

## PART ONE

# *Pre-Revolutionary Roots, 1607–1760*

### INTRODUCTION: THE LONG ROOTS OF MODERN DISSENT

An argument could be made that the history of the United States began in 1502, when Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales, died at the age of 15. Or in 1517, when Luther tacked his Ninety-five Theses to the door of Wittenberg Cathedral. Or in 1553, when Mary Tudor began her reign by restoring the Catholic faith to England and initiating the martyrdom of the heretics. In a sense these sixteenth-century developments would eventually have a powerful impact on the founding of English colonies in the New World, for these events led to a critical elevation of dissenting voices in the mother country and the eventual decision of many people, believing their differences were not being adequately addressed at home, to remove themselves to the American wilderness.

So dissent was endemic and pivotal in the political and intellectual history of the United States even before the idea of an independent nation in the New World had begun to take shape. Of course, a primary motive that propelled many colonists to leave their homelands and venture out into the unknown was economic. Enclosure, population growth, and increasing poverty had a huge impact. The economic motive cannot be in any way minimized, but understanding the complex texture and nuances of American history requires understanding the significant role dissent played. And it is important to appreciate the ironic fact that often those who raised voices of dissent and as a consequence were either demonized in their time as menaces to society or ignored as pathetic eccentrics became, to later generations, heroes and icons.



After Henry VII defeated Richard III at Bosworth Field in 1485 and consolidated the Tudor hold on the throne of England, he sought an alliance with one of England's chief rivals on the continent, Spain. To create this alliance, a marriage was arranged between Henry's son Arthur, the Prince of Wales, and Catherine of Aragon, the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella. Within the year, at the age of 15, the ailing Arthur had died, and the accord with Spain was in jeopardy. After a good deal of diplomatic maneuvering, Henry VII convinced Pope Julius II to grant a special dispensation dissolving the marriage so that Catherine could be married off to Arthur's younger brother, Henry. When the marriage took place, the alliance with Spain became a reality. And it was Catherine of Aragon who was Henry VIII's queen when he succeeded his father in 1509.

On the continent, during the early sixteenth century, a young priest in Wittenberg, Martin Luther, began questioning many practices of the church. To help pay for the construction and artistic embellishment of St. Peter's Basilica and the Sistine Chapel, the pope had authorized the sale of indulgences, pluralism (by which a bishop could profit from holding more than one benefice), and other corrupt practices. To Luther, the sale of indulgences, which purportedly minimized the time a purchaser would have to spend in purgatory, gave the impression that believers could buy their way into heaven and that salvation came with a price. And so in 1517, after much prayer and contemplation, he tacked his Ninety-five Theses to the door of the cathedral in an effort to stimulate a debate that he hoped would lead the church to correct these abuses. Debate was not exactly what he got. The ensuing uproar got him excommunicated. He and his followers eventually formed the Lutheran church, and the Protestant Reformation was thereby launched. The primary problem these "protestors" presented to the church had to do with one of the central tenets of Luther's beliefs: that the only source of God's truth was Holy Scripture and therefore the Bible had authority, not the church hierarchy of pope, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and priests. This undermining of the hierarchical structure of the church could not be allowed to go unchallenged. Luther, after his excommunication, was protected by numerous German princes who saw the political and economic advantages of emancipating themselves and their principalities from the strictures of the Vatican.

At first, one of the pope's most significant allies in his quarrel with Luther was England's Henry VIII. In fact, Henry issued a pamphlet, ghostwritten by Thomas More, that so vehemently attacked the Lutheran heresy that a grateful pope bestowed upon Henry and his successors the title "Defender of the Faith." To this day, the English monarch retains this title, although it is now a different faith that is defended.

