

## **The Many Faces of Providence in the New England Captivity Narratives of Nehemiah How and the Reverend John Norton, 1748**

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This morning we set out and traveled about eleven miles. We had something rough Traveling to-day. We quickly left the small Stream we lodged by at our right hand to the East of us, and, traveling in a few Miles over some small Hills and Ledges, came to a Stream running from East to West, about two or three Rods in Width, and about two Feet deep. We crossed it, our general course being North. We traveled about two or three Miles farther and came to a Stream running from South-West to North-East, about six Rods in Width, which we crossed. And this Stream (which we supposed to be Wood Creek), according to the best of my Remembrance, and according to the short Minute that I made of this day's Travel, we left at our right Hand to the East of us; but Sergeant Hawks thinks I am mistaken, and that we crossed it again, and left it at the left hand, West of us. I won't be certain, but I cannot persuade myself that I am mistaken.<sup>1</sup>

It is, I believe, obvious from the excerpt above, that an initial reading of a published New England captivity narrative by those uninitiated to the literary norms of the eighteenth century may prove to be an arduous task indeed – the spelling is archaic and unstandardized, the language turgid and often awkward. The narratives are not, as they have been described, “exciting adventure stories.”<sup>2</sup> Instead, the descriptions seem unexciting, tiresome and lacking in drama.

The challenge of these documents then initially becomes: how do we

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understand these narratives which obviously reflect a mentality far different from our own? The starting point, I believe, is precisely those features that appear so tiresome and even unfathomable to the twentieth-century reader: these are the “jumping off points” into the eighteenth century, for it is the exact qualities that are so incomprehensible that actually reflect a distant mentality.<sup>3</sup>

One way of approaching these narratives is to imagine how these documents were read by people in the mid-eighteenth century. The act of reading in eighteenth-century colonial America was not similar to that of the twenty-first century. Reading was an “intensive” activity and the printed text, because it was scarce, was venerated. Texts were read and reread over and over again, slowly, each word carefully pronounced and listened to, each word possessing a life and meaning of its own.<sup>4</sup> When we begin to comprehend the intensive nature of this type of reading, we can begin to understand the world of those who wrote and consumed captivity narratives. The turgid prose and the undramatic nature of the narratives reflected not only the slower manner of speech, but also the slower manner of reading and listening. Viewed within this context, the published captivity narratives come alive, mirroring not only the writers, but also the readers – they become a window onto the mentality of the eighteenth-century New Englanders who wrote, read and listened to them.<sup>5</sup>

The above discussion of mentality becomes pertinent as this discussion turns to the exploration of New England religious mentality. Any examination of mentality in the eighteenth century cannot overlook the importance of religion, for religion formed the very core of many peoples’ existence; it shaped their thoughts, their dialogue, and their interpretation of the reality surrounding and confronting them. Colonial New England was no exception to this. Religious dissent had been responsible for the establishment of the original Puritan colony in the New World in the seventeenth century and, throughout that century, it shaped many controversies.<sup>6</sup> As the colony grew in the eighteenth century, religion played no less an important role. According to Harry Stout, if one judges seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New England in terms of regular church life, there was not a decline in religion as the colony grew in numbers. Rather, his study of unpublished sermons underlines the importance of religion in general, and specifically sermons, in shaping “cultural values, meanings and a sense of corporate purpose.”<sup>7</sup>

A significant and fascinating segment of colonial American historiography has expressed an interest in this issue of religion and has,

in particular, focused upon the phenomenon of millenarianism in early New England thought. Briefly, millenarianism has been defined as a viewpoint that believed that human history was divinely ordained and would culminate in a period of heavenly perfection.<sup>8</sup> This concern has produced a prolific debate, and the many historians engaged in it have added enormously to our knowledge of the eschatological implications of eighteenth-century New England mentality.<sup>9</sup> This historiography, however, has generally been interested in millenarianism in terms of its influence upon the development of American revolutionary thought.<sup>10</sup> This discussion does not attempt to engage in this controversy, as the topic of the American Revolution is beyond its scope. Nevertheless, it does recognize the importance of what will be termed a “Providential”<sup>11</sup> tradition in colonial New England that has two dimensions. The first, the millennial or total Providential view, explained events within the Biblical tradition of covenant, sin, punishment and redemption. Often included within this belief was the perception of the chronic warfare that marked the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries between the British colonies and their French Catholic enemy as a millennial struggle against the Papal anti-Christ.<sup>12</sup> The second dimension involved a more simple faith in God’s underlying and often benevolent influence in individual human lives.

