THE AMERICAN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

VOLUME I
1630–1865

THIRD EDITION

EDITED BY

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The American Intellectual Tradition

A Sourcebook

Volume I: 1630–1865

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The American Intellectual Tradition

For
Henry F. May

Preface

If a tradition is a family of disagreements, the American intellectual tradition is a very extended family. Its members include arguments inspired by the interests and ideals of a variety of communities within the United States as well as arguments concerned with the national community itself. The family also embraces arguments responsive to Western, if not universal, issues in philosophy, science, religion, politics, literature, and the arts. Some of the most influential members of this family are intensely aware of their European ancestry, whereas others have married into European families, and still others remain always preoccupied with the family's Americanness. The family is currently quite content with its extended state; its diverse and contested character is often a source of pride. But not everyone is agreed on just what makes it a family to begin with. And the family is divided, if not confused, over exactly which of its members ought to supervise the education of its young. What disagreements are primary? How should the tradition be structured to ensure its continuation and critical revision? What specific artifacts of discourse have played the greatest role historically in developing the American intellectual tradition?

Answers to these questions are necessarily implied by any sourcebook for the study of American intellectual history. In deciding what to include in this collection, we have been aware of the dynamism and diversity of our subject as well as highly conscious of the differing constructions of it offered by various scholars. We have sought the advice of numerous colleagues and accordingly have designed *The American Intellectual Tradition* to make available to students many of the documents now routinely assigned by teachers of this subject in colleges and universities throughout the United States. Hence these volumes are chiefly practical devices, not outlines of a systematic, comprehensive interpretation of American intellectual history. Yet certain priorities have shaped these volumes, and it is appropriate to make them explicit.

The American Intellectual Tradition is frankly intellectual in orientation. Most of the documents it contains are the result of someone's effort to make an analysis and to persuade others of the correctness of that analysis. Although these documents express "attitudes" and embody "ideas," we have been more sensitive to their status as arguments. Hence most of our selections are of the genres classically associated with purposive discourse: sermon, address, letter, treatise, and essay. We have tried to identify pieces of argumentation that became prominent points of reference for contemporaries or for Americans of later generations. In so doing, we have necessarily been drawn again and again to the work of men and women normally regarded as intellectual leaders: people who were relatively effective at making arguments.

Arguments can be addressed to an infinite number of issues, but the writings in this book respond to issues that have persistently generated extensive intellectual discussion. The bulk of our selections concern the theoretical basis for religious, scientific, artistic, political, social, and economic practice. Because the United States

is above all a polity, the American family of disagreements includes a high proportion of arguments concerning the basis of politics. Because the public culture of America has often been caught up in the distinctive ethos of Protestant Christianity, many of our selections—especially in Volume I—are directed to religious issues. Because modern America has been a peculiarly science-preoccupied civilization, many of the selections in Volume II address the character of the scientific enterprise and debate the implications of scientific knowledge.

In order to give these issues historical shape, we have organized the documents around general themes or movements, which we address briefly in the introduction preceding each main section. Were this a textbook rather than a sourcebook, we would have attempted to indicate the entire structure of discourse surrounding the texts we discuss; here we can do no more than hint at this, leaving it to the instructor to fill in the missing arguments and counterarguments. In framing our selections, we have also tried to avoid what seems to us a failing in many previous anthologies: the packaging of each source as an example of a particular doctrine or movement. Throughout we have emphasized that most intellectual works are dynamic and multifaceted and therefore have meaning in more than one frame of reference. With this in mind, we have written headnotes that highlight the dense internal content of each document as well as the setting in which it was produced.