In the decade of the 1520s, the plot thickened, and a veritable soap opera emerged. Henry VIII, increasingly distraught that Catherine had not produced a male heir, began to question the legality and sanctity of his marriage to his brother's widow. Henry was concerned that if he died without a male heir,

England would be plunged back into the chaos that it had known during the Wars of the Roses and that as a result another dynasty would attempt to place a male on the throne. Seeking to free himself of Catherine, he requested a dispensation from Pope Clement VII to dissolve the marriage. Normally, this would not pose any significant problem for the pope, but one of Clement VII's staunchest allies in the struggle against Lutheranism was Holy Roman Emperor Charles V—Catherine's nephew. Not wishing to alienate Charles V, the pope rejected Henry's request. Henry's response was to have Cardinal Wolsey, the archbishop of Canterbury, grant a divorce. Henry divorced Catherine and married Anne Boleyn, whereupon Clement VII excommunicated Henry and Cardinal Wolsey. England, because of Henry's actions, moved into the Protestant camp.

When in 1533 Anne gave birth to a daughter, Henry was nearly beside himself. He made the decision to get rid of Anne and take yet another wife, who would presumably bear him a son. (Never, during any of this, did Henry consider he might be at fault! To him, it was the woman's fault, coupled with the fact that God was punishing him for having married his brother's widow.) Not wishing to go through another divorce, he had Anne tried on false charges of adultery. Found guilty of adultery (and therefore of treason), Anne was condemned to death. No sooner was she beheaded than Henry married Jane Seymour. His third wife eventually bore the desired son in 1538, but the infant Edward was sickly, and Jane died of complications from childbirth. Henry, not very good at being alone, went through another three wives (Anne of Cleves, divorced; Catherine Howard, beheaded; Catherine Paar, survived) before his death in 1547. His 9-year-old son succeeded him as Edward VI.

Under Edward's short reign, the Reformation in England was consolidated. Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer introduced the *Book of Common Prayer* and established the requirements for the polity of the Church of England. However, upon Edward's death at the age of 16 in 1553, the new monarch, Mary Tudor, the Catholic daughter of Catherine of Aragon, restored Roman Catholicism as the true, rightful church of England. Under Mary, many Protestants, Thomas Cranmer included, were burnt at the stake for heresy. Thousands fled England for the safety of the continent, especially to such Protestant enclaves as Frankfurt and John Calvin's Geneva. When "Bloody" Mary died in 1558, she was succeeded by her half sister, Anne Boleyn's daughter, Elizabeth I. With the Elizabethan settlement, restoring Protestantism to England, many of the Marian exiles returned home. Their experience on the continent with Calvinism had radicalized them, and they soon demanded that Elizabeth purify the Church of England of its popish practices: vestments, crucifixes, and reading of prayers. Elizabeth turned a deaf ear to these "puritans," and thus throughout her long reign, radical religious dissenters and sects flourished.

In the early seventeenth century, with the Stuart accession, first of James I and then of Charles I, a number of these dissenters, discontented with the state of the church and despairing of ever accomplishing the total reformation they desired in England, began to abandon their homes and migrate first to Holland



and eventually to Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay Colony. The "pilgrims" who settled in Plymouth in 1620 (after a sojourn of 12 years in Holland) were known as "separatists." They no longer wished to be associated with the Church of England, preferring instead complete separation. Those who settled in Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1630s, however, were a different variety of Puritan. Although they were Independents ("non-separating puritans" according to scholar Perry Miller) who believed that each congregation was independent and should have complete authority to choose its own members and ministers, they had no intention of separating from the Church of England. To them, it was the true church. They believed that if they set up congregational churches in the New World, their brethren back home would use their example as a model to reform the Church of England. Governor John Winthrop's "city upon a hill" would thus be a "beacon unto the world."

