

# Introduction

WHEN CHARLES CHAUNCY (1705–1787) wrote to his friend and fellow-minister Ezra Stiles on May 23, 1768, his main purpose was to enclose a brief and largely encomiastic memoir of his great-grandfather. This renowned English Puritan, also Charles Chauncy, had fled persecution to settle in New England in 1638, and had gone on to achieve prominence as the second President of Harvard College from 1654 until his death. Keenly aware of his status as the eldest son of the eldest son of the eldest son of his namesake, the minister of Boston's prestigious First Church informed Stiles that some forty years previously he had taken "considerable pains" to exercise a right of primogeniture and to locate the papers of his illustrious ancestor. Chauncy's efforts had been frustrated when he discovered from one of the president's grand-nephews that his great-grandfather's literary remains had met a tragic end. Because none of his sons had reached the age of maturity, the senior Chauncy's widow had reportedly remained in possession of his papers and she had subsequently married a pie-maker. "Behold now the fate of all the good President's writings of every kind!" his great-grandson told Stiles. "They were put to the bottom of the pies, and in this way brought to utter destruction."<sup>1</sup>

But the news of that loss did not lead Chauncy to formulate plans for the preservation of his own personal archives. On the contrary:

1. Chauncy, "Life of the Rev. President Chauncy," 179. Stiles, who was eventually to become President of Yale, was then pastor of the Second Congregationalist Church in Newport, Rhode Island. For a detailed biography, see Morgan, *Gentle Puritan*. Except for occasional stylistic modernizations, including the capitalization of book titles, which has been standardized, primary sources are cited almost entirely unedited. Because of the sheer quantity of Chauncy's and Mayhew's writings over a fifty-four-year period, their publication dates are often cited. Biographical references are given only for a limited number of prominent figures. Readers are otherwise referred to Weis, *Colonial Clergy*; SHG; ANB Online; ODNB Online.

I was greatly moved to hear this account of them [his great-grandfather's papers]; and it has rivetted in my mind a determination to order all my papers, upon my decease, to be burnt, excepting such as I might mention by name for deliverance from the catastrophe; though I have not as yet excepted any, nor do I know I shall.

Judging from what remains of Chauncy's prodigious output, he was apparently true to this rather mysterious commitment. Except for a limited number of scattered papers, scholars have been left to grapple with more than fifty published works and what they have made of this collection has varied widely. Although his publications were much fewer and his unpublished papers more extensive, the same could be said of Chauncy's colleague at Boston's West Church, Jonathan Mayhew (1720–1766). J. Patrick Mullins (2005) has bemoaned Mayhew's "unwarranted obscurity" and academic "neglect . . . in general." Yet Chauncy and Mayhew have consistently, if sporadically, attracted scholarly attention and John Corrigan (1987) has helpfully outlined three major "schools of interpretation" of their life and work.<sup>2</sup>

The first interpretative paradigm has largely concentrated on one or both of the pastors' political writings, arguing that "certain sermons" were "major contributions toward the formation of the rhetoric of the American Revolution." The second, first advanced by Alan Heimert (1966), has mainly seen Chauncy and Mayhew as social reactionaries, who were ultimately "more interested in preserving the status quo than in fomenting rebellion." The third has primarily focused on their theological ideas, generally viewing the eighteenth-century ministers as "leaders in the move toward 'rational religion' in America." Corrigan's three "schools" can also usefully be supplemented, and to some extent qualified, by a fourth, which is really a combination of the first and third. Thus many scholars have stressed both Chauncy's and Mayhew's political activism and religious heretodoxy,

