrs. Hutchinson confronted them at Cambridge, where magistrates and deputies crowded into the narrow benches of the meetinghouse, the only building of suitable size in the town. The ministers too were on hand, but only as witnesses, for this was a civil court, in which they had no authority. There was no jury, and no apparent proce-

ture. The magistrates (and even some of the deputies) flung questions at the defendant, and exploded in blustering anger when the answers did not suit them. Even Winthrop was unable to maintain his usual poise in the face of Mrs. Hutchinson's clever answers to his loaded questions.

The court was somewhat handicapped, because Mrs. Hutchinson throughout the preceding months had played her hand so cleverly that only minor charges could be framed against her. The court was preparing to deal with all Wheelwright's supporters who had signed the petition in his favor. They would be disfranchised, disarmed, and in some cases banished. But Mrs. Hutchinson had signed nothing and so could be charged only with "countenancing and encouraging" those who did. To this was added the even weaker charge that she held in her home meetings of men and women which were not tolerable or comely in the sight of God or fitting for her sex. Following these was a last and more serious indictment, that she had traduced the faithful ministers of the colony.

The ground of the first charge was that in entertaining seditious persons she broke the Fifth Commandment: she dishonored the governors, who were the fathers of the commonwealth. This was not really a far-fetched interpretation, for the Puritans always justified subordination and subjection to the state on the basis of the Fifth Commandment. But Mrs. Hutchinson's "entertainment" of seditious persons could be considered seditious only by the most tenuous reasoning, and her nimble wit quickly devised a dilemma for the court. "Put the case, Sir," she said to Winthrop, "that I do fear the Lord and my parents, may not I entertain them that fear the Lord because my parents will not give me leave?"

Winthrop was unable to find his way around this logical impasse and took refuge in blind dogmatism: "We do not mean to discourse with those of your sex but only this;

you do adhere unto them and do endeavor to set forward this faction and so you do dishonour us."

The court next called upon her to justify the weekly meetings at her house. In answer she quoted two passages of Scripture: Titus II, 3-5, which indicated that the elder women should instruct the younger, and Acts XVIII, 26, wherein Aquila and Priscilla "tooke upon them to instruct Apollo, more perfectly, yet he was a man of good parts, but they being better instructed might teach him."

There followed this interchange:

COURT: See how your argument stands, Priscilla with her husband, tooke Apollo home to instruct him privately, therefore Mistris Hutchinson without her husband may teach sixty or eighty.

MRS. H: I call them not. but if they come to me, I may instruct them.

COURT: Yet you shew us not a rule.

MRS. H: I have given you two places of Scripture.

COURT: But neither of them will sute your practise.

To this assertion Mrs. Hutchinson returned her most withering sarcasm: "Must I shew my name written therein?"

Mrs. Hutchinson was having the best of the argument, but the members of the court were only antagonized by her wit. As they saw it, she was usurping the position of a minister without the authority that a minister possessed from his election by a congregation. Her meetings were a fountain of dissension and separatism for which the community was liable to punishment by the Lord. On this note the court closed the argument: "We see no rule of God for this, we see not that any should have authority to set up any other exercises besides what authority hath already set up and so what hurt comes of this you will be guilty of and we for suffering you."

The greater part of the audience doubtless breathed a

silent "Amen," and the trial moved forward to the final accusation, that she had insulted the ministers. The basis of this charge was a conference held the preceding December between the ministers and Mrs. Hutchinson. In spite of the fact that the conference had been private, and they had encouraged her to speak freely, they did not hesitate now to testify that she had designated them all, with the exception of Cotton and Wheelwright, as laboring under a covenant of works. One minister after another was called forward, and when the court adjourned for the day, the evidence against her on this charge looked overwhelming.

That night she went over some notes taken at the December conference by her most determined opponent, John Wilson. Finding some discrepancy between his notes and the testimony offered in court, she demanded the next morning that the ministers be required to give their evidence under oath. This created a considerable stir, because if the ministers swore to their testimony and it was proved to be wrong, they would be guilty not merely of perjury but of blasphemy, of taking the name of the Lord in vain. After much hemming and hawing by the other ministers John Cotton was called upon for the first time to give his version of the conference. With the tact which had enabled him to retain the favor of both sides he soothed the injured pride of his fellow ministers and then brought his speech to a dramatic close by declaring, "I must say that I did not find her saying they were under a covenant of works, nor that she said they did preach a covenant of works." And though pressed by the other ministers, he stood his ground.

