

# Religion in American History

*Edited by*

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 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**

A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

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# Introduction

Amanda Porterfield and John Corrigan

## **Alligators in Paradise, Palm Trees in Hell**

The Robert Sayer map of 1786 shown on the cover depicts “America, north and south” in relation to the Caribbean islands, western Africa, and western Europe. In other words, it draws the Atlantic world. It identifies that world in text within an ornamental cartouche in the bottom right corner of the map. The art of that cartouche informs as much as the text. A map, as a commercial artifact, often represented through ornamentation the products of the region it depicted. In addition to the usual figures of Neptune and a cherub, a cartouche could include images of fish, game, lumber, crafted commodities, a cornucopia of fruit and grains, and other goods, as well as images of prospective trading partners, depending on how much the printer wished to advertise reasons to travel to the place. Information about the cartographer and about nations with interests in the area also could be included. In the case of the Sayer map, the cartouche identifies the recently formed “United States of America” as well as the “several European possessions.” This information is framed by a most interesting circle of images: an alligator sitting on a rock, an Indian headdress and wampum belt, layers of waterfalls, a dense sampling of exotic trees, twisting vines and flowering plants, the material ruins of a civilization, and a beaver. No human figures are present. The beaver, of course, was hunted for its fur, which was the crucial component of the felt hats that were so popular in Europe well into the nineteenth century. The Indian artifacts likewise were meant to identify the possibilities for commercial exchange with natives. But would an alligator attract people to America? Would a ruined civilization entice? Would the absence of people appeal? Would snake-like vines draw interest? Would a place thick with jungle-grade vegetation prove an incentive to commercial investment? Thomas Pownall’s competing map, also printed in 1786,<sup>1</sup> included a cartouche decorated with drawings of handsome Native Americans at peace with nature, thriving in a rich material culture, smiling as they sat peaceably petting a sleepy cougar. Why was the Sayer map different and what was its message?

The Sayer map represents a conception of North America that was common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and that remained in residue in the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries. For the earliest European explorers and colonists, America was an enchanted land. Explorers expected to discover the Garden of Eden in the Americas. The Fountain of Youth was thought to be hidden in the New World jungles. Cities of gold, wonderful places, were rumored to exist in the continent's interior. Amazing animals, breathtaking natural beauty, waterfalls framed in palm trees and blooming vines, and such an abundance of game and fish as to astound and bewilder, all of these were enchantments. But there were alligators in paradise, and the most sought-after treasures – gold, youth, innocence – after all lay concealed somewhere in a seemingly endless wilderness that was as terrifying and deadly as it was beautiful. Religion provided a set of categories by which the European experience of the Americas could be organized. Religion supplied myths to explain the history of the Americas and to imagine the region's glorious Christian future. Religion also furnished explorers and colonists with understandings of their suffering as they crossed swamps, contracted malaria, died of starvation, fought with Native Americans, or were eaten by alligators. The New World, then, for all of its beauties, was also an enchantment of horrors, of terror and tragedy. It could appear, as New Englander William Bradford wrote, as a “dungheap,” or worse: for the Spanish missionary Bartolomé las Casas, the European slaughter of Native Americans was an eyes-wide-open journey into hell. The magic of America – from its alligators in paradise to its palm trees in hell – was powerful. It undergirded a European imaginary of the New World as a place where anything was possible and everything was dangerous. It informed exploration and fostered the development of trade. Most importantly, it framed the planting of European religions and the adaptation of those religions, over time, to the changes that came with the ever more complex encounters between Euroamericans, Indians, and persons from Africa, as well as among Euroamericans themselves as all became Americans.

### **Thinking Historically about Religion**

Europeans discovered the Americas at a turning point in European history. European encounters with the lands, resources, and inhabitants of the Americas contributed significantly to the processes of modernization and empire building getting underway in Europe. These encounters shaped American history even more. Only by seeing how European dreams and conflicts played out in the Americas, and how religion contributed to those dreams and conflicts, can the history of the Americas be understood.

Religion has always been a major force in the Americas. Archeological evidence indicates that, prior to the age of discovery, religious ceremony played a significant role in human life in the Americas, especially in death rites and in the governance of chiefdoms. Religion played a no less significant role in Europe prior to the age of discovery; written records show that Christianity, the dominant religion of medieval Europe, focused people's attention on life after death, and that it promoted charity, compassion, deference to ruling elites, and participation in their wars. At the beginning of the modern era, religious thinking and behavior were an integral part of the historic changes occurring in Europe. The religious reformations and counter-reformations rocking Europe during the sixteenth century stimulated the growth of modern technologies associated with printing, and religious aspirations impelled the growth of European empires, leading to conflict between empires and new forms of global

enterprise. Religion was ever-present in the European competition for wealth and power, and in the discovery, depiction, and colonization of the Americas.

In the North American regions with which this book is primarily concerned, Spanish, French, English, Dutch, and Russian empires vied for control of land, resources, and native peoples. Spain took the lead in colonization during the sixteenth century, establishing a command center in Mexico City with outposts in Florida, the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, New Mexico and California. France established influence along the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Mississippi River, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. With small colonies along the Atlantic coast and in the Caribbean, Britain's presence in North America was relatively weak until the second half of the eighteenth century, when wars in Europe and in the Americas strengthened Britain's hold in North America. The American Revolution broke that hold but strong cultural ties to Britain persisted. The Revolution and the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 launched a new English-speaking empire, independent of Britain in government but strongly influenced by British legal and religious traditions.

Despite conflict over slavery and state's rights that led to Civil War in the 1860s, the new American Empire grew in size and strength in the nineteenth century with the annexation of Florida and Texas, the industrialization of labor and development of a national economy, and the immigration of millions of new settlers. The religious beliefs and behaviors of these newcomers increased religious diversity in the United States even as those immigrant traditions changed in response to new opportunities and challenges, including the necessity of coexistence with Anglo-Protestants who dominated political and economic life, and often expressed fear and disdain for foreigners. Meanwhile, Native Americans struggled to survive and to preserve elements of religious identity that had characterized their ancestors prior to the arrival of Christian missionaries. Spanish and French influences also persisted, especially in the borderlands of the Southwest, where Spanish-speaking and Latino religiosity often prevailed and in New Orleans, where Afro-Caribbean religions preserved elements of French Catholicism.

Throughout the history of the United States, religion has contributed both to centrifugal forces of diversity, fragmentation, and factionalism and to centripetal forces of union and cultural homogeneity. As an agent of diversity, religion preserved ethnic traditions, inspired countless forms of charity, education, and social activism, and brought an esthetic complexity to American life that stimulated the arts and enriched many lives. Religious diversity also contributed to the fragmentation and factionalism of American life, promoting boundaries between groups, and stimulating misunderstanding and hatred. Along with this fragmentation and factionalism, religion also operated as an agent of national unity and cultural homogenization. Religion contributed to overarching conceptions of nationhood and to patriotic devotion to the ideals of liberty, equality, and justice that people have often believed America to represent. While disputes raged over the meaning and practical application of those ideals with respect to a variety of issues, such as slavery and racial segregation, marriage and women's roles and rights, labor unions, affirmative action, abortion, and gun control, those disagreements only amplified moral claims about the meaning of American ideals. These moral claims largely derived from religious idealism about America and its historic role in the world.

In addition to religion's role in an overarching, patriotic commitment to American ideals, religion also contributed to underlying forces of cultural homogenization that

have been at least as powerful as patriotism. Consumerism and secularity are powerful underlying forces that have gained ground over the course of several centuries, shaping American behavior and thinking, and working to make Americans increasingly alike. The gradual meshing of religion with consumerism and secularity contributed to the processes of cultural unification, even as particular forms of religious expression differentiated Americans.

Religious diversity in the United States has encouraged religious competition, religious exchange, and strategies for marketing and branding religion that have made religion increasingly a matter of consumer choice. As this consumerizing process has evolved, the contents of religion have become less otherworldly and more tied to behaviors and thinking associated with the secular work of business, sports, entertainment, and healthcare. As a result of its fusion with consumerism and secularity, religion in the United States today is often less concerned with some of the things that used to preoccupy religious people more, such as life after death and the transcendent nature of God.