2. Chauncy, "Life of the Rev. President Chauncy," 179; Mullins, "Father of Liberty," 3, 4; Corrigan, *Hidden Balance*, x, 126; Akers, *Called unto Liberty*; Griffin, *Old Brick*; Lippy, *Seasonable Revolutionary*. Corrigan cited, in chronological order, among contributors to his first "school of interpretation": Thornton, *Pulpit of the American Revolution*; Moore, *Patriot Preachers*; Van Tyne, "Influence of the Clergy"; Baldwin, *New England Clergy*; Savelle, *Seeds of Liberty*; Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*; "Religion and Revolution." In addition to Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, Corrigan cited Miller, "Religion, Finance, and Democracy"; Wright, *Unitarianism in America* and Jones, *Shattered Synthesis* as representative of his second "school of interpretation" of Chauncy and Mayhew. Among representatives of the third, he listed: Bradford, *Memoir*; Allen and Eddy, *History of the Unitarians*; Cooke, *Unitarianism In America*; Haroutunian, *Piety Versus Moralism*; Morais, *Deism*; Akers, *Called unto Liberty*; Griffin, *Old Brick*. For a much more detailed account of the relevant historiography as of 2008, see Oakes, "Conservative Revolutionaries," 115–26, 221–34.

including a few who have highlighted the ministers' inherent social, even sociopolitical traditionalism.<sup>3</sup>

Most of the scholarship on Chauncy and Mayhew has been in the form of academic articles or summaries in larger works. Despite their obvious importance, they have been the subjects of just three modern biographies, all of which focused on familiar themes in developing traditional narrative accounts of their lives. Charles Akers's overall portrayal of Mayhew in *Called unto Liberty* (1964) was that of a thorough-going subversive. While continuing to emphasize his theological heterodoxy and political Whiggery, the two major biographers of Chauncy, Edward Griffin (1980) and Charles Lippy (1981), also sought to foreground more conventional motivations, if not content, in his works. Only Corrigan addressed the two Boston pastors concurrently in a significant monograph, which adopted a somewhat broader perspective.<sup>4</sup>

In doctrinal terms, Akers characterized Mayhew as one who "brazenly proclaimed his abandonment of Puritan theology in favor of a 'pure and undefiled' version of Christianity" and a rational "gospel of the Enlightenment."

3. In addition to Akers, *Called unto Liberty*, recent scholars to offer interpretations of Mayhew as both theological innovator and political militant have included, in chronological order: Stout, *New England Soul*, 240–44, 262–63, 268; Clark, *Language of Liberty*, 336, 366–68; Noll, *America's God*, 79–80, 138–40; Byrd, *Sacred Scripture*, 29–30, 123–26, 140–41. As well as by Griffin, *Old Brick* and Lippy, *Seasonable Revolutionary*, which Corrigan, *Hidden Balance*, x, 126–27, misleadingly categorized primarily in theological terms, Chauncy's political activism has been latterly highlighted by Noll, *America's God*, 130–33. Jones, *Shattered Synthesis*, while occasionally noting Mayhew's social traditionalism, e.g., 151, 162–63, as Corrigan, *Hidden Balance*, x, suggested, was primarily concerned with the development of Mayhew's theological heterodoxy, rather than with his sociopolitical ideas. Noll also addressed Chauncy's "theological liberalism," but acknowledged his "self-conscious reliance on British authorities and . . . marriage to the ideal of a stratified, elite-dominated, mercantile Boston" (*America's God*, 138–43, esp. 143). Other significant recent works to focus on Chauncy's and Mayhew's theology include: Gibbs and Gibbs, "Charles Chauncy" and "In Our Nature"; Holifield, *Theology in America*, 131–35. Among studies with a more political focus, especially on Mayhew, are: Beneke, "The Critical Turn"; Mullins, "A Kind of War"; Lubert, "Jonathan Mayhew."

4. Akers, *Called unto Liberty*; Griffin, *Old Brick*; Lippy, *Seasonable Revolutionary*; Corrigan, *Hidden Balance*. In 2017, the University Press of Kansas is scheduled to publish a new work by Mullins, *Father of Liberty: Jonathan Mayhew and the Principles of the American Revolution*. According to the author, this will argue that "through the popularization of Real Whig 'revolution principles' within New England's political culture from 1749 to 1766, Mayhew did more than any other individual to prepare New Englanders intellectually for resistance to British authority. Though little remembered today, he was the most politically influential clergyman of colonial British America and a seminal thinker in the intellectual origins of the American Revolution" (Mullins, "Research"). Because of lack of access to this new work, it has unfortunately not been possible to incorporate or address Mullins's findings here.