The following essay will examine the published captivity narratives<sup>13</sup> of two individuals, Nehemiah How and the Reverend Mr. John Norton. Both narratives were written in the 1740s during the War of the Austrian Succession between the British and the French, a war which would culminate ultimately in the defeat of the French in 1763 and the concomitant establishment of British hegemony in North America. The discussion will focus first upon the commercial aspects of the total Providential view within these documents and then move to an analysis of the individual religious mentality of these captives.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Total Providentialism***

It is perhaps easy for the reader of captivity narratives to become mesmerized by the narratives as individual testimonials or adventure tales<sup>15</sup> or, as in this case, rich historical primary sources.<sup>16</sup> Yet, one should also not lose sight of the physical existence of these stories, for they were concrete realities within the colonial American publishing industry. These accounts were chosen for publication by printers working within an industry notoriously strapped for cash, who must have been aware of their

A  
**NARRATIVE**  
**Of the Captivity**  
**OF**  
**Nehemiah How,**

Who was taken by the **Indians** at the *Great-Meadow-Fort* above *Fort-Dummer*, where he was an Inhabitant, *October 11th 1745.*

Giving an Account of what he met with in his travelling to *Canada*, and while he was in Prison there.

Together with an Account of Mr. *HOW's* Death at *Canada.*

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*Pfal. cxxxvii. 1,2,3,4. By the Rivers of Babylon, there we sat down -- We banged our Harps upon the Willows, in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive, required of us a Song; and they that wasted us, required of us Mirth, saying, Sing us one of the Songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's Song in a strange Land.*

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**B O S T O N : N. E.**  
**Printed and Sold opposite to the Prison in Queen-Street, 1748.**

Figure 1: Title page from *Narrative of Nehemiah How* (Boston: Printed and sold opposite to the prison in Queen St., 1748)

audience and therefore must have chosen and structured the material they published with its market value in mind.<sup>17</sup>

One aspect of the narratives that the printers undoubtedly shaped for their readers was the format and content of the title pages,<sup>18</sup> which, at least throughout the 1740s and 1750s, bore a resemblance to one another (see Figures 1 and 2). This page generally included a title, a brief description of the contents of the narrative itself, place of publication, printer, location of the printer and date. In addition, the most interesting feature of these title pages from the point of view of this discussion are the Biblical quotes which normally appeared on the title pages of most narratives published throughout this period. Placed about three-quarters down the page, they were set off from the rest of the title page by rules above and below the quotes. It is, I believe, by examining these Biblical quotes that we can clearly grasp the printers' concept of what appealed to the readers of these narratives.

On the title pages of the narratives of Nehemiah How and the Reverend Mr. John Norton, the Biblical quotes are laments from the Old Testament: the title page of How's narrative included, in part, a passage from Psalm 137:1 which read, "by the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down . . .," while the Norton title page contained a passage from Jeremiah 50:33, "The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together and all that took them captives held them fast, they refused to let them go." These passages allude, in particular, to the Babylonian captivity (587 B.C.) and the exile of the Israelites from Jerusalem. The Babylonian captivity, perceived as a punishment meted out by God for the sin of breaking the covenant, is viewed by the Jewish people as one of the most important events in their history, second only to their captivity in Egypt. The Biblical quotes on these particular title pages do not refer specifically to the themes of covenant or sin, punishment or redemption, integral aspects of this particular viewpoint. In How's case, his captivity was an occasion of great sorrow: "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (Psalm 137: 4), while in the instance of Norton, it was "because of affliction" (Lamentations 1:3). However, the context of these quotes would not be lost to readers of the day who undoubtedly knew from their historical tradition and Biblical training, as well as the many sermons they listened to, that just as God had punished the Israelites for their sins, He would redeem the children of His covenant in a better world.<sup>19</sup>