Since the eighteenth century, more than a few philosophers and social scientists have predicted that religion would die out as secularity advanced, and while declines in religious belief among Europeans seemed to bear this prediction out, by the end of the twentieth century it was clear that theories about the incompatibility of religion and secularity were wrong, especially when applied to the United States. Consumerism and secularity seem to have fueled rather than inhibited the proliferation of religious options and the saturation of secular society with religion and religious choice. Religion has not disappeared in the process of infiltrating many forms of industry, recreation, and media technology. Indeed, religious people often lead the way in developing industry, recreation, and media. Through their doings religion has become more fluid, interchangeable, and accessible, not only for Americans but for people around the world affected by globalization and the exportation of American culture.

New immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe and from Asia and Africa have also contributed to the vitality of American religious life today, to the religious choices available to Americans, and to the religious freedom and eclecticism of American society. Escalating interest in the practical benefits of religion, and declining interest in systematic theologies that focus on the otherworldly nature and will of God have made religion part of the fabric of American society.

Tracking religion's fusion with consumerism and secularity implies that the meaning of the term "religion" has changed over time, and that to look for some common denominator may be to miss religion and its effects in particular times and places. Rather than imposing an abstract definition of religion for the study of religion in American history, this book invites readers to think about religion as an historical phenomenon continually subject to new meaning and interpretation. In exploring what people have meant by religion over the course of American history, this book focuses on the place of religious behavior and thinking within larger forces of social and intellectual change.

## **Historical Periods and Themes: Overview**

This book is organized both by chronological period and by theme. This means that there are two optimal ways of reading this book. One way is to select a theme and to

follow it through the four chronological periods of American religious history. The other way is to focus on each period, one at a time but consecutively, reading across the four themes that organize the religious history of each period before advancing to the next. For persons who prefer to undertake the study of American religious history through the exploration of specific topics – community, for example, or religious practice – this book offers an opportunity to directly track developments in those areas from the time of first contacts between Europeans and Native Americans up to the present day. Readers whose preference is for a chronological view can follow the thread of development of religious history as it is organized in each period under four headings, and then see how that history develops in the next period under those same headings.

Four periods of American religious history are distinguished herein. We begin with *Part I: Exploration and Encounter (1492–1692)*, which focuses on religion in America from the time of the arrival of Columbus to the Salem witchcraft trials. In this part of the book, we have placed particular emphasis on the ways in which engagements between Europeans and Native Americans led both parties to religious adaptation and innovation. The colonial setting, and especially the relationship between Europeans as colonizers and Indians as a dominated people, profoundly shaped the development of religion in America during this period. The colonial mentality, forged in dramatic and complex relationships with natives, was reinforced in subsequent racial contexts – and especially with regard to a growing African American population. That mentality has survived to some degree in religious thinking about power, destiny, purity, war, and global mission up to the present day. The early colonial period of United States history was equally characterized by a dynamism that came from the exchanges and associations among the many different migrant European groups. Encounters between Protestants and Catholics, Jews and Christians, sectarian groups and larger, well-established churches, as well as confrontations between like-minded religionists of different nationalities, all contributed to the lively and sometimes violent history of religion during this period. Although religious institutions developed steadily – meetinghouses and churches were built, people went to church, ministries were organized and funded, and so forth – religious life remained deeply entrenched in a rich bed of popular beliefs and practices that flourished alongside official religion. The witchcraft episode at Salem in 1692 demonstrated just how important popular ideas about the invisible world and its inhabitants were to late seventeenth-century Americans. It also marked the end of a period characterized by the transplantation of European religions to North America and the beginning of a period of accelerated experimentation with and refinement of religion within a coalescing Atlantic world.

In *Part II: The Atlantic World (1692–1803)*, we turn to a consideration not only of the movement from colonial empires to nationhood, but to the ways in which religion in America developed distinctive features even as it absorbed influences from Europe, Africa, the Caribbean, and South America. Most of the defining features of an American religious landscape of the period – the Great Awakening, the founding of the California missions, the rise of rational religion and deism, the integration of African and Afro-Caribbean influences, the coalescence of regional differences – came about through contact with persons, ideas, and traditions from the larger Atlantic world. Even as the European colonies and territories in North America pulled more closely together, they fed more hungrily on cultural raw materials that were in circulation

in the Atlantic. Accordingly, at the same time that the eastern seaboard colonies were fashioning a rudimentary collective identity and banding together to resist English rule, they were borrowing freely from models of religious culture in England and elsewhere. Religious agendas and the conflicts that arose from them in other parts of the Atlantic world thus were played out, in some measure, in North America as well. The religious differences that conditioned relations among Spain, France, and England – and that shaped conflicts within each of those nations as well – framed confrontations between religions in America. The process of blending traditions that took place at an accelerated rate in the West Indies translated, especially, to the American South, including to the Louisiana territory, which was not yet under the flag of the United States. During this period, the emergence of a political order that decoupled church and state was a recognizably American innovation, however. So also was the American experiment of joining religious feeling to the practice of virtue, a complicated enterprise that set the terms initially for a distinctive understanding of republican virtue, and prepared the way for a subsequent century of lively religious debates and inventions.

After the purchase of the vast Louisiana Territory during Thomas Jefferson's presidency, the nation turned its attention decisively westward. Westward migration had been increasing in the late eighteenth century, but in the years after 1803, the imagination of the nation by degrees came to be as much sparked by the Pacific as the Atlantic. The religious history narrated in *Part III: American Empire (1803–1898)* is a history of both expansion and consolidation. Churches took on more and more of an official look, especially in the larger urban areas: funding was secure, ministers were educated, doctrine was defined – sometimes in painstaking detail – and communities were bonded in approved collective practice and a shared sense of the comportment of religious values with the nation's political life. The movement westward, however, challenged all that was thought safe and secure in the older communities. An amazing efflorescence of new religious ideas and ways of living, appearing seemingly overnight and with a force that was irresistible to many, characterized the period as much as the settling-in of more traditional religious orientations. Shakers, Mormons, Millerites, Campbellites, Spiritualists, Christian Scientists, religious communities such as Oneida and the Amana societies, the Ghost Dance, New Thought, Unitarianism, the growth of black denominations and black congregations and the migration of black religious practice to white churches, all of these dynamic and powerful changes came during the period of American Empire. The Civil War also defined this period. It prompted thinking about difference, about virtue and morality, and about the religious meanings of both nationhood and violence. The mass immigration of Jews and Catholics towards the end of the period also led to reflection on those themes, and while, for some, religious differences still led to violent encounters, for others, such as those who organized the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, there was hope for an American future of religious diversity.

In 1898, America went to war with Spain, a Catholic country. Many in the Protestant majority worried that American Catholics would take the Spanish side, but that did not happen, and anxieties about Catholic patriotism, while not disappearing, began to slowly recede. *Part IV: Global Reach (1898–Present)* addresses the movement of America onto an international stage, and the religious developments, both domestic and as part of American global influence, that were a part of that process. During this

period, religion took stumbling steps in coming to terms with what was called the “modern.” Science and religion found themselves at loggerheads in the Scopes “monkey” trial in Dayton, Tennessee, fundamentalist Christianity arose in force in reaction to a perceived sense of the erosion of tradition, religious bigotry resurfaced in a massive reconstituted Ku Klux Klan – and all of this took place in the first quarter of the twentieth century. While some religious groups launched ambitious mission campaigns to the far corners of the globe, others sought ever more energetically to shape the political order of the nation, and to foster conformity in religious and social practice. This was also a period of remarkable innovation, however. Americans crossed many conceptual boundaries in their thinking about what religion itself was, and all kinds of so-called “alternative” altars were built: Asian religions, healing and nature religions, ethical humanism, and New Age movements. The lives of people who belonged to more traditional congregations changed as well during the twentieth century, through two World Wars, dazzling science, rights movements, and many other ways. Many Catholics stopped praying in Latin, some Jews came to terms with the notion of women rabbis, and a few African American groups incorporated ideas and practices borrowed from non-Christian religions.

There are four themes that organize the history of religion in the United States: politics, cosmology, community, and practice. We begin with religion and politics, and in doing so we call attention at the outset to a specific kind of collective life, one that is conditioned by religious ideas but constructed just as much out of incentives arising from historical accidents and the social contingencies of everyday life. The chapters on politics in this book pay particular attention to the formal organization of authority in office and law, and describe the ways in which that government of local communities as well as the nation as a whole shapes and is shaped by religion. In the study of American religious history, the separation of church and state under the Constitution and the complex of pathways Americans have taken toward realizing that ideal are particularly important for appreciating why politics is central to American religious history. American notions of national religious destiny, and the campaigns that have been undertaken under the banner of that belief, are historical realities that make a focus on politics crucial to exploration of the nation’s religious past.