With this testimony the case against Mrs. Hutchinson was about to collapse. The first two specifications against her had been too weakly sustained to warrant more than a serious admonition, and now the revered Mr. Cotton had knocked out the props from under the only remaining charge. The triumph was too much. Hitherto Mrs.

Hutchinson had been on guard and had dexterously parried every thrust against her. Had she been content to hold her tongue at this point, her judges might have felt obliged to dismiss her with a censure. But instead she now proceeded to justify herself by a torrent of divine revelations.

Winthrop tried to stop her, but the floodgates were opened—perhaps by hysteria. Suddenly he must have seen where this outpouring might lead and was silent. The minutes raced by as she described how one thing after another had been revealed to her through scriptural passages thrust into her mind by God. To the Puritans this was an acceptable form of revelation. But then, still to the accompaniment of Biblical citations, she came to the revelation that she would come into New England and there be persecuted, but need fear no more than Daniel in the lions' den. "And see!" she cried, "this scripture fulfilled this day in mine eyes, therefore take heed what yee goe about to doe unto me . . . for I know that for this you goe about to do to me, God will ruine you and your posterity, and this whole State."

Here was the naked challenge. Winthrop and his colleagues believed that the Lord would punish Massachusetts if they *did not* punish Mrs. Hutchinson. Obviously either she or they were deluded, and they asked her "How shée did know that it was God that did reveale these things to her, and not Satan." With a final scriptural flourish to justify what she was about to do and with confidence in the Lord's deliverance, Mrs. Hutchinson at last threw off the confining authority of the Bible and swept arrogantly on.

MRS. H: How did Abraham know that it was God that bid him offer his son, being a breach of the sixth commandment?

COURT: By an immediate voice.

MRS. H: So to me by an immediate revelation.

COURT: How! an immediate revelation?

MRS. H: By the voice of his own spirit to my soul.

Here it was at last, an acknowledgment of the heresy so long suspected. The Lord had indeed disclosed who was deluded, but He had left it to the court to strike her down! Winthrop recorded that "the Court and all the rest of the Assembly (except those of her owne party) did observe a speciall providence of God, that . . . her owne mouth should deliver her into the power of the Court, as guilty of that which all suspected her for, but were not furnished with prooffe sufficient to proceed against her. . . ." It required only the briefest deliberation for the court to agree that Mrs. Hutchinson's words were sufficient cause for banishment, and when she said, "I desire to know wherefore I am banished," Winthrop gave the shabby final word: "Say no more, the court knows wherefore and is satisfied."

The sentencing of Anne Hutchinson was followed by the disfranchising and disarming of her closest adherents, who might at any moment receive an immediate revelation directing them to kill her judges. Religious enthusiasm was known to produce such results. Fortunately, the number of unwavering Hutchinson disciples was small. Her heretical declaration at the trial had driven off many in disillusionment. Though badly shaken, the Boston church for a time kept dogged faith that the declaration had been the result of unfair pressure and chicanery by the court. But when they sought to satisfy their doubts at a church meeting, Mrs. Hutchinson offered some testimony so obviously contrary to her own previous statements that they could only reluctantly conclude to abandon her. In March 1637, they voted to excommunicate her, and at the end of the month, her banishment having been deferred four months because of the winter and her pregnancy, she departed for Rhode Island, followed by the few faithful.

Winthrop's victory at the trial had been an unsavory triumph of arbitrary power, but happily it represented more than the mere crushing of a helpless woman. When she

left, Massachusetts lost a brilliant mind, but God's commission was secured. Even the Boston church recovered from the troubles and was restored to unity. Only a little over a year later Winthrop looked back and congratulated himself on not having withdrawn from the church when every hand was turned against him. "By this time," he writes, "there appeared a great change in the church of Boston; for whereas, the year before, they were all (save five or six) so affected to Mr. Wheelright and Mrs. Hutchinson, and those new opinions, as they slighted the present governour and the pastor, looking at them as men under a covenant of works, and as their greatest enemies; but they bearing all patiently, and not withdrawing themselves, (as they were strongly solicited to have done,) but carrying themselves lovingly and helpfully upon all occasions, the Lord brought about the hearts of all the people to love and esteem them more than ever before, and all breaches were made up, and the church was saved from ruin beyond all expectation; which could hardly have been, (in human reason,) if those two had not been guided by the Lord to that moderation."

Thus the final lesson of the Hutchinson affair was the same lesson that Winthrop had been learning all his life, the importance of not separating.