Imbedded on the title page, either directly or indirectly, was the complete Providential framework for viewing not only the captivities but

**The Redeemed Captive.**  
 Being a  
**NARRATIVE**  
 Of the taken and carrying into Captivity

THE REVEREND

**Mr. John Norton,**

When *Fort-Massachusetts* Surrendered to a large Body  
 of French and Indians, August 20th 1746,

With a particular Account of the Defence made before the  
 Surrender of that Fort, with the Articles of Capitulation  
 &c.

Together with an Account, both entertaining and affecting,  
 of what Mr. NORTON met with, and took Notice of,  
 in his travelling to, and while in Captivity at *Canada*,  
 and 'till his Arrival at *Boston*, on August 16. 1747.

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Written by Himself.

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Jer. 21. 4. Thus saith the Lord,--Behold, I will turn back the  
 Weapons of War that are in your Hand, wherewith ye fight  
 against the King of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans, which  
 besige you without the Walls, & I will assemble them into the City.

Chap 50. 33.--- The Children of Israel, and the Children of  
 Judah were oppressed together, and all that took them Captives  
 held them fast, they refused to let them go.

Lam. 1. 3. Judah is gone into Captivity, because of Affliction.  
 Neh. 7. 6. These are the Children of the Province, that went up  
 out of the Captivity, of those that had been carried away.

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BOSTON: Printed & Sold opposite the Prison. 1748.

also the war itself – covenant, sin, punishment and redemption – fashioned by printers for an audience they must have been sure would have understood. This Providential context must have been, in the printers' eyes, one of the selling features of the narratives, and by placing the Biblical quotes on this title page, they not only set them in the context and language their audience would have understood, but also created a structure for reading these tales. However, central question remains: How far did the individual captives like How and Norton view their experiences of the war within the total Providential context alluded to so prominently on the title pages of their respective narratives?

### *The Narrative of Nehemiah How*

Nehemiah How's captivity narrative was written after he was taken captive by the Abenakis, native allies of the French, on 11 October 1745 when "he went out from the fort about 50 rods to cut wood." It describes his journey as an Abenakis prisoner from Great Meadow Fort (Fort Massachusetts) to Fort St. Frédéric, down Lake Champlain to Fort Chambly and then to Québec. How also describes the time he spent in the Québec prison where he succumbed to a virulent epidemic and died on 25 May 1747 at the age of fifty-five. Although the narrative is primarily descriptive, it contains enough references to devotional matters to develop a sense of this man's religious mentality.<sup>20</sup>

Nehemiah How was, undeniably, a deeply religious man, a "good pious gentleman," another captive said of him, and "a Christian from his youth." How was also a man of prayer. This is evident from the outset of his captivity, when he was being chased by "12 or 13 Indians with red painted heads," he "cry'd out to God for help and ran and hollow'd" as he ran; he then committed his case to God when the Abenakis "led me into a swamp and pinion'd me."<sup>21</sup>

How's religiosity was expressed outwardly through prayer. At times, as the above examples illustrate, his prayer was unreflective and immediate, a lifeline to hold onto, a resource to aid him in moments of distress. Yet, he was not simply a man who only petitioned God in times of dire need. Prayer was also an integral part of his life, and while he did not practice it regularly on route to Québec, it became something he performed both daily and devoutly within the confines of the Quebec prison. Here, other prisoners, perhaps recognizing the pious nature of this man, "desir'd me to lead them in carrying on morning and evening

devotion.” It became custom, he wrote rather proudly that “our constant practice was to read a chapter in the Bible and sing part of a Psalm, and to pray, night and morning.”<sup>22</sup>