He highlighted the anti-Trinitarian views expressed by Mayhew from the mid-1750s. Akers also argued that historians of Unitarianism had been “right in hailing [the Arminian] Mayhew as a pioneer of their movement,” although “wrong in confusing his theology with their own.” Echoing the judgments of “the Revolutionary generation,” Akers characterized Mayhew’s political views as equally militant. Mayhew was not only “the boldest and most articulate of those colonial preachers who taught that resistance to tyrannical rulers was a Christian duty as well as a human right.” He “remained the first commander of the ‘black Regiment’ of Congregational preachers who incessantly sounded ‘the yell of rebellion in the ears of an ignorant and deluded people.’”<sup>5</sup>

By contrast, Griffin sought to portray Chauncy in more nuanced terms in *Old Brick*. This was “a Representative Man” in eighteenth-century America—a “supernatural rationalist” who occupied “the middle ground” between “[Jonathan] Edwards’s evangelicalism and [Benjamin] Franklin’s Deism.” Because Chauncy “considered himself simply a good Congregationalist, true to his own heritage of dissent and free enquiry,” Griffin also highlighted themes of continuity, despite the major changes in his theology that were evident from the 1750s. However innovative the results, Griffin argued, as Chauncy reworked his doctrinal understandings of “the nature of God, the creation and destiny of humans, original sin, salvation, ethics, eschatology, and ecclesiology,” the Boston minister was attempting “to reconstruct New England theology by applying to his basic Puritan principles the lessons he had learned from the [Great] Awakening.” Griffin found similarly traditional influences at work in some of Chauncy’s political views and activities. But he ultimately characterized his subject as a willing and active revolutionary, who became “politically radicalized” in the 1770s and was recognized “by the people of Boston as a pugnacious champion of political liberty.” Chauncy endorsed rebellion against British rule, Griffin contended, and he “had a part in most of the important crises that jolted New England from 1771 to 1775.”<sup>6</sup>

5. Akers, *Called unto Liberty*, 2, 115–22, 227, 232, citing Oliver, *Origin and Progress*, 29. The much older biography of Mayhew by Bradford, *Memoir*, is a rambling chronicle which contains little by way of original analysis or insight, but some otherwise unpublished source materials. Cf. Griffin, “A Biography,” on which his published biography was based.

6. Griffin, *Old Brick*, 8, 4, 110, 144, 151. Rossiter also emphasized both Mayhew’s and Chauncy’s “Christian rationalism” as “sons of latitudinarian Harvard” and key representatives of one side of a split in “the apparent monolith of Puritanism” that took place in the aftermath of the Great Awakening (*Seedtime of the Republic*, 136). But Rossiter’s main focus was on the political arena, where he highlighted their role in promoting both Stamp Act and revolutionary resistance. Norman Gibbs was really the first to

According to Lippy in his intellectual biography, Chauncy was both a creative theological innovator and an inherent traditionalist, as well as the “seasonable revolutionary” that his title made clear. This was “first and foremost a traditional Puritan cleric” who was “propelled by a passion for order and a fear of disorder.” But Chauncy acted in ways that were “seasonable” by adopting “a line of thinking or a course of action . . . particularly appropriate to a given situation.” Even in the comprehensive reformulations of theological doctrine that he released toward the end of his life, Lippy thus discerned an essentially “conservative passion to preserve the essential structures and categories of Puritan religious thought”. As he shifted the very “cornerstone . . . from a theocentric anthropology to an anthropocentric theology,” Chauncy “had not intended to undercut the heart of orthodox theology, although that was the effect of his works. As far as he was concerned,” Lippy contended, “he was . . . preserving what he saw as vital to the New England Way by providing a rational and logical defense of present practice and experience.” Similar concerns were apparent politically during the 1760s, when Chauncy’s “opposition to the Stamp Act represented an effort to maintain intact the structures of political authority which he believed had been operative prior to its passage.” Even during the revolutionary period, Chauncy was not driven by any creative vision of a newly independent nation, but by concerns for “the transmission of those social and political patterns which he perceived as integral to a developing American identity and self-awareness.” In that sense, “Chauncy’s reluctant, but relentless, advocacy of the patriot cause” from 1774 onwards was based on his pursuit of “what he saw as a lost ideal—the ideal of human liberty.”<sup>7</sup>