Many of those who left for New England had high hopes of bettering themselves both socially and economically, but pursuing the fruition of Reformation was what prompted many of the first settlers to risk crossing the Atlantic. What is confusing to the modern mind is that these Puritans, seeking toleration for their beliefs, seeking to create the ideal society, and seeking to set up the pure church, seemed to become themselves, in their new wilderness home, zealously intolerant of others. Remember, however, that they were products of their own age who never believed that all faiths should be tolerated, only *their* faith, which they deeply believed was the only true one. They were not seeking tolerance in the New World; they were seeking to practice what they knew in their hearts to be the true faith and polity. In Massachusetts Bay Colony, intolerance of opinions that undermined the basis of Congregational beliefs was perceived as absolutely necessary for the survival of the Holy Commonwealth, which such dissenters as Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson, and Mary Dyer quickly discovered.

Colonies in which the economic motive took precedence over the religious also experienced outbreaks of dissent. In Virginia, Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 grew out of the grievances of settlers in the Piedmont region toward the colonial government in Williamsburg. Because such a large number of those who rose up in arms were indentured servants, the rebellion created so much anxiety about relying on indentured servants to solve the labor shortage in the colony that it added momentum to the growth of slavery in the Chesapeake region and established that slavery in the English colonies would be forever based on race. In Pennsylvania, the strong Quaker element led some to question the treatment of the Indians. William Penn himself insisted that Native Americans be dealt with fairly and that settlers had no right to take their land without compensation. Yet Penn's heirs moved away from his benevolent stance and allowed their hunger for land to dictate a far less humane relationship with the Indians. All throughout the colonies, Native Americans encountering the newcomers attempted with limited success to protest their treatment. Slaves, too, whose masters kept them illiterate and ignorant of such Enlightenment values as natural rights and liberty, tried as best they could to articulate their discontent. Women also were not afraid

to struggle against the confines of a male-dominated society and to strive for more liberty than men were willing to concede. And 40 years before the American Revolution, a fledgling newspaper in New York that was brought to trial for libeling corrupt politicians argued successfully for freedom of the press in one of the most momentous court cases of the colonial period.

## Roger Williams (c. 1603-1683)

*From the moment Roger Williams arrived in the colonies, he ran headlong into the Massachusetts Bay authorities. He served for a time as teacher of the Salem church (many churches in New England had two ministers: the pastor and the teacher), but his form of Puritanism was considered too radical by the ministers and magistrates of the colony. Williams called for the complete separation of the New England churches from the Church of England. He also challenged the king's authority to grant a charter to the colonists and, in effect, to usurp Indian land. Finally, he argued for complete religious toleration. These views led to his banishment from the colony in 1635, whereupon he sought refuge among the Narragansett Indians. Eventually he purchased land from the Narragansetts and, in 1636, founded the colony of Providence in Rhode Island.*

*In 1644 he sailed to England to secure a charter for the colony that would permit him to form a government. While in England, Williams published *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution* in which he called for religious toleration of all faiths—including Jews and atheists—and the complete separation of church and state. The book is set up as a dialogue between the position of such Puritans as John Cotton and John Winthrop (Truth) and Williams's own view (Peace). He claimed that magistrates had no right to become involved in religious affairs, nor did they have the power to punish breaches of the Ten Commandments.*

## THE BLOODY TENENT OF PERSECUTION: FOR THE CAUSE OF CONSCIENCE, DISCUSSED IN A CONFERENCE BETWEEN TRUTH AND PEACE, 1644

First, that the blood of so many hundred thousand souls of Protestants and Papists, spilt in the wars of present and former ages, for their respective consciences, is not required nor accepted by Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace.

SOURCE: Roger Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution* (Providence, RI: Narragansett Club Publications, 1867), vol. III.



Secondly, pregnant scriptures and arguments are throughout the work posed against the doctrine of persecution for cause of conscience.

Thirdly, satisfactory answers are given to scriptures, and objections produced by Mr. Calvin, Beza, Mr. Cotton, and the ministers of the New English churches and others former and later, tending to prove the doctrine of persecution for cause of conscience.

Fourthly, the doctrine of persecution for cause of conscience is proved guilty of all the blood of the souls crying for vengeance under the altar.