It is easy to list the names of historically significant American thinkers whose work does not appear in these volumes. Yet, we have resisted the impulse to reduce the length of our selections in order to make room for a greater number of authors. The multiplication of texts by cutting them into mere snippets might have enabled us to more effectively register the social and cultural diversity of American intellectual leadership. Every ideological persuasion and identity group might then find its representative listed in the table of contents. The plural and contested character of the American intellectual tradition might then be acknowledged even more compellingly than is acknowledged by the selection we have decided to include. But the reducing of texts to brief excerpts has a great cost. The rhetorical and discursive power that helped draw attention to a text in the first place can be easily lost. Tensions within a text can be silenced, rendering the authors more univocal than they were. Although we have sometimes printed only a brief selection from a longer work, most of the documents found in *The American Intellectual Tradition* are complete, or nearly complete, essays, addresses, or chapters of books. We hope that what this sourcebook offers in the depth of its selections will compensate for what it lacks in the range of its inclusions.

Yet this range is greater in the third edition of *The American Intellectual Tradition* than it was in the second (1993) and the first (1989). In dropping some selections and adding new ones, we have been guided by the advice of colleagues who have used the earlier editions in teaching. We have also tried to take account of recent scholarship that assigns new historical significance to certain authors.

The chronologies at the end of each volume list almost as many European textual and sociopolitical events as American ones, reflecting our awareness that American intellectual history is bound up with the larger history of Europe, and indeed that of most of the world. The United States stands intellectually in much the same relation to Europe as Great Britain does: British intellectuals help constitute the discourse of Europe while simultaneously perpetuating and revising their own national tradition. The same can be said of intellectuals in Russia, Spain, Ger-

many, or France, as well as of those in the United States. Moreover, national cultures are sites of differing international significance at different times. In the seventeenth century, for example, the discourse of an extended Europe went forward without much attention to what was being said in British North America, but in the twentieth century the United States became a major site for this discourse.

Students using this sourcebook can learn more about the authors of these selections, and about the issues being addressed, from the hundreds of thematic and biographical articles in Richard W. Fox and James T. Kloppenberg, eds., *A Companion to American Thought* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995). Students in need of a basic introduction to what is meant by "intellectual history" may be helped by Stefan Collini et al., "What Is Intellectual History" in Juliet Gardiner, ed., *What Is History Today?* (London, 1988), 105–19. Those interested in contemporary debates about methodological questions in the study of intellectual history can turn to recent issues of the *Intellectual History Newsletter*, edited by Casey Blake at Indiana University. Students eager to explore the theoretical issues that most sharply divide intellectual historians from one another can examine the critical exchange between David A. Hollinger and David Harlan in the *American Historical Review*, 94 (June 1989), 581–626, and the overview essay by Martin Jay, "The Textual Approach to Intellectual History," in Jay's *Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique* (New York, 1993), 158–166, 220–22.

For advice regarding this sourcebook, we wish to thank the following individuals: Patrick Allitt of Emory University; Joyce Appleby of the University of California, Los Angeles; Robert C. Bannister of Swarthmore College; Thomas Bender of New York University; Fred Beuttler of the University of Chicago; Casey Nelson Blake of Indiana University; Ruth H. Bloch of the University of California, Los Angeles; Eileen Boris of Howard University; Paul Boyer of the University of Wisconsin–Madison; Howard Brick of the University of Oregon; E. Wayne Carp of Pacific Lutheran University; Kenneth Cmiel of the University of Iowa; Charles Lloyd Cohen of the University of Wisconsin–Madison; George Cotkin of California State Polytechnic University at San Luis Obispo; David Brion Davis of Yale University; John P. Diggins of the City University of New York; Elizabeth Faue of Wayne State University; Richard Wightman Fox of Boston University; George M. Fredrickson of Stanford University; James B. Gilbert of the University of Maryland; Samuel Haber of the University of California, Berkeley; Thomas L. Haskell of Rice University; Hugh Hawkins of Amherst College; David Hoeveler of the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee; E. Brooks Holifield of Emory University; James Hoopes of Babson College; Daniel Horowitz of Smith College; Daniel Walker Howe of Oxford University; David Johnson of Portland State University; John F. Kasson of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Linda K. Kerber of the University of Iowa; James T. Kloppenberg of Brandeis University; Lloyd S. Kramer of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Bruce Kuklick of the University of Pennsylvania; Ralph Luker of Antioch College; Henry F. May of the University of California, Berkeley; Donald B. Meyer of Wesleyan University; Robert Moates Miller of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Jill Morawski of Wesleyan University; Michael O'Brien of Miami University; Lewis Perry of Vanderbilt University; Mark Pittenger of the University of Colorado; Daniel T. Rodgers of Princeton University; Dorothy Ross of the Johns Hopkins University; Joan Shelly Rubin of the State University College of New York at Brockport; Barbara Sicherman of