Corrigan’s comparative study of the broad outlines of Mayhew’s and Chauncy’s Enlightenment worldview was much more general in focus. In

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question seriously the traditional understanding of Chauncy as a theological innovator, arguing that Chauncy’s “faith was evangelical first” and “the eternal gospel, as he understood it, transcended the rational ideology of his day” (“Problem of Revelation,” 302). The “Great Awakening” is here understood as the religious revival movement that began among Congregationalists in the 1730s, was catalyzed by the ministry of the British evangelist, George Whitefield in the 1740s, and extended as far as Virginia in subsequent decades. It is assumed, *contra* Butler, “Enthusiasm Described,” that this was an identifiable, historically significant religious revival movement. For reliable accounts of key aspects of the Awakening, some older works remain indispensable, including: Gewehr, *Great Awakening*; Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism*; Tracy, *Great Awakening*. On Whitefield, see esp. Stout, *Divine Dramatist*; Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity*. Among newer studies, see esp. Kidd, *George Whitefield*; Kidd, *Great Awakening*; Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*. On the Stamp Act, see esp. chapter 6.

7. Lippy, *Seasonable Revolutionary*, 12, 15, 16, 109, 114, 122, 72, 100, 103–4. See, further, Lippy, “Seasonable Revolutionary”; “Restoring a Lost Ideal”; “Trans-Atlantic Dissent.”

*Hidden Balance* (1987), he sought to show how his two subjects countered “tensions” in religion, government, and society by presenting “an understanding of the cosmos” that was “based on two key principles: wholeness and balance.” This was rooted in the conceptions of the “Moderate Enlightenment,” of which Chauncy and Mayhew were key figures. Their views could be seen as constituting “one of the very few examples among eighteenth-century American writers of the attempt to integrate ideas in all of these areas into a coherent [Geertzian] ideology, a symbolic map of reality.” Even Chauncy’s later theological heterodoxy could be understood in terms of his quest for “balance,” Corrigan contended. Although “ideas contained in these [later] treatises were a departure from previous Puritan theology,” they should be seen “not as amendments to or a revision of Chauncy’s theology in the 1740s to 1760s but rather as an integral part of his thinking in those years, as a balance or complement to more conservative arguments in his published work.” The First Church minister’s theories of government and society were influenced by similar considerations. Thus “‘mutual dependency’ was the key to [his] vision of government,” which “could require deference to superiors, but . . . must balance this with respect for the good of society as a whole, and the recognition of individual liberties and property.”<sup>8</sup>

Notwithstanding Corrigan’s bold attempt at synthesis, differing interpretations of Mayhew and Chauncy in the works of Akers, Griffin, Lippy and other scholars thus continue to raise major questions. The first and most obvious concerns the extent to which either can be identified as truly heterodox in his theology. If both ministers embraced Arminianism, how far did they travel beyond that point? Were they really Arian and/or Unitarian, as some have claimed, or both, and if so, how? Did they personally pioneer the Unitarian universalism that eventually became such an important feature of nineteenth-century Congregationalism, or pave the way for it? Secondly, and quite closely related to the issue of their overall heterodoxy, what were their major influences? How much did their religious views reflect the Enlightenment rationalism and moralism to which they were exposed? Whatever their final positions, did their theology continue to be shaped by more traditionalist factors in their Puritan New England heritage? More specifically, to what extent did Chauncy’s avowed universalism of the 1780s, for example, or Mayhew’s critical questioning of the doctrine of the Trinity in the 1750s and 1760s represent radical disjunctions from their earlier views? Last but not least, what, if any, were the most significant connections between Mayhew’s and Chauncy’s theological positions and

8. Corrigan, *Hidden Balance*, 5, 7, 112, 23, 64–65. For helpful reviews, see Akers, Review of *Hidden Balance*; Wilson, Review of *Hidden Balance*. See, further, Corrigan’s earlier dissertation, “Religion and the Social Theories.”

their politics? Did their revolutionary sentiments and attitudes, such as they were, flow from theological or political willingness to break with the status quo, or from other influences, and how did they connect with their socio-political views in general? This is the first work to compare and contrast the thought of Chauncy and Mayhew in sufficient detail to allow a thorough re-examination of such issues.<sup>9</sup>