The chapters on cosmology describe the ways religious groups thought about the world, including, among other things, good and evil, the past and future, the human and the divine, and the visible and invisible worlds. Cosmology – strictly speaking, a network of explanatory ideas about the cosmos and one’s place in it – provides ideological grounding for religious thinking about the self and about collective identity. It frames reflection on what virtue is, how to live an ethical life, the kinds of social and political orders that are best suited to foster that life, what nature is, and what death is.

Religious community can be of many sorts. Communities can be old or new, small or large, defined by clearly marked and well-policed boundaries, or ambiguous and fluid. Communities are organized under the head of some authority or authorities, and appeal to religious tradition to enforce standards on their members and to defend the community against ideological challenges. Religious communities are never static. Most are constantly changing as social forces and events challenge them to adapt, as for example, with regard to gender roles, ethnic identification, and views of sexuality. Sometimes communities choose not to adapt, a decision that has led to violent confrontation, where they might prevail, or might be destroyed.

Religious practice includes all of the activities of devotion in which religious persons engage. Praying, dancing, healing, singing, working, and reading are obvious forms of practice, but religious practice can also include dress, thinking, dieting, viewing art, taking trips, organizing for a social cause, jogging, and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Because religious practices embody religious belief and carry out the implications of belief for behavior and the organization of relationships among people, study of these practices is essential for understanding religious life.

Religion, as mentioned above, is complex and fluid, and poorly captured by any abstract definition. In organizing this book with reference to four themes, we are proposing neither that we have completely encompassed religion nor do we believe that these four themes identify entirely distinct aspects of religion. All of these themes are interlocked. There is overlap among all of them. Attentive readers will recognize those overlaps, and is doing so will be positioned to appreciate how multifaceted religion is, and how, in American history, it has evidenced both concordances and contradictions. In other words, this book offers an open-ended story of religion in American history. It invites readers to think about the openings between the narratives given in each of these chapters. In veering away from a traditionally-conceived “grand narrative,” it offers readers opportunities to reorganize some of the pieces of the story, or recalibrate some of the emphases, through critical reflection on the ways that each of the chapters stands in relation to the others. Religion is a complex and dynamic phenomenon. So also should be our reading about it.

### **Note**

- 1 Thomas Pownall, *A New Map of North America, with the West India Islands* (London: Robert Sayer, 1786). See the David Rumsey map collection: <http://www.davidrumsey.com/maps2473.html>.

# 1

## Politics

Amanda Porterfield

In September of 1679 in the historically Dutch town of Albany, Mohawk headmen representing the Iroquois confederacy met with William Kendall from the colonial government of Virginia at the invitation of Sir Edmund Andros, the British Governor of New York who had served as a diplomat to the Carib Indians in the Leeward Islands. Andros wanted the Iroquois to step up their efforts to control Indian violence in Virginia. After accepting presents of wampum, cloth, rum, tobacco, and bread, the unnamed Mohawk diplomat acknowledged Kendall's arduous journey, promised the Iroquois would do their part to keep their Covenant Chain with the British "clear and clean," and exhorted the British to do the same, punctuating each point of his speech with a gift of wampum, a belt made of shells or glass beads strung together, some with symbols of agreement embedded as part of the design.<sup>1</sup> This meeting illustrates a common political situation in North America during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; representatives of different groups establishing alliances with each other in a turbulent sea of competing interests.

Religion mediated politics in seventeenth-century Albany and in many other situations in North America prior to 1700. Although not always acknowledged or made explicit, religion served as a medium of political expression in two overlapping senses of the term – religion provided both means of decision making and the interpretive environment in which decision making occurred. The means that negotiators employed in decision making – gifts of wampum and invocations of a Covenant Chain – were symbolic forms of communication derived from religious belief and practice. The social and intellectual environments in which decision making took place were also profoundly shaped by religious belief and practice. For the Iroquois, gifts of wampum were symbols of political agreement that derived from kinship practices associated with spiritual power. For the British, the Covenant Chain was the metaphorical name for their political alliance with the Iroquois that derived from legal concepts of contractual agreement and also from religious practices of submission to authority associated with God's sovereignty and with the covenant agreement that British Christians believed God offered believers. For both Iroquois and British, then, beliefs and behaviors associated with spiritual realities played an

important role in the environment of the Albany meeting and in the means the actors used in forging political agreement.

In North America before 1700, religious beliefs and practices shaped the ways people went about confirming relationships and dealing with enemies, and the expectations they brought to encounters with strangers. For both indigenes and colonists, religion figured importantly in the construction of group identity, in the formation of individual behavior, and in the determination of rank and social order. Religion provided norms of conduct, self-discipline, and social interaction that, while always subject to improvisation, served as guides for behavior and conceptualization. At the meeting in Albany in 1679, and in many other instances where people in North America came together for political purposes, religion mediated decision making and led to political outcomes that affected both individual lives and the balance of power among groups.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter considers two different regions in North America where relationships between Native Americans and Europeans that had been developing for decades came to a head in the 1670s. Focusing first on the eastern woodlands where Native groups adapted to increasing European, especially British, influence and then in the southwest where Native groups accepted, and also resisted, Spanish control, the chapter shows how religion functioned among both Indians and colonists as a means of arriving at and authorizing decisions about group behavior. It also shows how religion and politics in two regions of North America changed over the course of two centuries. In both the eastern woodlands and in the southwest, indigenes with religions based on kinship and colonists with religions based on submission to authority developed new forms of religious expression and formed new political alliances.

In the eastern woodlands at the end of Metacom's (King Philip's) War in 1676, representatives of the British Empire and the Iroquois Confederacy formalized a political alliance that enabled the British government to secure and extend its authority in North America. With British sanction, the Iroquois took responsibility for pacifying other Indian groups, and the meeting in Albany in 1679 was a reaffirmation and continuation of that arrangement. The alliance between the British Empire and Iroquois chiefs strengthened the latter, and was an important component of a larger British strategy for establishing political order and expanding commerce in her American colonies.<sup>3</sup> In essence, the British made use of the power of Iroquois kinship to establish British authority.

British victory in 1676 over the French and their allied Indian forces in northern and western New England enabled British settlers to secure their new homeland and expand commerce in the Connecticut River Valley. Regaining control of New York from the Dutch in 1674 also facilitated the expansion of British influence and enabled closer cultural alliances between New York and New England. In all the port towns along the eastern coast, rivers and British islands off North America, expanding commercial networks supported the growth of a politically powerful merchant class allied with Britain, and dominated by English religious beliefs and codes of conduct. In the southern colonies, especially Virginia, British authority in government, commerce, and social behavior increased as a result of the establishment of a class of wealthy planters who emulated upper-class British behavior and supported a parish system of Anglican ritual and moral governance.

Working against this extension of British influence, French explorers, soldiers, and missionaries developed ties with Native groups around the Great Lakes and rivers of

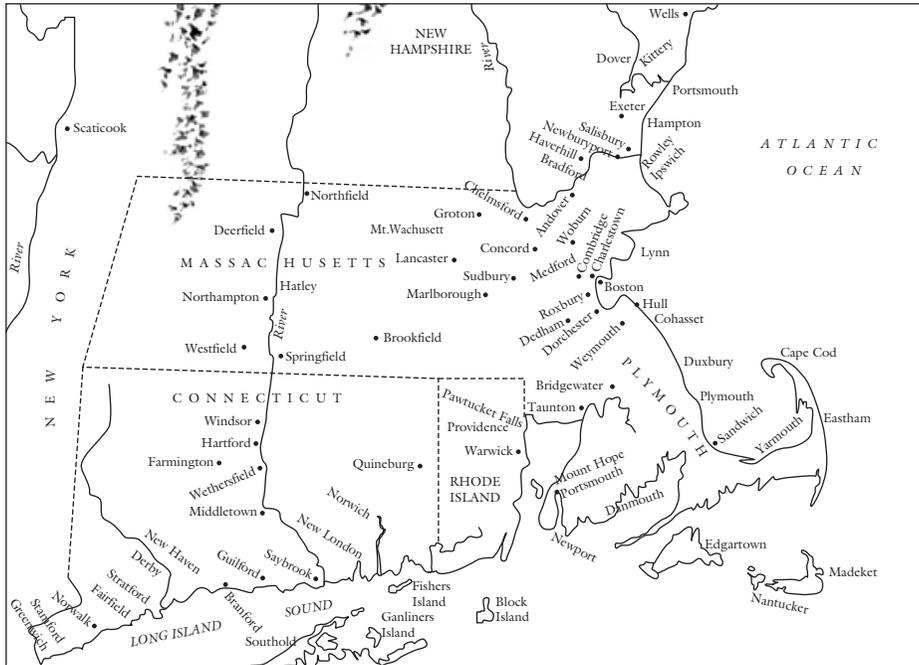
North America to expedite the fur trade. French *courriers de bois* lived among Natives and sired children who inhabited a middle ground between the cultures of their Native forbearers and that of French traders. Agents of France sought ports and passageways throughout the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico, and around the Great Lakes and rivers of the eastern woodlands. Meanwhile, Spanish agents harried both the French and the British in the Caribbean and along the Gulf Coast, and competed for ports and waterways. In their quest for riches and converts, agents of the Spanish crown built forts and missionary outposts in Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, New Mexico, and California, and presided over villages of subjugated Indians who worked for colonial overlords and paid tribute to them. In all these situations, Native American life changed dramatically. Trade with Europeans transformed material cultures and economic practices and also diminished natural resources. New forms of disease eroded village populations, and conflicts over land forced Native survivors to abandon villages and hunting territories. Competition for trade goods and natural resources exacerbated conflicts among Native peoples but also led to new alliances forged for defense against European settlers.<sup>4</sup>