But then again, How’s prayer was also more than a mere daily formality – it was also a source of profound solace and a reflection of his deep spirituality. In prison, for example, he learned that the French had taken one hundred prisoners in the area of Great Meadow Fort, where his family and friends lived. This news was an occasion of great sorrow for this captive. The news “put me upon earnest prayer to God,” not to save the fort, his family and friends, but for the greater gift, to enable him “to submit his will,” that is, God’s design. This particular prayer had a healing effect upon him; after reciting it, he wrote that he was “easy” in his mind, presumably free from the anxiety and sorrow that the news had evoked.<sup>23</sup>

Obviously How was a deeply religious individual, a man for whom prayer was an integral facet of his life. But who was this God to whom How prayed so dutifully and fervently? Was this the God described in the title page of his narrative, the God of Providence who had a covenant with his people, punished them for their sins and ultimately redeemed them to a promised land? And was this war within which he was embroiled as a captive a millennial struggle against a French papal anti-Christ, destined to culminate in a new promised age?

How’s God was, in part, the Providential God who intervenes in human affairs. He was a God whose will it was “to deliver me into the hands of these cruel men” (the Abenakis), and who turned these enemies into friends: his God saw to it that he “found favour in the their [the Abenakis] eyes,” for they were generally “kind to me while I was with ‘em.” His God rescued his friends, Jonathan Thayer, Samuel Nutting and his own son, Caleb How, from pursuing Indians; granted him strength to climb mountains on the way from Great Meadow Fort to Fort St. Frédéric; turned his weakness into strength for a time in prison; preserved his family from French attacks; and was responsible for the gentlemen and ladies who visited him in prison who “shew’d us great kindness in giving us money and other things.”<sup>24</sup>

How rarely hesitates to shower praise upon this beneficent God who was responsible for the many favours both he and other captives either asked for or received: “Blessed be God therefore,” he wrote in prison, “for I desire to ascribe all the favours I have been the partaker of ever since my captivity, to the abundant grace and goodness of a bountiful God, as the first cause.”<sup>25</sup> Yet, for him, was this beneficent God also accountable for

the many misfortunes that occurred throughout his captivity?

At the beginning of his narrative, How admits that his captivity is God's will: "I then committed my case to God," he wrote when he was captured, "and pray'd that since it was His will to deliver me into the hands of these cruel men, I might find favour in their eyes." Nevertheless, he never alludes to the disturbing possibility that the Lord may be punishing him or others for their sins. In fact, he never reflects upon the many misfortunes he recorded. God's "gracious goodness" eased his sufferings, protected his friends and his family, and turned enemies into friends. And yet he leaves blatant tragedies totally unexplained. For example, David Rugg, a man from How's fort, was immediately killed by the natives. Rugg was scalped, and his scalp was painted red, with the "likeness of eyes and mouth on it." The natives then stuck the painted scalp on a pole on their canoe and traveled to Fort St Frédéric. Here, the natives left How "in a storm without shelter or a blanket." Again at Fort Chambly, natives struck him on the cheek with stones, and this "made the blood run plentifully," after which they forced him to dance and to sing. Moreover, his prison experience describes a litany of captives streaming in with news of successive French victories and English defeats, and numerous accounts of "deaths among us daily" from the plague. Had God visited these misfortunes upon his children as a punishment for their sins – How himself, David Rugg, the inmates of the prison, his fellow countrymen – as the context of Psalm 137 on the title page of the narrative would have led the reader to expect? If How believed for even one moment that these adversities were a punishment from God visited upon a sinful people, he remains totally silent in this regard.<sup>26</sup>

And what about redemption to the promised land, also an integral facet of the Providential message? Indeed, How never questions the larger meaning of his captivity or the war itself. He neither mentions the greater upheaval as a millennial struggle against the papal anti-Christ, nor does he blame the French for his misfortunes. How celebrates God's goodness as an unquestioned source of comfort, a real presence working within his life. But he remains curiously silent about the punishing and redemptive dimensions of the Creator.