The value of a comparative study of Chauncy and Mayhew, which focuses on their religious and political thought, goes well beyond the fact that they have often been linked by other scholars, most notably by Corrigan. Although Chauncy was fifteen years older and lived twenty-one years longer than Mayhew, the two Boston ministers were friends and colleagues for more than two decades during a crucial period, from the mid-1740s through the mid-1760s, when New England's established structures faced major challenges in both church and state. Theologically, the fresh currents of more rationalist thought that were eventually to contribute to quite a widespread reorientation away from traditional Congregationalist Calvinism towards universalism and Unitarianism were already raising serious questions and beginning to make serious intellectual inroads among the ministerial elite. Politically, the social disruptions arising from mid-eighteenth-century economic and demographic change, as well as from the centrifugal force of religious revivalism, increasingly threatened existing hierarchies. From the 1760s onward, resulting tensions were considerably aggravated by the renewed efforts of British colonial authorities to assert stronger fiscal and governmental control over the American colonies and by

9. More recent scholarship on Chauncy and Mayhew will be reviewed in greater depth, where appropriate, in subsequent chapters. Both ministers have been linked with the major historical debate over the nature of New England Congregationalist political militance and causal connections between religious thought and activism and the origins of the American Revolution. Except briefly in the concluding chapter, that debate will not feature in this study. For a helpful overview of the massive historiography of religion and the American Revolution, see esp. Wood, "Religion and the American Revolution." See, further, and more recently, Oakes, "Conservative Revolutionaries," 2–30. Yenter and Vailati defined an "Arian" Christology, together with related "Socinian" and "Sabellian" positions, in the following terms: "Although they were commonly used as abusive terms for anyone holding non-traditional or anti-trinitarian views, they also have more precise meanings. An Arian holds that the Son (the second person of the Trinity) is divine but not eternal; he was created by God the Father out of nothing before the beginning of the world. A Socinian holds that the Son is merely human and was created at or after the conception of Jesus. A Sabellian holds that the Son is a mode of God" ("Samuel Clarke (Revised)). "Rationalism" is defined in general terms throughout this study. As in *OED Online*, a "rationalist" is understood as "one who emphasizes the role of reason in knowledge," including theological knowledge. "Moralism" is defined, again following *OED Online*, as a "preoccupation with moral teaching or morality" that can result in "religion . . . reduced to moral practice."

growing colonial attempts, fueled by Whig ideologies of resistance, to resist metropolitan interference. As ministers of two of Boston's more prominent and wealthier churches, whose congregations included influential local leaders, Chauncy and Mayhew found themselves right at the heart of such tumultuous developments. They emerged as leading thinkers and actors in different movements for religious and political change, and although their responses sometimes varied, they engaged very similar issues. They both addressed the theological challenges of Arminianism, for example, which they embraced, and of Unitarian and universalist ideas, over which they differed. They also grappled, over different time-frames, with some of the most crucial political questions of their era—not least, the right of resistance against unjust rulers, the continuing validity of traditional social structures, and the role of New England in protecting a heritage, which they both valued, of Protestant, British constitutional liberties.

This book not only makes sense strategically, therefore. It facilitates direct engagement with important issues in the religious and political history of eighteenth-century colonial and revolutionary America. In addressing them through the thought and lived experience of two such influential Boston ministers, *Conservative Revolutionaries* also engages two other key problems connected with histories of intellectual change, which are germane, although by no means identical. The first arguably has as much to do with an oft-critiqued “Whig” interpretation of history which has fostered and facilitated it, as with its main gravamen, which concerns polarizing and potentially misleading historical labeling. The second relates to the challenge of attempting to account for how and why individuals shift positions on key issues without assuming a “narrative of progress” that impedes proper contextualization of various gradations in their thinking.<sup>10</sup>

In a recent study of reforming and “democratizing” elements in seventeenth-century New England Puritanism, Harvard historian David Hall (2011) helpfully highlighted the general dangers in such a context of

10. On the “Whig” interpretation of history,” see esp. the useful summary critique by Cronon, “Two Cheers.” For the original source, see Butterfield, who described it as “the tendency in many historians to write on the side of Protestants and Whigs, to praise revolutions provided they have been successful, to emphasise certain principles of progress in the past and to produce a story which is the ratification if not the glorification of the present” (*Whig Interpretation*, v). As Cronon noted, “Butterfield’s chief concern was with oversimplified narratives—he called them ‘abridgements’—that achieve drama and apparent moral clarity by interpreting past events in light of present politics. Thanks in part to Butterfield, we now recognize such narratives as teleological, and we rightly suspect them of doing violence to the past by understanding and judging it with reference to anachronistic values in the present, however dear those values may be to our own hearts” (“Two Cheers”).