Fifthly, all civil states with their officers of justice in their respective constitutions and administrations are proved essentially civil, and therefore not judges, governors, or defenders of the spiritual or Christian state and worship.

Sixthly, it is the will and command of God that (since the coming of his Son the Lord Jesus) a permission of the most paganish, Jewish, Turkish, or antichristian consciences and worships, be granted to all men in all nations and countries; and they are only to be fought against with that sword which is only (in soul matters) able to conquer, to wit, the sword of God's Spirit, the Word of God.

Seventhly, the state of the Land of Israel, the kings and people thereof in peace and war, is proved figurative and ceremonial, and no pattern nor precedent for any kingdom or civil state in the world to follow.

Eighthly, God requireth not a uniformity of religion to be enacted and enforced in any civil state; which enforced uniformity (sooner or later) is the greatest occasion of civil war, ravishing of conscience, persecution of Christ Jesus in his servants, and of the hypocrisy and destruction of millions of souls.

Ninthly, in holding an enforced uniformity of religion in a civil state, we must necessarily disclaim our desires and hopes of the Jew's conversion to Christ.

Tenthly, an enforced uniformity of religion throughout a nation or civil state, confounds the civil and religious, denies the principles of Christianity and civility, and that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.

Eleventhly, the permission of other consciences and worships than a state professeth only can (according to God) procure a firm and lasting peace (good assurance being taken according to the wisdom of the civil state for uniformity of civil obedience from all forts).

Twelfthly, lastly, true civility and Christianity may both flourish in a state or kingdom, notwithstanding the permission of divers and contrary consciences, either of Jew or Gentile. . . .

TRUTH. I acknowledge that to molest any person, Jew or Gentile, for either professing doctrine, or practicing worship merely religious or spiritual, it is to persecute him, and such a person (whatever his doctrine or practice be, true or false) suffereth persecution for conscience.

But withal I desire it may be well observed that this distinction is not full and complete: for beside this that a man may be persecuted because he holds or practices what he believes in conscience to be a truth (as Daniel did, for which he was cast into the lions' den, Dan. 6), and many thousands of Christians, because they durst not cease to preach and practice what they believed was by God commanded, as the Apostles answered (Acts 4 & 5), I say besides this a man

may also be persecuted, because he dares not be constrained to yield obedience to such doctrines and worships as are by men invented and appointed. . . .

Dear TRUTH, I have two sad complaints:

First, the most sober of the witnesses, that dare to plead thy cause, how are they charged to be mine enemies, contentious, turbulent, seditious?

Secondly, thine enemies, though they speak and rail against thee, though they outrageously pursue, imprisonment, banish, kill thy faithful witnesses, yet how is all vermillion'd o'er for justice against the heretics? Yea, if they kindle coals, and blow the flames of devouring wars, that leave neither spiritual nor civil state, but burn up branch and root, yet how do all pretend an holy war? He that kills, and he that's killed, they both cry out: "It is for God, and for their conscience."

'Tis true, nor one nor other seldom dare to plead the mighty Prince Christ Jesus for their author, yet (both Protestant and Papist) pretend they have spoke with Moses and the Prophets who all, say they (before Christ came), allowed such holy persecutions, holy wars against the enemies of holy church. . . .

PEACE. I add that a civil sword (as woeful experience in all ages has proved) is so far from bringing or helping forward an opposite in religion to repentance that magistrates sin grievously against the work of God and blood of souls by such proceedings. Because as (commonly) the sufferings of false and antichristian teachers harden their followers, who being blind, by this means are occasioned to tumble into the ditch of hell after their blind leaders, with more inflamed zeal of lying confidence. So, secondly, violence and a sword of steel begets such an impression in the sufferers that certainly they conclude (as indeed that religion cannot be true which needs such instruments of violence to uphold it so) that persecutors are far from soft and gentle commiseration of the blindness of others. . . .