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The editors have worked closely at every stage of the preparation of *The American Intellectual Tradition,* but responsibility for Volume I belongs to Charles Capper and for Volume II to David Hollinger.

Berkeley, Calif. D.A.H.
Chapel Hill, N.C. C.C.
February 1996

Note on the Texts in Volume I

The date assigned to a text other than a letter is the year of its first regular publication or, in the case of an address or sermon, of its initial delivery. If the year of first publication varies significantly from the date of composition, the latter is given in parentheses preceding the text. Letters are identified by date of composition. Except for the modern "s" in place of the archaic "ſ," the original spelling, capitalization, and punctuation of all texts have been retained.

Contents

Part Three: Evangelical Democracy

Part Four: Romanticism and Reform

Part One

The Puritan Vision

Introduction

To consider Puritan thinkers as part of an ongoing tradition of American intellectuals might seem perversely anachronistic. The very noun "intellectual" was never used by them, and key concepts commonly found in the writings represented in these volumes, such as "self-sufficient reason" or "the independent thinker," would have seemed to them absolutely abhorrent. Yet if the Puritans were not moderns, they were not archaic obscurantists either. The outpouring of scholarship on American Puritanism in the last fifty years has taught us to marvel at the highly articulated intellectuality of Puritan culture in both Old and New England. Nor should this be surprising. The Puritans were enthusiastic inheritors not only of Christian and biblical scholarship, but also of the new learning and culture of Renaissance humanism. From both sources they took materials that they strenuously manipulated in order to achieve the highest cultural goal of the religious intellectual—a justification of the ways of God to man and woman. Out of this striving necessarily came a complex synthesis of supernatural, rationalistic, and emotional elements that has remained—in large part *because* of its great strength and complexity—a powerful influence in American intellectual life down to the twentieth century.

At the bottom of this Puritan synthesis was the idea of the covenant. This was a concept, developed first by late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century continental and English reformed theologians, that defined the relationship between God and humankind as being based on a covenant—a series of divinely ordained yet understandable rules and mutual responsibilities. So defined, the covenant or "federal" idea obviously had wide-ranging applicability, as is well shown in the first two selections. John Winthrop, in his lay sermon on Christian charity, used the concept both to expound a complete theory of political authority and social relations and to explain the world-historical significance of the entire New England venture. John Cotton's treatise on the theology of the covenant was no less comprehensive. Embracing the orthodox Puritan doctrine of God's promise of assured salvation for the elect, Cotton strove mightily at the same time to reconcile that grandly deterministic tenet with the necessity of humans' ethical duties and spiritual efforts.

New England Puritan covenantal thought, although vast in scope, was frought with ambiguity and tensions. When conflict among its formulators therefore broke out in the first years of the Massachusetts Bay settlement, although the dissenters were few, the dissension brought into sharp focus some of the most basic elements of the Puritan intellectual vision. None of these was more basic than the ultimate evangelical questions raised in Cotton's treatise: What must I do to be saved? and (almost as momentous) How do I *know* that I am saved? The selection from the General Court's examination of Anne Hutchinson dramatically reveals the astonishingly broad range of answers that Puritan intellectuals sometimes gave to those questions. Religious dissension naturally raises the issue of toleration, a problem addressed by the Bay Colony's other great religious dissenter, Roger Williams. But

for Williams the issue was not the familiar modern secular one of mutual tolerance achieved through rational discourse, but rather one that went, like Hutchinson's dissent, although from a different angle, to the heart of the New England covenantal way. In his essay on Indian conversions, Williams argued that the authenticity of Puritan piety and hopes for fulfillment of God's promises were undermined by the very exercise of political authority over religion that the Massachusetts colony's intellectual leaders believed was essential to the implementation of God's word in this world.