“substituting modern usage” of political terminology for more historically authentic “nuances of meaning and practice.” In so doing, Hall credited earlier British scholars for showing particular sensitivity to the issue. A striking example of immediate relevance to this study is Jonathan Clark (2000), who rejected usage of terms like “liberalism, radicalism and conservatism” in a pre-nineteenth century English political setting, because, he argued, they were not used to denote anything approaching their modern meanings until the 1820s or 1830s and were, therefore, anachronisms. In light of the persuasive analysis of Hall, Clark and others, an obvious problem with major scholarship on Chauncy and Mayhew is that usage of such terms has been quite widespread. Moreover, inasmuch as their theological journeys have often been portrayed as progressing out of retrograde and irrational positions into more enlightened and reasonable ones, the frequent use of labels like “conservative” and “liberal” has only served to entrench an unbalanced, teleological, “Whig” history of their religious thought which does little justice to the complexities of its immediate contexts. Similar issues emerge in the political arena, where the frequently applied category “radical,” for example, which has often, like “liberal” in theological terms, been counterpoised against a “conservative” labeling of more traditionalist positions, has sometimes led to virtual caricatures of the two ministers as either extremist firebrands or social reactionaries, but little in between.<sup>11</sup>

Despite its deliberately provocative title, *Conservative Revolutionaries* will seek to avoid such simplistic labels and offer a more nuanced account of Chauncy’s and Mayhew’s intellectual histories, both religious and political. It will do so by highlighting areas of continuity, as well as discontinuity over time. In exploring Mayhew’s and Chauncy’s theological development in Part 1, it will show how they were pioneers of transformation, while remaining, to a hitherto neglected degree, pillars of tradition. Part 2 will then consider how their political and even revolutionary ideas reflected similar trends and tensions. An important theme throughout will be the much discussed, but not always well understood, topics of how religion interacted with “Enlightenment” and related philosophical influences, including political Whiggery, in eighteenth-century New England. Because it focuses so single-mindedly on the intellectual journeys of two individuals, *Conservative Revolutionaries* will address these subjects *en passant* in the course of the first seven chapters. This work makes no claim to offer definitive “case studies”; nor does it assume any inherent narrative of progress. But it does serve to highlight some of the resulting complexities when two intellectual leaders sought to

11. Hall, *A Reforming People*, 14–16, esp. 16, citing, among key British historians, Condren, *Language of Politics* and Hurstfield, *Freedom, Corruption and Government*; Clark, *English Society*, 6–9, esp. 6.

reconcile the demands of faith and reason, as they understood them, in turbulent times. Some of the wider implications of their conclusions will then be considered in the final chapter.<sup>12</sup>

Four major findings emerge from *Conservative Revolutionaries*. The first is that Chauncy and Mayhew were more traditionalist figures than scholars have often portrayed, even when they have sought to identify ongoing connections with Puritan tradition. There is clear evidence that both subscribed to New England orthodoxy in their earliest years and that Chauncy did so publicly until the mid-1760s. However much their ideas changed over time and however innovative they eventually became, the two ministers also continued to share a dissenting worldview that was marked not only by such traditionalist theological distinctives, but by striking commitments to the defence of Congregationalist polity in face of the perceived threats of Catholicism and expansionist Anglicanism, and to a vision of New England that retained what they saw as the best of their Protestant and British heritage. To some extent, Chauncy and Mayhew were clearly figures of Henry May's "moderate [American] Enlightenment"—increasingly influenced, in their religious and political positions, by recent theological and philosophical trends, including Anglican Latitudinarianism and Whig or "Real Whig" ideology. But they remained grounded in intellectual traditions that they shared with earlier figures. Their understandings of liberty, which were foundationally spiritual in origin, were significant to this weltanschauung. Even the ministers' more revolutionary ideas and inclinations, such as they were, were stimulated and informed by an overarching concern to preserve New England's "Protestant interest," with all that that had traditionally entailed. Although they have often been listed and sometimes hailed together as eighteenth-century New England pioneers of theological change, the second major conclusion is that there were important differences in their thought. Thus while both Chauncy and Mayhew moved from Calvinist to Arminian positions, Mayhew did so much earlier and more decisively. Although both traveled further into the realm of theological heterodoxy, Mayhew went beyond Arminianism to a "subordinationist" Christology that foreshadowed full-blown Unitarianism, while Chauncy's