On the other side, to batter down idolatry, false worship, heresy, schism, blindness, hardness, out of the soul and spirit, it is vain, improper, and unsuitable to bring those weapons which are used by persecutors, stocks, whips, prisons, swords, gibbets, stakes, etc. (where these seem to prevail with some cities or kingdoms, a stronger force sets up again, what a weaker pull'd down), but against these spiritual strongholds in the souls of men, spiritual artillery and weapons are proper, which are mighty through God to subdue and bring under the very thought to obedience, or else to bind fast the soul with chains of darkness, and lock it up in the prison of unbelief and hardness to eternity. . . .

PEACE. I pray descend now to the second evil which you observe in the answerer's position, viz., that it would be evil to tolerate notorious evildoers, seducing teachers, etc.

TRUTH. I say the evil is that he most improperly and confusedly joins and couples seducing teachers with scandalous lives.

PEACE. But is it not true that the world is full of seducing teachers, and is it not true that seducing teachers are notorious evildoers?

TRUTH. I answer, far be it from me to deny either, and yet in two things I shall discover the great evil of this joining and coupling seducing teachers, and



scandalous lives as one adequate or proper object of the magistrate's care and work to suppress and punish.

First, it is not an homogeneous [homogeneous] (as we speak) but an heterogeneous [heterogeneous] commixture or joining together of things most different in kinds and natures, as if they were both of one consideration....

TRUTH. I answer, in granting with Brentius [Lutheran theologian Johann Brenz] that man hath not power to make laws to bind conscience, he overthrows such his tenent and practice as restrain men from their worship, according to their conscience and belief, and constrain them to such worships (though it be out of a pretense that they are convinced) which their own souls tell them they have no satisfaction nor faith in.

Secondly, whereas he affirms that men may make laws to see the laws of God observed.

I answer, God needeth not the help of a material sword of steel to assist the sword of the Spirit in the affairs of conscience, to those men, those magistrates, yea that commonwealth which makes such magistrates, must needs have power and authority from Christ Jesus to fit judge and to determine in all the great controversies concerning doctrine, discipline, government, etc.

And then I ask whether upon this ground it must not evidently follow that: Either there is no lawful common earth nor civil state of men in the world, which is not qualified with this spiritual discerning (and then also that the very commonwealth hath more light concerning the church of Christ than the church itself).

Or, that the commonwealth and magistrates thereof must judge and punish as they are persuaded in their own belief and conscience (be their conscience paganish, Turkish, or antichristian) what is this but to confound heaven and earth together, and not only to take away the being of Christianity out of the world, but to take away all civility, and the world out of the world, and to lay all upon heaps of confusion?...

PEACE. The fourth head is the proper means of both these powers to attain their ends.

First, the proper means whereby the civil power may and should attain its end are only political, and principally these five.

First, the erecting and establishing what form of civil government may seem in wisdom most meet, according to general rules of the world, and state of the people.

Secondly, the making, publishing, and establishing of wholesome civil laws, not only such as concern civil justice, but also the free passage of true religion; for outward civil peace ariseth and is maintained from them both, from the latter as well as from the former.

Civil peace cannot stand entire, where religion is corrupted (2 Chron. 15. 3. 5. 6; and Judges 8). And yet such laws, though conversant about religion, may still be counted civil laws, as, on the contrary, an oath cloth still remain religious though conversant about civil matters.

Thirdly, election and appointment of civil officers to see execution to those laws.

Fourthly, civil punishments and rewards of transgressors and observers of these laws.

Fifthly, taking up arms against the enemies of civil peace.

Secondly, the means whereby the church may and should attain her ends are only ecclesiastical, which are chiefly five.

First, setting up that form of church government only of which Christ hath given them a pattern in his Word.

Secondly, acknowledging and admitting of no lawgiver in the church but Christ and the publishing of His laws.

Thirdly, electing and ordaining of such officers only, as Christ hath appointed in his Word.

Fourthly, to receive into their fellowship them that are approved and inflicting spiritual censures against them that offend.