Religious beliefs and practices figured importantly in these transformations. In politics, religion provided the symbolic means – such as wampum and the Covenant Chain in the eastern woodlands, and dances and crosses in the southwest – with which people forged alliances and established plans of action. In addition to providing such symbolic expressions of decisions taken, religious beliefs and practices shaped the patterns of thought and behavior out of which those decisions emerged. In both the eastern woodland and the southwestern regions of North America, indigenous religions based on kinship coexisted, vied with, and capitulated to the power of colonial religions based on submission to authority.

## Religion and Politics in the Eastern Woodlands

Prior to 1700, new centers of political influence emerged in North America while others receded or were recast. In the eastern woodlands at the end of the seventeenth century, the bargaining power of numerous Indian groups declined precipitously as British influence increased. Outbreaks of violence against Indians occurred often, sometimes in retaliation for Indian attacks against British settlers, sometimes out of sheer hatred or greed for Indian land. In 1676, in western Massachusetts and Connecticut (Figure 1.1), colonial militias squelched an uprising of Algonquian tribes and hunted down the Wampanoag leader Metacom (called King Philip by the English), jubilantly chopping off his head and one famously scarred hand, and then quartering his body. The body parts became trophies of victory against Indian enemies; Metacom's killer, an Indian allied with the colonial militia, received the head and hand as a prize, and subsequently "got many a penny" showing them off.<sup>5</sup> Almost simultaneously in Virginia, an upwelling hatred of Indians, and growing demand for Indian land, led to another outburst of violence. Poor entrepreneurs, servants, and slaves, losing out in the ruthless competition for tobacco land and slaves, followed the revolutionary Nathaniel Bacon in demanding rights and venting their rage on Susquehanna Indians and neighboring Algonquian tribes.<sup>6</sup>

While Algonquian Indians in New England and Virginia lost ground as a result of Metacom's War of 1675–76 and Bacon's Rebellion of 1676, the Iroquois confederacy



**Figure 1.1** New England in 1675, at the outbreak of King Philip's War.

gained in strength and international status. Headquartered in upper New York and along the St. Lawrence Seaway, Iroquois tribes replenished their populations through adoption of refugees and captives, and Iroquois headmen played increasingly important roles as diplomats allied in one way or another with British, French, Dutch, and various Native groups. British agents strengthened their ties with the Iroquois in 1676 as a result of negotiations between the British Governor Edmund Andros and the much-admired sachem of the Iroquois Confederacy, Daniel Garacontié, a Christian and chief of the Onondaga Bear clan. When Garacontié committed to the Covenant Chain, Andros looked to the Iroquois to keep Algonquian tribes pacified. Meanwhile, the Iroquois chiefs expanded their political and military influence throughout the eastern woodlands, and their engagement in British trade.

The Iroquois managed their negotiations with the British according to traditional rites of diplomacy. At the meeting in Albany in 1679, when the unnamed Mohawk diplomat presented the Virginia emissary William Kendall with several belts or strings of wampum, he engaged the Englishman in an Iroquois rite. Gifts of wampum represented compensation for ills suffered, or points of agreement forged. As material embodiments of a highly personal and relational understanding of events, they reaffirmed existing relationships or established new ones.

Much of the treaty protocol that agents of Britain (and later, the United States) adopted in formal negotiations with other Native groups derived from diplomatic practices originally employed by the Iroquois. Iroquois diplomatic ritual derived, in turn, from the condolence ceremony associated with the founding of the Iroquois League in the sixteenth century, and from periodic reenactments of that ceremony occasioned by the death of one of the League's 49 chiefs. According to accounts of

the condolence ceremony dating from the mid-nineteenth century, chiefs representing the Iroquois nations – Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca (and later, the Tuscarawas) – assembled at the death of a chief to condole his kin people. The ceremony attended to the mourner, pictured as an individual with eyes blinded, ears stopped, and throat choked with grief. In a ritual process with numerous steps punctuated by gifts of wampum, the clear-eyed condolers took pity on the stricken mourner, restored his sight, hearing, and speech, and then turned to welcome a new chief to replace the deceased in the confederacy's council of chiefs.

Iroquois informants in the nineteenth century linked the condolence ceremony to the founding of the confederacy by the god Dekanawidah and his spokesperson and disciple Hiawatha. By all accounts, blood feuding was rampant among the warring Iroquois tribes prior to the arrival of Dekanawidah who, with Hiawatha's help, convinced those tribes to stop fighting. This political transformation involved a reaffirmation of the importance of ancient matrilineal clans, named after Bear, Wolf, Turtle and other ancestral spirits, which extended across tribal boundaries. Chiefs representing each of these clans within each of the confederated tribes convened for ritual expressions of condolence that affirmed the power of these intertribal lineages to bind the confederacy together. Thus the political power of the confederacy derived from ritual practices that called for public catharsis of grief and reaffirmation of kinship ties. The political power of the confederacy also derived from individual leaders whose clan status, reputation, intelligence, oratorical skill, and personal presence manifested *orenda*, the Iroquois term for power, often interpreted as a spiritual force flowing through persons, including non-human beings conceptualized as persons, such as the sun.<sup>7</sup>

Although Europeans could also conceptualize political power as a spiritual force, their investment in kinship was not so all-encompassing as that of the Iroquois. For agents of the British crown, as for agents of other European states and American colonial governments, power had a kin-transcendent aspect that was foreign to the Iroquois and other Native groups until they learned about it from Europeans. In contrast to the Iroquois League's expansive network of kinship ties that brought different family groups together in a ritual that dramatized the grief survivors felt when the network was torn, the religiously authorized political power of the British crown was imperial, operating in the minds of its representatives as an authority on high with sovereign claims that transcended kinship. While both British and Iroquois admired spiritual power in individuals, the British understood that power to ultimately derive from the transcendent governing authority of God, and they performed rites of supplication to God and feared his wrath. The Iroquois were certainly not immune to fear, but fear of such transcendent authority was not engrained.

In their face-to-face societies, relationships among Iroquois people were essentially familial. Newcomers who exerted political influence received familial names and often become adopted members of established clans. Relationships with non-human beings also operated in the context of kinship, with human beings impersonating ancestral spirits through dances and other forms of religious dramatization that presupposed a symbiosis between the needs, demands, and identities of the spirits and those of their human descendants and living representatives.

If participation in the British system required deference to transcendent, sovereign authority that overshadowed kinship and limited people's freedom and autonomy, the advantages of identifying with such an elevated, centralized power were nevertheless

significant. The crowned head of the British Empire was not only a royal personage with an exalted bloodline and elite host of royal relations and attendants, but was also the defender of British law. That law, compiled over centuries, provided rules and procedures for maintaining a system of social order, regulating industry and commerce, commanding armed forces, and protecting people and property in the monarch's realm. British law also empowered certain individuals; the Magna Carta, first issued by King John in 1215, allowed some rights and liberties to British free men.

Both the British monarchy and British law drew support from their religious associations. Solemn ceremonies and official documents asserted that God stood behind both; thus in the Magna Carta, John was king of England "*by the grace of God.*" The rights guaranteed to English free men also descended from God. Belief in a transcendent God who was both king and lawgiver supported the British political system, framing people's deference to authority within a cosmology that encompassed heaven and earth, stretched back in time to the creation of the world, and anticipated Christ's triumphal return. British leaders strengthened their own political authority by promoting reverence for the God who presided over this cosmos. In many cases, fear of God figured in the self-conceptions of rulers as servants of God.