12. *Contra* Clark, who has argued that the "Enlightenment"—a word which dates, in a "reified" descriptive sense, from the mid-nineteenth century—represents a "fiction of a unified project," which "can no longer be used as a reliable and agreed term of historical explanation," its usage is retained here. So is use of "radical" in an apolitical sense. The main reason, again quoting Clark, is that "Enlightenment" still represents a sufficiently helpful "shorthand signifier of an accepted body of authors and ideas" (*English Society*, 9). The term "enlightened" is also sometimes used to describe those influenced by Enlightenment ideas. Those authors and ideas will be identified in more specific contexts, as necessary.

radical universalism betrayed little sign of a parallel departure from orthodox Trinitarianism.<sup>13</sup>

Thirdly, *Conservative Revolutionaries* will conclude that such differences reflected not only the two ministers' individual intellectual journeys at Harvard and elsewhere, but also their contrasting personalities, life circumstances, and professional situations at different Congregationalist churches. Secure in his position as sole pastor of Boston's recently established West Church with its Arminian tradition, the younger, bolder and more combative Mayhew felt willing and able to declare the most heterodox of his views within just eight of the nineteen years of his relatively short-lived ministerial career. By contrast, the older and much more cautious Chauncy spent forty-two of his sixty-two years at First Church, not only in a prestigious position at a prominent congregation that was historically considered the *fons et origo* of New England orthodoxy, but with a senior colleague, whose favor he valued and whose Calvinism he long shared. Chauncy thus faced major personal and professional constraints in expressing the Arminian and universalist positions that he seems to have reached by 1760 and fully defined by 1768 at the latest. Although he declared his moderate Arminianism much earlier, it was not until the mid-1780s, by which time the elderly Chauncy was Boston's longest-serving minister in a revolutionary milieu teeming with new ideas, that he finally felt able to release his four most radical works. Even then, he did so carefully.

Finally, as well as summarizing key arguments, chapter 8 will further explore the possible significance of Chauncy and Mayhew as contributors to New England intellectual and political development during a crucial period of colonial and revolutionary history. Locating the findings of this study within the broader framework of recent historiography of the Enlightenment and its connections with the evangelical movement in particular, the chapter will show how such contextualization strengthens a more authentic understanding of the two Boston ministers as men of their times, whose religious and political thought was shaped by multiple intellectual influences, traditionalist as well as contemporary. Such an approach not only avoids the false dichotomy that has previously distorted some previous scholarship—between their alleged “radicalism” on the one hand and their

13. For the “moderate [American] Enlightenment,” see May, *Enlightenment in America*, 1–101. The term “Protestant interest” is primarily drawn from Kidd, *Protestant Interest*. Mayhew, *Sermon Preached at Boston*, 29, also used the expression himself. “New England orthodoxy”—or elsewhere, “Calvinist,” “Puritan,” or “reformed” orthodoxy—is here defined in terms of the key doctrines that were central to the belief-system of Calvinist Congregationalists for more than one hundred years after their first settlement in New England.

“conservatism” on the other—it negates Whiggish historical interpretations of Mayhew and Chauncy as progressive, transitional figures on the inevitable march of progress from the dark ages of American Puritanism to intellectual enlightenment, religious liberalism and political revolution. At the same time, because their thought clearly does raise broader issues about changing ideas of personal and communal autonomy and potential under God in a significant period of change, both theologically and politically, chapter 8 will include some suggestive, but inevitably inconclusive exploration of questions surrounding their wider influence.

SAMPLE