It is left to the author of the epitaph, the "unknown hand" at the end of the narrative to endow How's tale with the redemptive meaning, so glaringly absent in the narrative itself:

His death is a great loss to his friends, but I believe a gain to himself;

and that he is gone from a captivity of sorrow on earth to join in songs of everlasting joy among the ransom'd of the Lord in the heavenly Zion.<sup>27</sup>

### ***The Narrative of the Reverend John Norton***

The narrative of the Reverend John Norton reflects a similar pattern. Written by Norton, who was thirty years old at the time of his captivity, the document is primarily descriptive. It discusses the defense, military struggle and surrender of Fort Massachusetts (1746), Norton's captivity in the hands of the French, and his long and often arduous journey from Fort Massachusetts to Québec where he was released on 25 July 1747 from prison. Yet, like How's tale, the document also contains enough devotional references to illuminate the nature of his religious point of view.<sup>28</sup>

Although a man of the cloth, the reverend was also a man of this world. He was, first of all, a candid man, as well as a man of action: he freely spoke his mind after the surrender of Fort Massachusetts and opposed the transfer of French prisoners to the natives; he attempted to negotiate with the French for the release of English captives from the hands of the Indians; and he comforted other captives on their march from Fort Massachusetts to Fort St. Frédéric, reminding them along the way that "God would strengthen them." Norton was also in close touch with the secular world of events, and he displayed a great interest in them – he recorded in detail the latest news of the war and political developments the French passed on to him. And he rarely let an opportunity slip by without this debating this information. On at least two occasions, he engaged in heated political debates with Lt. de Muy, the French officer who was in charge of him. The reverend also enjoyed the physical comforts of this world, and he filled his journal with descriptions of the "kind" treatment that the French bestowed upon him, including evenings of drinking fine wines and eating sumptuous meals.<sup>29</sup>

Norton was also a devout man, a man who executed his religious duties sincerely and promptly. Before the surrender of Fort Massachusetts, for example, presumably in front of the defeated who were assembled together, Norton prayed "unto God for wisdom and direction"; he performed religious services at Fort St. Frédéric where "they had the liberty of worshipping God together in a room"; and according to How, on at least one occasion in prison "preach'd two discourses from Psalm 60:11 Give us help from trouble for vain is the help of man." Moreover, Norton's

prayer was more than a mere formality. Rather, it could be, as it was in the prison, “where we had the free liberty of the exercise of our religion,” a “matter of comfort to us in our affliction.”<sup>30</sup>

Despite his secular proclivities, Norton firmly believed, like How, in a God of Providence who works directly and benevolently in human affairs. Thus, while Norton relied on his own actions to alleviate human suffering, to improve terms of surrender, or upon the course of political and military events to determine the outcome of the war, a beneficent God that underlay human reality. The “good God of Providence” ensured that they “we were all in the fort” when “there appeared an army of French and the Indians” who attacked them. The providential God also continued to help the captives on their long journey northward from Fort Massachusetts to Fort St. Frédéric and “wonderfully strengthened many who were weak,” “ensured that our men that had been sick grew better and recovered strength,” and that Mrs Smeed, who had just three days earlier delivered her baby named “Captivity,” was not harmed by the “heavy shower of rain, which wet us through all our clothes.” Moreover, his belief in God’s Providence was also profound and could become a source of comfort in moments of distress. This is evident on the march from Fort Massachusetts to Fort St. Frédéric where his “heart was filled with sorrow, expecting that many of our weak and feeble people would fall by the merciless hands of the enemy.” The subsequent “shouting and yelling” of the “savages” made him tremble and conclude that they had “murdered some of our people.” In spite of these fears, Norton did not fall into despair, but was comforted by the thought that “they [the natives] could do nothing against us, but what God in his holy Providence permitted them.”<sup>31</sup>