British religion and politics changed dramatically during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and evolved together to a considerable extent, with religion operating as a medium for new forms of political expression, and as a nursery for modern conceptions of government, individual liberty, political deference, and social control. While sharp differences and an array of opinion existed on these matters, the momentum of change with respect to increasing emphasis on the importance of individual conscience in both religion and government affected many British colonists.

Protestant commitments to a direct relationship between each believer and God mediated this increasing emphasis on individual conscience, as did Protestant practices of devotional reading, relentless sermonizing, and commitment to household government and piety. While Catholics also participated in these modernizing trends, Catholic belief in the Church's power to mediate grace limited the authority of individual conscience, as did devotional practices that involved supplication to saints in heaven. Protestant life did not necessarily lead to individual autonomy – conformity to biblical rule and submission to the authority of fathers restrained that – but freedom from the Church's control over judgment, forgiveness, and salvation made individual autonomy possible.

Early modern religious disputes over individual conscience occurred as part of the formation of nation states and often represented political differences about how society should be organized and individuals should be governed. A prince's alliance with, or independence from, the Church of Rome determined the official state religion and animosity between Catholic and Protestant churches provided fodder for numerous wars. However diverse and uncontrollable popular religiosity may have been in their realms, European monarchs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries linked their wills with the will of God and expected their people to fall in behind. But while the Catholic monarchs of Spain and France could rely on the Church's power over individual souls to help expand their realms and enforce their policies, British heads of state had a national church with weaker authority over people's eternal destinies. The diminished authority of the Church of England and the correspondingly larger opportunities for individual authority contributed to a proliferation of new religious groups

in Britain, and to pleas for religious toleration. In this turbulent situation, Britain's colonies in North America offered a haven (or dumping ground) for religious groups whose beliefs differed from those of the monarch. English Catholics in Maryland, Puritans in New England, and Quakers in Pennsylvania all had charters from the King that allowed provisions for self-government these groups could not have enjoyed in England.

In the seventeenth century, English radicals on both sides of the Atlantic pushed the linkage between individual conscience and transcendent authority in ways that made religion appear to operate through a force of its own in visions, claims to supernatural revelation, and radical practices that bore only a condescending relation to government, as in the case of mystics who sought union with Christ and disregarded perceptions that their religious beliefs were a threat to the state. The New England Puritan Anne Hutchinson was one such mystic. She believed that she was sealed to Christ by the Holy Spirit, and that God spoke to her by "an immediate voice" much as he had spoken to the Old Testament prophet Abraham. Confident that God authorized her to speak her conscience even in defiance of political and ecclesiastical power, she was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1638 as a threat to civil order.<sup>8</sup>

Against the challenge of Anne Hutchinson, Puritan leaders in New England worked hard to align church and state, and to construct the realms of religion and politics in concert with each other. These reformers conceptualized God's will in terms of government, beginning with self-government, and moving out from there to family government, church government, and state government. They sought systematic deference to divine authority in all aspects of life. Thus Anne Hutchinson's chief political opponent, Massachusetts Governor John Winthrop, attempted to establish a Christian commonwealth in New England in which he and others would "walk humbly with our God" and "be knit together in this work as one man." That enterprise required people to accept stations in life assigned to them by God, defer to superiors without resentment, and treat inferiors with civil condescension. Winthrop argued that Hutchinson had violated this hierarchical arrangement and, in particular, the fifth commandment – "thou shalt honor thy father" – and ought to be banished. She was. She had presumed to criticize men in official positions of authority instead of submitting to them as should an obedient daughter, or an obedient wife.<sup>9</sup>

Winthrop's view of the relationship between religion and politics reflected a belief long held by Christian theologians that people owed obedience to their earthly rulers because the power of rulers derived from God. The French Protestant reformer John Calvin put this belief most succinctly: resisting early rulers was to "revile God himself."<sup>10</sup> For Winthrop as for Calvin, political authority existed within a larger, religious system of government seated in God, the King of kings and ultimate authority over all. At the same time, however, as an Englishman proud of his individual rights, Winthrop believed that good government was based on the assent of the governed, or as he stated in 1637, "No common weale can be founded but by free consent."<sup>11</sup>

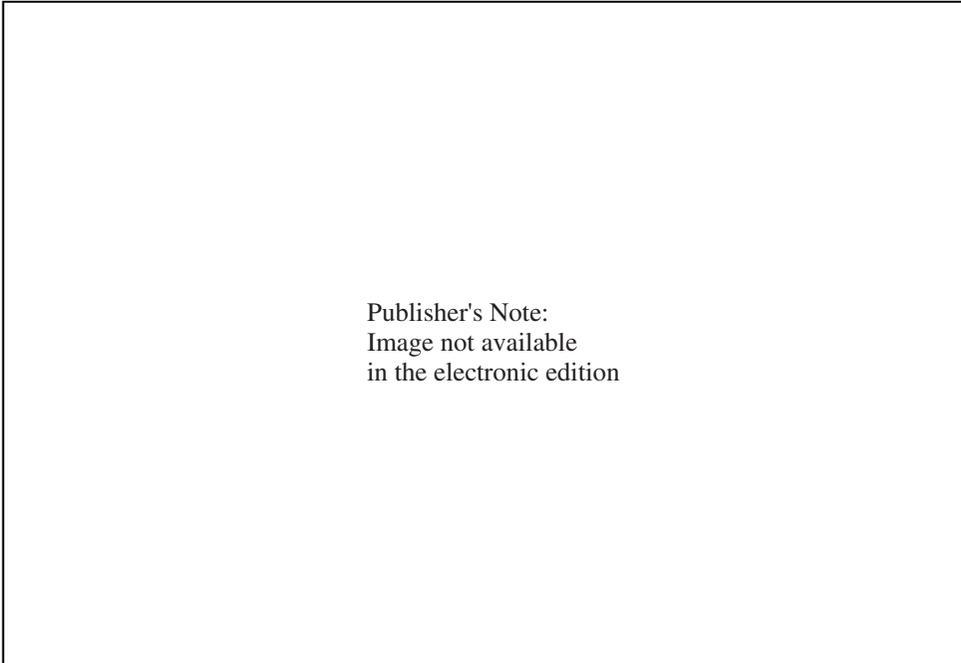
Winthrop's political understanding of the compatibility between free consent and the necessity of obedience paralleled his religious understanding of salvation in Christ. Similar to the freedom in Christ attained through submission to his authority, liberty in civil life, Winthrop explained in 1645, "is maintained and exercised in a way of subjection to authority." In politics as in religion, he believed, there were two kinds

of liberty, one inevitably running to anarchy and immorality, the other instituted by God for moral law and civil order. The latter, morally positive liberty involved free assent “to that only which is good, just, and honest.” The free election of magistrates preserved the liberties of the voters without undermining obedience to magistrates once they were elected.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, action undertaken in the spirit of Christ allowed for the exercise of human liberty in conformity with divine rule.

The dissenting minister Roger Williams challenged Winthrop’s view that New England Puritans should establish theocratic governments modeled on ancient Israel. Williams argued that Christ had inaugurated a new era in God’s relationship with mankind; God no longer entered covenants with nations, as he had in Old Testament times. With Christ’s incarnation in individual human form and his atonement for the sins of God’s elect everywhere, God’s people were no longer a nation, but dispersed through all nations, and often hidden from the world. Consequently, Williams believed, no government had authority to exercise religious oversight. He accused the government of Massachusetts of acting against Christ in enforcing church attendance, demanding religious oaths, and requiring other forms of religious obligation. Banished from Massachusetts in 1636 as a threat to civil order, Williams became the founding president of Rhode Island, where he established religious freedom and a secular state.

Although some New England leaders thought Roger Williams was crazy – William Hubbard called him “divinely mad” in 1680<sup>13</sup> – their efforts to uphold the religious authority of the state ultimately failed. Increasingly strong claims for the authority of individual conscience eroded both the power of the British monarchy and the interdependence of church and state that theocrats like John Winthrop wanted to preserve. When the British monarchy was restored to power in 1660, Charles II recognized Parliament as a governing authority apart from his own authority as King of England and head of the Church of England. Parliament attained co-equal status with the monarchy in 1688 and passed the Act of Toleration the following year, protecting religious dissidents from persecution and limiting the government’s ability to use religion to extend its authority. The Act of Toleration dismayed religious leaders in New England who felt their efforts to establish a model of Christian government based on mutual consent had been betrayed, and echoes of their commitment to a national covenant with God can still be heard today. But Protestant investment in individual conscience had worked to undermine weakened linkages between church and state they wanted to uphold.