By the end of the seventeenth century, much of the social and political basis of the New England way had eroded. The Puritan monopoly of political power in the Massachusetts Bay Colony had been broken with the new charter's substitution of property for church membership as the basis for suffrage, non-Puritan sects were growing in numbers, and competing Enlightenment currents were increasingly attracting the allegiance of Puritan and non-Puritan intellectuals. Meanwhile, ministers continued to preach jeremiads over what they saw as clear evidence of rising worldliness in their society. In this context a host of third- and fourth-generation New England Puritan leaders, like their Protestant counterparts in other parts of America and in Europe, lent support to organized efforts to revitalize their region's piety. The last selections by the two leading Puritan intellectual figures of their respective generations demonstrate the range of responses to these turbulent times. Cotton Mather, in his essay on the doing of good, sought feverishly to find in voluntaristic moral efforts avenues to Godly piety and community solidarity. By contrast Jonathan Edwards, in his sermon in defense of divine determinism and especially in his treatise defending the spiritual character of religious emotions, both creatively adapted and radically subverted emerging modern rationalistic and moralistic intellectual currents in order to restore the ethical and psychological integrity of a God-intoxicated Christian faith.

Recommendations for Further Reading

Perry Miller, *The New England Mind,* vol. 1: *The Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1939), and vol. 2: *From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953); Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York, 1963); Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life* (New Haven, 1966); T. H. Breen, *The Character of the Good Ruler: A Study of Puritan Political Ideas in New England, 1630–1730* (New Haven, 1970); Stephen Foster, *Their Solitary Way: The Puritan Social Ethic in the First Century of Settlement in New England* (New Haven, 1971); Robert Middlekauff, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596–1728* (New York, 1971); David D. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, 1972); Sacvan Bercovitch, ed., *The American Puritan Imagination: Essays in Revaluation* (Cambridge, 1974); E. Brooks Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed: The Development of Puritan Sacramental Theology in Old and New England, 1570–1720* (New Haven, 1974); Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, Wis., 1978); William K. B. Stoever, *'A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven': Covenant Theology and Antinomianism in Early Massachusetts* (Middletown, Conn., 1978); Norman Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard: A Discipline in Transition* (Chapel Hill, 1981); Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill, 1982); Philip F. Gura, *A Glimpse of Sion's Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620–1660* (Middletown, Conn., 1984); David S. Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm in the New World: Heresy to Revolution* (Cambridge,

Mass., 1985); Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550–1750* (Cambridge, 1986); Charles Lloyd Cohen, *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (New York, 1986); Edmund Leites, *The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality* (New Haven 1986); Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York, 1986); James Holstun, *A Rational Millennium: Puritan Utopias of Seventeenth-Century England and America* (New York, 1987); Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism* (Chapel Hill, 1988); Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989); David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York, 1989); E. Brooks Holifield, *Era of Persuasion: American Thought and Culture, 1521–1680* (New York, 1989); James Hoopes, *Consciousness in New England: From Puritanism and Ideas to Psychoanalysis and Semiotic* (Baltimore, 1989); Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990); Michael J. Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England's Revival Tradition in Its British Context* (New York, 1991); Stephen Foster, *The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture, 1570–1700* (Chapel Hill, 1991); Jon Pahl, *Paradox Lost: Free Will and Political Liberty in American Culture, 1630–1760* (Baltimore, 1992); Amanda Porterfield, *Female Piety in Puritan New England: The Emergence of Religious Humanism* (New York, 1992); Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994); Stephen Innes, *Creating the Commonwealth: The Economic Culture of Puritan New England* (New York, 1995).