Yet, did he ever place this be Norton, like How, obviously believed in the goodness of God. neficent Providential God within the total Providential framework appearing so prominently on the cover of his tale? Not within this narrative. Like How, Norton never mentioned the possibility of redemption to a promised land, although he did attribute his final release by cartel to “the many great and repeated mercies of God towards me.” He also never situated the larger events of the war – the loss of Fort Massachusetts to the French, the news of English reverses and French victories he constantly received, not only on route to the Québec prison, but also within the prison itself – within the wider context of a millennial struggle against the French Catholic enemy or the Papal anti-Christ. Nor, like How, does he ever attribute his personal captivity to a God who may be punishing him for his sins.<sup>32</sup>

This is not to argue that the Reverend did not reflect upon the larger issue of punishment. In one particular situation, when faced with the overwhelming reality of the death of a number of individuals in the Quebec prison, Norton does ruminate upon the theme of punishment, and these brief reflections offer an important insight into this man's religious mentality. "Those who brought it (the plague) into the prison," wrote Norton as many of the inmates began to fall ill and die, "mostly recovered and so there were many others that had it and recovered; but the recovery of some was but for a time – and many of them relapsed and died." These deaths moved Norton to reflect upon the more elaborate significance of the events surrounding him: "I will therefore put you in remembrance," he wrote, "tho ye once knew this, how that the Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believe not." But the conviction, however, that his fellow prisoners were dying as punishment for their sins did not provide Norton with a satisfactory answer: Could all of these dying people possibly be sinners? Instead, Norton immediately dared to question the doctrine of punishment itself: "Not that I have reason," he wrote, "to think ill of those upon whom the sickness fell and who died with it. Many of them, I hope were truly pious and godly persons." However, just as readily, Norton interpolates this brief moment of skepticism with another Biblical quote that clearly re-establishes the sovereign judgment of God: "The Lord is righteous," he wrote, "for I have rebelled against his commandment. Here I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow. My virgins and my young men are gone into captivity."<sup>33</sup>

Undeniably, Norton adhered to the doctrine of punishment deeply embedded within the Christian tradition, and which he, as a reverend, represented. Yet his temporary doubts indicate that his belief in certain aspects of the total Providential framework was, at the very least, deeply divided.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

This examination of the title pages and the contents of these two captivity narratives reveal contrasts not only between the religious mentality of these two individuals, but also between these particular narratives and the printers' perception of the collective mentality of their colonial American audience.<sup>35</sup> These differences are perhaps indicative of the possibility of many diverse shades in the religious attitudes in colonial America during the War of the Austrian Succession, and, concomitantly,

various opinions about captivity and the war itself.<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps some individuals did place the war within the total Providential framework that appeared on the title pages of the narratives – or, at least, they would immediately have understood it within these terms. The printers of these narratives must have believed they did or they would not have bothered to have given the Biblical quotes such a central position within these documents. After all, it was in their interest to understand their audience and sell the material they published, for books were their livelihood. And perhaps many others thought of the war as a millennial struggle against the papal anti-Christ and the French Catholic enemy.

However, neither How nor Norton entirely placed their experiences within this framework of total Providentialism or a millennial struggle, at least not within these particular narratives. Both men rested firmly within the Providential tradition that believed in God's underlying and benevolent influence in human affairs. Neither man discussed either the papal anti-Christ or the French Catholic enemy, any more than they mentioned the covenant or redemption. Moreover, How never reflected upon the idea of punishment and, when Norton did meditate upon this theme, his ruminations reveal a man deeply divided in his religious attitudes.

It is easy, however, to become lost in pointing out differences in attitudes and beliefs within these narratives and in doing so to lose sight of the fact that while the printers and individuals may have expressed divergent points of view, they all conveyed, deeply religious perceptions, not only of the war, but also of the circumstances around them. Whether they perceived either the war or captivity specifically in terms of a clearly defined Providential tradition, as the title pages would suggest, or expressed their views within a simpler, more flexible Providential framework, is perhaps a matter of splitting hairs. The war to the colonial readers and the individuals who experienced it was obviously a deeply religious matter, and, in the end, these documents remain as specific reflections of the religious temper of the time within which they were written and published.