In Britain’s middle Atlantic colonies where colonial populations were more ethnically and religiously diverse, religious leaders welcomed the Act of Toleration. In New York and New Jersey, Reformed churches supported by Dutch settlers and their descendants grew alongside Anglican, Congregational, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Quaker, Mennonite, Catholic, and Jewish institutions. Pennsylvania’s Quaker founder, William Penn, contributed to the debates in England leading to passage of the Act of Toleration and established his colony as a haven (and center of commerce) for people from a variety of different religious and ethnic backgrounds (Figure 1.2). With a land grant from Charles II in payment of debts the Stuart monarchy owed his father, Penn based the government of his colony on Quaker principles of pacifism and religious freedom. With its diverse population, enthusiasm for business, and broad streets laid out in orderly squares, Pennsylvania’s City of Brotherly Love (Philadelphia) soon became colonial America’s most cosmopolitan city.



**Figure 1.2** *William Penn's treaty with the Indians when he founded the province of Pennsylvania in North America, 1681.* Painting by Benjamin West.

In the southern colonies of Virginia, Carolina, and Georgia, the colonial population was almost as ethnically homogeneous as that of New England prior to 1700, but religious leaders were much weaker, and much less successful in establishing control over society than in New England. In an effort to impose order in the 1610s, Virginia's governor Thomas Dale established a draconian code of "Articles, Lawes, and Orders – Divine, Politique, and Martiall" that included death sentences for some forms of theft. The colonial population of Virginia was aggressive and unruly, and sharply divided between land owners and poor laborers. Rituals conducted by a growing number of Anglican churches contributed to the social status of colonial elites and to the acceptance of political policies based on ownership of land and slaves.

Slavery was not always a permanent condition in the early colonial period but in many cases a form of servitude from which one could be freed, at least in principle. British law governed the political existence of slaves and other servants in British North America. In contrast to their treatment of Native Americans, though, the British never approached Africans in America as members of other nations whose allegiance or submission could be negotiated through diplomacy. In addition to this political dependence on British law, Africans in America were removed from kin-based tribal groups that, in Africa, had figured importantly in the formation of individual behavior and decision making, in the determination of rank and social order, and in religious constructions of group identity.

Uprooted from tribal societies where ancestral religious practices mediated political decision making, Africans on the American side of the Atlantic prior to 1700 improvised new forms of religious belief and practice that combined elements of different traditions centered on individual specialists whose skills of healing and augury gave

them political influence as well as spiritual authority. A small number of Africans converted to English Christianity prior to 1700. The African American embrace of Christianity as a religion that promised freedom lay in the future.<sup>14</sup>

Small populations of free blacks existed in most of the British colonies before 1700, and colonists acquired bonded servants from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds, including African tribes raided by slave traders. While many Africans were forced into hard labor harvesting sugar cane in the Barbados or tobacco in Virginia, others became domestic servants and skilled laborers whose freedom, in a few cases, was purchased or bestowed. Still others escaped, in some cases joining or living near Indian tribes, in other cases migrating to urban centers. The vast majority of Africans in the British colonies before 1700 suffered horribly under British colonialism. A tiny minority eked out a living in colonial society with legal rights to individual freedom.

Although Native Americans had greater political independence, and often retained the religious beliefs and practices of tribal communities, British colonialism had disastrous effects, especially on Algonquian groups at odds with the Iroquois in the eastern woodlands. British efforts to develop resources in North America fostered dependencies that led to the decline or extinction of many Indian tribes, despite political and religious efforts of Native resistance. Still, Britain did recognize Indian rights, and some Native Americans, especially the Iroquois, benefited at least temporarily from trade with British colonists and alliances with British government. The influence of Iroquois diplomatic ritual on treaty making in North America is evidence not only of Iroquois power but also of British investment in religious and political principles of mutual consent. In this respect, British engagement with Native Americans was not as authoritarian as Spanish dealings with Indians in Florida and New Mexico. In contrast to the British, Spanish dealings with Native Americans prior to 1700 reflected a totalistic approach to the imposition of Christian authority.

## Religion and Politics in the Southwest

Spanish exploration in the Americas began at the end of seven centuries of Christian effort to reclaim Spain from Islamic rulers, and Spanish discoveries in the New World built on the momentum of crusades against Islam. In January, 1492, six months before setting sail for America, Christopher Columbus watched the final act of the Christian *reconquista* of Spain in Granada, the last Islamic stronghold in Spain, as Ferdinand and Isabella accepted the surrender of Muhammad XII, Abu Abd Allah Bobadilla. Spanish perceptions of Islam carried over into perceptions of Native cultures in the Americas. The renowned *conquistador* of Mexico, Hernán Cortés, referred to Meso-American temples as mosques. His heritage as the son and grandson of minor noblemen who fought in the *reconquista* of Spain laid the groundwork for his fusion of military and religious fervor in the conquest of Mexico, which in turn established the basic strategy behind the northern *entradas*, the Spanish expeditions from Mexico City into North America.<sup>15</sup>

Cortés approached Mexico with total conquest in mind. In 1519, he and his men rode across country to the lake-encircled city of Tenochtitlán, the ritual center of the Aztec Empire, smashing “idols,” planting crosses, and fighting along the way. Once across the causeway and into the city, Cortés came face to face with the Nahuatl ruler

Montezuma II. The Spaniard dismounted and attempted to embrace the chief, but Montezuma's men held Cortés off. Undeterred, the *conquistador* transferred a string of pearls and glass from his neck to Montezuma's. The chief gave two necklaces strung with gold shrimp in return and placed a royal house at Spanish disposal. After more displays of respect from Montezuma over the course of several days, which the Spanish interpreted as capitulation, Cortés imprisoned the Nahuatl chief and claimed dominion over all the lands and people of Mexico in the name of the Spanish king and Holy Roman Emperor, Carlos V. Montezuma's imprisonment sparked an uprising against the invaders, who managed to escape back across the causeway at night. Two years and thousands of dead indigenes later, Cortés and his men marched back to Tenochtitlán as victors. In Madrid, Carlos V welcomed the gold and silver that flowed into his coffers from Mexico and heard complaints that Cortés had been excessively brutal in carrying out the conquest.<sup>16</sup>

From their stronghold in Mexico City, Spanish soldiers and entrepreneurs embarked on *entradas* in search of more wealth. Lured by rumors of gold, silver, and emeralds, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado led an expedition north from Mexico City into the Rio Grande Valley in 1540. In the mountains and deserts along the way, Coronado lost many of the hundreds of Spanish soldiers and Mexican Indians, and many of the thousands of horses, cows, and sheep he started out with. Out of supplies, the company survived two difficult winters by commandeering food, blankets, shelter, and firewood from the Tiwa pueblos. In the warmer months, Coronado traveled from one pueblo to another in the Rio Grande Valley, hunting for stores of precious metals without success. His diminished and impoverished company returned to Mexico City in 1542.

As memories of the difficulties of that trip faded, Spanish dreams of gold in North America revived. In 1598, Don Juan de Oñate crossed the Rio Grande with about 140 men and claimed New Mexico for King Phillip II. Marching from one pueblo to another, Oñate and his men sometimes found all the people gone. In other pueblos, people acquiesced to the presence of the Spaniards, who demanded supplies and loyalty oaths, and performed military displays, including reenactments of Spanish victories over the Moors.<sup>17</sup>

Christianity played a central role in the establishment of Spanish rule in the Americas, and it operated in a more straightforwardly repressive way than in British America, where colonists were less dependent on Native labor, and less committed to Native conversions. The Spaniards linked their right to authority over Native Americans to papal bulls issued in 1493 and 1494 by the Spanish Pope Alexander VI. These edicts granted dominion to Ferdinand and Isabella and their successors over undiscovered lands on the western route to Asia, with the proviso that Spanish monarchs accept responsibility for the conversion of Native inhabitants. In some cases, the *conquistadors* announced their authority to these inhabitants in formal declarations. In addition to planting crosses to assert their Christian dominion over geographical space, Cortés and other Spanish explorers read aloud the *Requirimiento*, a legal document written in 1512 summarizing the history of the world beginning with Adam and Eve and proclaiming papal and Spanish right to jurisdiction over Indian souls and land.<sup>18</sup>