Fifthly, prayer and patience in suffering any evil from them that be without, who disturb their peace.

So that magistrates, as magistrates, have no power of setting up the form of church government, electing church officers, punishing with church censures, but to see that the church does her duty herein. And on the other side, the churches as churches, have no power (though as members of the commonwealth they may have power) of erecting or altering forms of civil government, electing of civil officers, inflicting civil punishments (no not on persons excommunicate) as by deposing magistrates from their civil authority, or withdrawing the hearts of the people against them, to their laws, no more than to discharge wives, or children, or servants, from due obedience to their husbands, parents, or masters; or by taking up arms against their magistrates, though he persecute them for conscience; for though members of churches who are public officers also of the civil state may suppress by force the violence of usurpers, as Jehoiada did Athaliah, yet this they do not as members of the church but as officers of the civil state....

## Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643)

Anne Hutchinson is one of the most controversial figures in colonial American history. She was an extraordinary woman who led weekly in-depth discussions about the sermons delivered the previous Sunday by Boston ministers John Cotton and John Wilson. Partly because she had stepped out of the submissive role of her gender and partly because she began accusing John Wilson of preaching the "popish" doctrine of a covenant of works (salvation could be achieved through individual effort and not through faith alone), she was brought to trial. During the trial, she asserted that she was in direct communication with God. To Puritans,



*who believed that only scripture reveals God's truth, this was the heresy of antinomianism. If the final authority of scripture was supplanted by direct communication with God, then what was to prevent any individual, even a murderer, from saying that he was only carrying out God's command? This would lead to the breakdown of law. As a result, Anne Hutchinson was banished.*

## THE TRIAL OF ANNE HUTCHINSON, 1637

MR. WINTHROP, GOVERNOR: Mrs. Hutchinson, you are called here as one of those that have troubled the peace of the commonwealth and the churches here; you are known to be a woman that hath had a great share in the promoting and divulging of those opinions that are causes of this trouble, and . . . you have spoken divers things as we have been informed very prejudicial to the honour of the churches and ministers thereof, and you have maintained a meeting and an assembly in your house that hath been condemned by the general assembly as a thing not tolerable nor comely in the sight of God nor fitting for your sex, and notwithstanding that was cried down you have continued the same, therefore we have thought good to send for you to understand how things are, that if you be in an erroneous way we may reduce you that so you may become a profitable member here among us, otherwise if you be obstinate in your course that then the court may take such course that you may trouble us no further, therefore I would intreat you to express whether you do not hold and assent in practice to those opinions and factions that have been handled in court already, that is to say, whether you do not justify Mr. Wheelwright's sermon and the petition.

Mrs. HUTCHINSON: I am called here to answer before you but I hear no things laid to my charge.

Gov: I have told you some already and more I can tell you.

Mrs. H: Name one Sir.

Gov: Have I not named some already?

Mrs. H: What have I said or done?

Gov: Why for your doings, this you did harbour and countenance those that are parties in this faction that you have heard of.

Mrs. H: That's matter of conscience, Sir.

Gov: Your conscience you must keep or it must be kept for you.

Mrs. H: Must not I then entertain the saints because I must keep my conscience.

Gov: Say that one brother should commit felony or treason and come to his other brother's house, if he knows him guilty and conceals him he is guilty of the same. It is his conscience to entertain him, but if his conscience

comes into act in giving countenance and entertainment to him that hath broken the law he is guilty too. So if you do countenance those that are transgressors of the law you are in the same fact.

Mrs. H: What law do they transgress?

Gov: The law of God and of the state.

Mrs. H: In what particular?

Gov: Why in this among the rest, whereas the Lord doth say honour thy father and thy mother.

Mrs. H: Ey Sir in the Lord.

Gov: This honour you have broke in giving countenance to them.

Mrs. H: In entertaining those did I entertain them against any act (for there is the thing) or what God hath appointed?

Gov: You knew that Mr. Wheelwright did preach this sermon and those that countenance him in this do break a law.