### ***Endnotes***

1. The Reverend John Norton, *The Redeemed Captive* (Boston: Printed and sold opposite to the prison in Queen St., 1748), 16-17.

2. R.W.G. Vail, *The Voice of the Old Frontier* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff Inc., 1949). Vail contends that a modern reader would admire the authors of the captivity narratives for “their swift-moving and exciting plots and their sense of suspense and sustained horror” (Vail, *Voice of the Old Frontier*, 27).
3. Robert Darnton, “Workers Revolt: The Great Cat Massacre of the Rue Saint-Severin,” in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1985), 77, 78. According to Darnton, anthropologists have found that the best points of entry into another culture are those that appear most incomprehensible.
4. David Hall, “The Uses of Literacy,” in *Printing and Society in Early America*, ed. William L. Joyce, et al (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1983), 22, 23, 32.
5. I have borrowed the expression of a “window” from Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, “The Historicization of Anthropology,” in *Culture Through Time: Anthropological Approaches*, ed. Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 23.
6. Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop* (Boston: Little Brown and Co.), ix, x, 3-53. For an excellent description of the role of religion in seventeenth-century New England, see David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989).
7. All colonies in America experienced the impact of the first Great Awakening throughout the 1740s. Ruth Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 15; Harry Stout, *The New England Soul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 202-4. Bloch, *Visionary Republic*, 234, n. 9, also maintains that religiosity, in general, was more prominent within colonial America as a whole. Further, see Patricia U. Bonomi and Peter Eisenstadt, “Church Adherence in the Eighteenth-Century British American Colonies,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 3d ser., 39 (1982): 245-86.
8. Bloch, *Visionary Republic*, xi.
9. Kerry Trask, *In Pursuit of Shadows: Massachusetts, Millennialism and the Seven Years’ War* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1989), 7.
10. According to Bloch, the two most significant works emphasizing the importance of millennial thought upon the American Revolution are Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966) and Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: the Idea of America’s Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

11. For an excellent discussion of Providence see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Belief in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), 78-112.
12. See especially, Thomas More Brown, "The Image of the Beast: Anti-Papal Rhetoric in Colonial America," in *Conspiracy: The Fear of Subversion in American History*, ed. Richard O. Curry and Thomas More Brown (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1972), 1-20. According to Trask the Seven Years' War was seen by Protestant colonists as a "mythical" struggle of the forces of good and evil and a crusade for utopia (*In Pursuit of the Shadows*, 13).
13. Captivity narratives have held the attention of scholars for decades. Most recent treatments of captivity narratives include Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997); James D. Hartman, *Providence Tales and the Birth of American Literature* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Pauline Turner-Strong, *Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics and Poetics of Colonial American Captivity Narratives* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999); and Joe Snader, *Caught Between Worlds: British Captivity Narratives in Fact and Fiction* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2000).
14. Nehemiah How, *The Narrative of Nehemiah How* (Boston: Printed and sold opposite to the prison in Queen St., 1748); and Norton, *The Redeemed Captive*.
15. Vail, *Voice of the Old Frontier*, 27.
16. For other uses of the captivity narrative in this respect see James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures Within Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); John Demos, *Unredeemed Captive: A Family from Early America* (New York: Knopf, 1994); and Kevin Sweeney, *Captors and Captives: The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).
17. David Hall, "The Uses of Literacy," 22, 23, 32. See also Lucien Febvre, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800*, trans. David Gerard, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and David Wootton (London: N.L.B. 1976). Febvre claims that the book was a piece of merchandise that men produced above all in order to earn a living (109). I have used the term "printers" to describe these men. According to Febvre, however, these men could more correctly be termed "printers-journalists-postmasters." They were also often booksellers. For a good description of a New England bookseller see Elizabeth Carroll Reilly, "The Wages of Piety," in *Printing and Society in*