By contrast, British colonists operated free of such official edicts. In addition to being an officially Protestant nation that had severed ties with the Roman Catholic Church in 1534, Britain also lagged in time behind Spain in establishing colonies in

North America. As relative latecomers to American colonization, the British had the benefit of lessons taken from the inefficiencies and unsavory brutalities of Spanish *conquistadors*. But while the British government was moving in the direction of religious toleration and also in the direction of treating with Native groups as sovereign entities, British settlers in North America could be as brutal as any Spaniard in their encounters with Indians. Colonial British rule was more *laissez-faire*, with many British settlers becoming outright Indian haters, eager to simply run the savages off and take their land. Spaniards, on the other hand, made more concerted efforts to pacify, convert, and manage Indians under authoritarian rule.<sup>19</sup>

Few if any Spaniards questioned the right of Spain to subjugate Native Americans, but vigorous debates did take place in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain about how harshly Natives should be treated, and whether or not they should be enslaved. These debates reflected conflicting ideas about the natural innocence or depraved character of Native Americans, and about whether Christianity allowed for the preservation of some aspects of Native tradition or required its complete uprooting. In practice, Spaniards in New Mexico treated settled communities of farmers in pueblo towns as vassals. They also condoned the enslavement of nomadic Indians who harassed Christian pueblos and *encomiendas*, the labor camps that colonial governors awarded to Spanish entrepreneurs.

Spanish laws governing the treatment of natives dwelt increasingly on the necessity of religious conversion, which had the effect, in New Mexico, of enhancing the political and religious power of missionary priests. After the conquest of Mexico, and the equally brutal conquest of Peru, Carlos V enacted New Laws to improve the treatment of Indians. In 1573, Phillip II extended these laws by condemning extreme violence against indigenes and making the establishment of missions for their conversion a requirement of further conquests in the King's name. Franciscan friars gained the most from these policies. Authorized by the Pope to celebrate the sacraments that saved people's souls from hell, dozens of these men settled in the pueblos of the Rio Grande Valley, where they took up the work of baptizing, catechizing, and supervising Indian behavior. They assumed control of much of the Indian labor in these pueblos and also supervised Natives in many of the *encomiendas*. In addition to managing supplies of labor and tribute to the provincial government, they benefited personally from the labor of the Indians who fed, clothed, housed, and served them.<sup>20</sup>

The concentration of religious and political power in the hands of Franciscan friars contributed to tensions within the Spanish population as well as to Indian resistance. The friars faced challenges to their authority from diocesan priests and bishops whose authority was directly tied to the colonial government, as Franciscan authority was not. Citing the friars' vows of poverty and commitment to missionary work, bishops sought to move them off the *encomiendas* once the initial work of conversion was done.<sup>21</sup>

A larger struggle for power between missionary friars and the provincial government of New Mexico took place that undermined the provincial government and contributed to the conflicts that engulfed the region in the seventeenth century. The governors of New Mexico depended on people's respect for their official appointments as upholders of the King's law and distributors of *encomiendas*. Given the six months travel time from the provincial capital of Santa Fe to Mexico City, not to mention the distance to Madrid, this respect proved difficult to maintain. The friars used their ability to excommunicate and withhold communion with increasing frequency.

Governors and their agents retaliated, criticizing the friars' morality and questioning their power over people's lives. This conflict between secular and religious authority came to a head in 1660, when Governor López de Mendizábal investigated numerous charges of sexual abuse by friars and arrested Fray Luis Martínez for "having committed the execrable crime of forcing a woman, cutting her throat, and burying her in an office, or cell, in the *convento* of Los Taos."<sup>22</sup>

In a further move to undercut Franciscan influence, Governor Mendizábal agreed to a request from the Indians of the Tesuque pueblo for permission to resume their traditional dances. The ban on traditional dancing had been essential to the Franciscan campaign against pagan worship and the ban's removal at Tesuque sparked a revival of religious dancing in other pueblos as well. Although the Governor represented the dances at Tesuque as harmless athletic events, they were really emboldened displays of traditional values and communal solidarity. The revitalization of dancing among the Tewa and other pueblos of the Rio Grande Valley generated momentum for the revolution against Spanish rule that erupted in 1680.<sup>23</sup>

Similar to the Iroquois condolence ceremony, which articulated kinship lineages drawing people from several tribes together in political enterprise, ritual dancing in the Tewa pueblos drew people of different subgroups within communities together in cooperative activity. Performed at specific times in seasonal rotation, Tewa dances inaugurated specific forms of labor such as planting, harvesting, and hunting. Dancers impersonated the ancestral spirits believed to inhabit the Tewa world and its elemental forces.<sup>24</sup> In the revitalization of religious dancing that preceded the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the deities came out in the open, reaffirming communal solidarity and articulating elaborate subgroup linkages and pathways of community leadership.

The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 was not the first pueblo uprising against Spaniards. In 1598, the people of Acoma pueblo defeated Juan de Zaldívar and his company of 31 men, who had run out of food on the way to join Zaldívar's uncle, Juan de Oñate, in his quest for a South Sea. With their pueblo situated on top of a stone mesa 360 feet high, the Acoma villagers enjoyed a strategic advantage. After being lured to the summit and into the village, thirteen Spaniards died in an attack, including Zaldívar; the others jumped off the mesa top, with a few landing on sand dunes living to tell the tale. Oñate took his revenge the next year, hauling two cannons by ropes up the mesa to the village, where he and his men killed an estimated 800 Indians and took another 500 as prisoners. Although no Spaniard died in that battle, Oñate ordered a foot cut off of each male prisoner over the age of 25 and distributed the amputees among his soldiers for 20 years of servitude each.<sup>25</sup>

Several more pueblos rebelled against Spanish authority between Oñate's revenge at Acoma in 1599 and the widespread pueblo revolt of 1680. Given the harsh treatment the Spanish routinely meted out and the stresses that pueblo people faced even without those overlords, some of the uprisings may have been attempts to avoid starvation as much as efforts to reclaim freedom. Even before the first Spanish soldiers arrived, maintaining agricultural villages in the arid land of the North American southwest required careful management of resources and successful strategies of community organization. Between efforts to husband precious agricultural stores through periods of drought and efforts to withstand raids from nomadic Apache, Navaho, and Comanche peoples, pueblo survival depended on effective political management grounded in religious ritual.

Germans emanating from Europeans passed along the trade routes that crisscrossed North America and into Meso-America, weakening pueblo populations even before the Spanish entered North America. But hard-won practices of social organization enabled the existence of more than 100 pueblos in the American southwest at the time of the expedition led by Cortés in 1519.<sup>26</sup> Four centuries earlier, a much grander cultural system had existed in the San Juan Valley to the north, where ancestors of both the western Hopi and eastern Rio Grande Valley pueblos lived. Called Anasazi by the Navajo, these ancestors participated in a vast cultural system, at the heart of which stood the spectacular trade, distribution, and ritual center of Chaco Canyon. Chaco culture collapsed in the twelfth century as a result of drought, deforestation, and loss of faith in the Chaco elites, and this collapse sent refugees to upland areas and cliff dwellings such as Mesa Verde. For reasons still obscure, the Anasazi abandoned Mesa Verde and other upland towns in the fourteenth century, immigrating (or fleeing) to the Rio Grande Valley and to Hopi and other pueblos further west.

The abandonment of Mesa Verde coincided with the arrival of a religious cult from Meso-America that involved new dances for bringing rain and enhancing fertility, and some Anasazi may have left the cliff dwellings for the pueblos further south to participate in the new religion. The deities represented in these dances developed differently in different pueblos. The Hopi called them kachinas. The Tewa “counterpart” to the Hopi kachinas, according to anthropologist Alfonso Ortiz, were the “Dry Food Who Never Did Become,” a constellation of deities that included “all of the deities recognized by the Tewa, who were present before the emergence” of Tewa ancestors from a previous, underground world.<sup>27</sup>

The kachina-type religion adopted in many pueblos in the Rio Grande Valley was an effective way of absorbing refugees after the collapse of Anasazi society and the abandonment of cliff dwellings. Kachina rites offered new ways of combining disparate kinship groups within a single village through the means of religious societies dedicated to particular deities. Each of those religious societies had responsibility for staging particular events in the ritual calendar, and for leading activities associated with the production of food at particular times of the year.<sup>28</sup> In ways analogous to the Iroquois confederacy’s achievement of political cooperation among warring tribes through condolence rituals centering on kinship, pueblo people created political cooperation within and among villages through the dances and divisions of labor associated with particular dances and deities. For pueblo peoples as for the Iroquois, religious practice mediated political organization and decision making.