*Early America.*

18. The printers also shaped other aspects of the captivity narratives with economic considerations in mind. These pamphlets were far from luxury items in this book trade. Rather, the two narratives under discussion (How and Norton) were small pamphlets of twenty-three and forty pages respectively, 15.8 cm x 11.4 cm and 16.7 cm. x 10.2 cm, unadorned with woodcuts (see Vail, *Voice of the Old Frontier*, 240, 241.) Merely holding a captivity narrative conveys a sense of their simplicity: a small document with a cardboard cover, easily held in two hands, it could be transported cheaply and readily passed on to other individuals.
19. J.D. Douglas, ed., "Jerusalem," *The New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1962), 614; G.W. Anderson, "The Psalms," in *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, ed. H.H. Rowley (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1962), 442; and John Paterson, "Jeremiah," in *Peake's Commentary*, 550, 562; and Stout, *New England Soul*, 6.
20. How, *Narrative*, 3. How's diary must have been smuggled out of the prison after his death and taken to Boston, where it was published by the same publisher as the Norton narrative. One can assume that the original manuscript has been lost.
21. How, *Narrative*, 22, 2.
22. How, *Narrative*, 3, 13.
23. How, *Narrative*, 14. Many of the raids that How describes were a part of the French counter-offensive carried out against New York and the New England frontier between 1746 and 1748 due to the exposed position of Quebec after the fall of Louisbourg in 1745. For more on this period see George F.G. Stanley, *New France: The Last Phase, 1744-1760* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1968), 25-28; For a good discussion of the different types of prayer, as well as the individual and social function of prayer, see Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, chapter 5, esp. 113-24.
24. How, *Narrative*, 2, 4, 5, 12, 14.
25. How, *Narrative*, 12.
26. How, *Narrative*, 12, 2, 6, 9, 10, 14-22.
27. How, *Narrative*, 22. It is, of course, impossible to determine whether the printer or the person who found How's diary after his death in prison added this epitaph. Given the title page, however, more than likely the printer was the "unknown hand."

28. Norton, *Redeemed Captive*. According to Clifford K. Shipton and James E. Mooney, eds., *National Index of American Imprints Through 1800*, vol. 2 (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society and Barre Publishers, 1969), Norton was born in 1716 and died in 1778.
29. Norton, *Redeemed Captive*, 11, 12; 20-2; 19, 25, 26, 28.
30. Norton, *Redeemed Captive*, 8, 18, 28; How, *Narrative*, 20.
31. Norton, *Redeemed Captive*, 4, 14, 16, 12, 13.
32. Norton, *Redeemed Captive*, 40.
33. Norton, *Redeemed Captive*, 31.
34. red Anderson, *A People's Army: Massachusetts, Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984) also notes that the belief in Providence that he found prevalent among provincial soldiers during the Seven Years' War was, by the mid-eighteenth century, already rather old-fashioned. Norton's reflections, particularly his doubts on the subject of punishment, immediately take him out of the category of a "New Light" preacher. Perhaps he belonged to or at least had sympathies with the section of ministers who, as early as the 1720s, maintained that religion was more a matter of "reason" than inward spiritual experience. David Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, 244.
35. In this case, at least, these "printers" were not the purveyors of "rationalization and progressive thinking that we call *modernity*," Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (London and Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), ix. Rather, ultimately these individuals used their technology to reinforce traditional ways of thinking, clearly because it was profitable to do so.
36. The existence of these contrasts also points out to the historian the necessity of studying the individual in history in order to penetrate finer shades of historical meaning; that perhaps a collectivist approach, which would, for example, have taken the Biblical quotes on the title pages as reflective of colonial American mentality, masks a more complex multi-dimensional reality.

The predominance of the individual Providential view is probably not indicative of a general trend away from belief in the total Providential world view during this period. David Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, also notes the diversity of religious experience in seventeenth-century New England. More specifically, Hall notes that Henry Dunster, a minister and president of Harvard College, expressed a definite affirmation of the total Providential viewpoint. However, other individuals he studies expressed doubts about

God's Providence – that the operations of the divine economy were often inconsistent, and it was troubling to some people that God should appear so indifferent to prayer (“The World of Print and Collective Mentality in Seventeenth-Century New England,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 41[1984]: 54).