Lifting the ban against open dancing galvanized community spirit in the pueblos. The deities forced out of public spaces by the Spanish friars returned, reasserting their power in the life of the people.<sup>29</sup> But as the deities returned, they were also transformed, influenced by Catholic images of the spirit world promoted by Franciscans and also by the new political context in which pueblo people found themselves. With people from different pueblos confronting a common invader more technologically advanced than anything their ancestors had ever seen, the meaning of the dances must have changed. Along with the reanimation of community strength through rituals associated with rain and fertility, the open expression of this strength offered a medium for new political expression, and a social context in which political deliberations across pueblos could take place.

In August, 1680, news of a coordinated pueblo plan to attack all the Spaniards in the region reached Governor Don Antonio de Otermín. When Otermín captured

two youths sent by Tewa elders to the elders at other pueblos with knotted strips of deerskin representing the number of days before the rebellion should begin, he demanded of them, “what reason or motive they had for rebelling and losing respect for God and obedience to his majesty.”<sup>30</sup> Otermín’s terminology showed no understanding of the religious and political culture of pueblo peoples. Instead, it reflected his understanding of a relationship between religion and politics based not on kinship but obedience to transcendent authority.

Despite the leak in news about the revolt that gave Otermín some advance warning, the organized pan-pueblo uprising against Spanish overlords in the Rio Grande Valley succeeded, forcing the Spanish to abandon the region and return to Mexico. When the Spanish surrendered, the pueblo leaders simply allowed them to depart, and the southwest remained free of Spanish rule for a decade. When Spanish soldiers, missionaries, and entrepreneurs returned in 1690, the people of the pueblos were starved, exhausted, and willing to accommodate the return of Spanish authority. After 1690, Catholicism became increasingly entrenched in the southwest and also extended into California, where Catholic commitment to the linkage between political and religious control coalesced in an extensive system of missions in which priests forced Natives to surrender their autonomy and many of their ways of life.

In the southwest, the Tewa and other pueblos expanded the organization of their communities to protect the integrity of the old kachina-type societies while at the same time accommodating their communities to the structures of Spanish authority. Called *Towa é* by the Tewa, a new class of people arose within pueblo communities as buffer groups protecting traditional religious life and controlling assimilation to Spanish culture. Distinct both from pueblo people without any status in the kachina-type societies and from the Made People who led those societies, the *Towa é* developed as a managerial group responsible for stabilizing the political existence of the Tewa and for managing the Tewa people’s double life as participants in Spanish Catholicism and civic organization on one hand and preservers of indigenous religious rites and kinship ties on the other.<sup>31</sup> Because of this persistence of pueblo religious life over centuries, pueblo communities to this day are the oldest continually inhabited towns in North America.

Like the Iroquois of the eastern woodlands, pueblo groups in the southwest conducted religious life through symbols and rites of kinship that involved representation of non-human forces and allowed for the absorption of new peoples and customs. For Europeans who moved into North America and encountered native peoples in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, religion involved a different element of submission to transcendent authority that brought kinship and family life under the aegis of a heavenly kingdom. In both cases, religion mediated politics, providing symbols and rites for use in collective decision making as well as imaginative frameworks for experiencing the world.

## Notes

1 Richter (2001), pp. 130–133, quotation from p. 132.

2 This chapter takes a very basic and inclusive definition of politics borrowed from ethnohistorian Lynne Sebastian:

By *political* I mean things having to do with the structure of decision making. By *socio-political* I mean ... the social and economic relationships that arise as a consequence of a particular political structure. In this latter category I would include status differentiation, relations of production, etc., as well as the specific relationships of power and obligation that constitute the political realm. (Sebastian, 1992, p. 8)

- 3 Saunders Webb (1995).
- 4 White (1991); Daniels and Kennedy (2002); Bannon (1974; orig. 1970).
- 5 Thomas Church, *Entertaining Passages Related to Philip's War* (1716) quoted in Richter, *Facing East*, p. 92.
- 6 Morgan (2005; orig. 1975), pp. 250–270.
- 7 Wallace (1958), pp. 118–130; Wallace (1972; orig. 1969), pp. 94–98; Morgan (1901; orig. 1851); Hale (1895), pp. 45–65; Shimony (1961).  
 Iroquois power (*orenda*) has been described as a spiritual force. Like other Native peoples, the Iroquois understood the exercise of power as flow and exchange of spiritual force among persons, both human and non-human. Forceful human beings could capture and enthrall others; they could also protect or favor others and expect to receive fealty or favors in return. Whether compassionate or ruthless, power was interpersonal. Even when ruthless, as in the case of the Huron chief who took a Seneca warrior captive in 1637 to assuage his grief over the recent killing of a nephew, power flowed through personal interchange. Bantering with his captors after being stoned, cut, and burned, the Seneca showed stoicism, courage, and defiance. His slow death by fire, as his captors finally forced him to break into screams, was a form of spiritual combat, and the distribution and feasting upon his body parts constituted the sharing and absorption of his spiritual power (“Relation of Father LeJeune, 1637,” recounted in Wallace, *Death and Rebirth*, pp. 104–107).
- 8 Hall (1990; orig. 1968), quotation from p. 337.
- 9 Winthrop's reading of the Fifth Commandment also encompassed respect for the King's authority. Prior to the outbreak of civil war in England, the beheading of Charles I in 1649, and the establishment of a Puritan government under Oliver Cromwell, most Puritans accepted the King's authority as a matter of fact, and used deferential language to invoke it. Winthrop's respect for “the King's Majesty” coincided with his belief in God as the transcendent authority over all creation who invested earthly rulers with power to uphold law and justice. This respect for the King's Majesty is evident in Winthrop's description of a petition sent to the King and his council in 1633 by three disgruntled men who had experienced Puritan government in New England first hand. The petition claimed that the Puritan leaders in Massachusetts had rebelled against the King by establishing an independent government, and by setting up independent churches with preachers hostile to the Church of England and its bishops. All three signers of the petition had been punished in Massachusetts – Sir Christopher Gardiner for bigamy, Thomas Morton for bestiality, and Philip Ratcliffe for “most foul, scandalous invectives” against Puritan institutions. When the contents of the petition became known, Puritans in London rushed to the defense of the Massachusetts government, challenging the accusers and their “misdemeanors.” Writing in his journal after the furor had died down, Winthrop acknowledged the King's authority and God's employment of it: “it pleased the Lord our gracious God and protector so to work with the lords and after with the King's Majesty that he said he would have them severely punished who did abuse his governor and the plantation” (Dunn and Yeandle, 1996, pp. 38 and 54).
- 10 John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, section 20.7, published as *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill (1960), quotation from vol. 2, p. 1492.
- 11 John Winthrop, “A Defence of an Order of Court Made in the Year 1637,” in Miller and Johnson, Vol. I, rev. edn (1963; orig. 1938), quotation from p. 200.

- 12 *Journal of John Winthrop*, quotations from pp. 282–283. Winthrop explained his view of the relationship between “the authority of the magistrates and the liberty of the people” in 1645, after being tried for impeachment in a dispute over the extent of his authority, as Lt. Governor of Massachusetts, to make decisions about local government in the town of Higham.
- 13 Quoted in Miller (1970), p. 31.
- 14 Raboteau (1978), pp. 3–92; Frey and Wood (1998).
- 15 Elliott (2006), pp. 19–20; TePaske (2002), pp. 29–41.
- 16 Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, pp. 3–5.
- 17 Knaut (1995), pp. 20–35.
- 18 Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, p. 11.
- 19 Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, p. 24; Drinnon (1980); Slotkin (1973).
- 20 Knaut, *The Pueblo Revolt*, p. 24.
- 21 Stafford Poole, “Iberian Catholicism Comes to the Americas,” in Lippy et al. (1992), pp. 3–50.
- 22 Knaut, *The Pueblo Revolt*, p. 108.
- 23 *Ibid.*, pp. 88–117.
- 24 Ortiz (1969), pp. 79–119.
- 25 Knaut, *The Pueblo Revolt*, pp. 36–46.
- 26 For a population estimate, see John (1975), p. 87.
- 27 Ortiz, *Tewa World*, quotations from p. 18.
- 28 Stuart (2000); Hegmon (2000); Sebastian, *The Chaco Anasazi*.
- 29 Gutiérrez (1991).
- 30 Knaut, *The Pueblo Revolt*, quotation from p. 4.
- 31 Ortiz, *Tewa World*, pp. 61ff.

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