Mrs. H: What law have I broken?

Gov: Why the fifth commandment.

Mrs. H: I deny that for he saith in the Lord. . . .

Gov: You have counselled them.

Mrs. H: Wherein?

Gov: Why in entertaining them.

Mrs. H: What breach of law is that Sir?

Gov: Why dishonouring of parents.

Mrs. H: But put the case Sir that I do fear the Lord and my parents, may not I entertain them that fear the Lord because my parents will not give me leave?

Gov: If they be the fathers of the commonwealth, and they of another religion, if you entertain them then you dishonour your parents and are justly punishable.

Mrs. H: If I entertain them, as they have dishonoured their parents I do.

Gov: No but you by countenancing them above others put honor upon them.

Mrs. H: I may put honor upon them as the children of God and as they do honor the Lord.

Gov: We do not mean to discourse with those of your sex but only this; you do adhere unto them and do endeavour to set forward this faction and so you do dishonour us.

Mrs. H: I do acknowledge no such thing neither do I think that I ever put any dishonour upon you.

Gov: Why do you keep such a meeting at your house as you do every week upon a set day?

Mrs. H: It is lawful for me so to do, as it is all your practices and can you find a warrant for yourself and condemn me for the same thing? The ground of my taking it up was, when I first came to this land because I did not go to such meetings as those were, it was presently reported that I did not allow of such meetings but held them unlawful and therefore in that regard they said I was proud and did despise all ordinances, upon that a friend came unto me and told me of it and I to prevent such aspersions took it up, but it was in practice before I came therefore I was not the first. . . .



Gov: Your course is not to be suffered for, besides that we find such a course as this to be greatly prejudicial to the state, besides the occasion that it is to seduce many honest persons that are called to those meetings and your opinions being known to be different from the word of God may seduce many simple souls that resort unto you, besides that the occasion which hath come of late hath come from none but such as have frequented your meetings, so that now they are flown off from magistrates and ministers and this since they have come to you, and besides that it will not well stand with the Commonwealth that families should be neglected for so many neighbours and dames and so much time spent, we see no rule of God for this, we see not that any should have authority to set up any other exercises besides what authority hath already set up and so what hurt comes of this you will be guilty of and we for suffering you.

Mrs. H: Sir I do not believe that to be so.

Gov: Well, we see how it is we must therefore put it away from you, or restrain you from maintaining this course.

Mrs. H: If you have a rule for it from God's word you may.

Gov: We are your judges, and not you ours and we must compel you to it.

Mrs. H: If it please you by authority to put it down I will freely let you for I am subject to your authority....

Mr. DUDLEY, DEP. Gov: Here hath been much spoken concerning Mrs. Hutchinson's meetings and among other answers she saith that men come not there, I would ask you this one question then, whether never any man was at your meeting?

Gov: There are two meetings kept at their house.

DEP. Gov: How is there two meetings?

Mrs. H: Ey Sir, I shall I not equivocate, there is a meeting of men and women and there is a meeting only for women.

DEP. Gov: Are they both constant?

Mrs. H: No, but upon occasions they are deferred.

Mr. ENDICOTT: Who teaches in the men's meetings none but men, do not women sometimes?

Mrs. H: Never as I heard, not one.

DEP. Gov: I would go a little higher with Mrs. Hutchinson. About three years ago we were all in peace. Mrs. Hutchinson from that time she came hath made a disturbance, and some that came over with her in the ship did inform me what she was as soon as she was landed. I being then in place dealt with the pastor and teacher of Boston and desired them to enquire of her, and then I was satisfied that she held nothing different from us, but within half a year after, she had vented divers of her strange opinions and had made parties in the country, and at length it comes that Mr. Cotton and Mr. Vane were of her judgment, but Mr. Cotton cleared himself that he was not of that mind, but now it appears by this woman's meeting that Mrs. Hutchinson hath so forestalled the minds of many by their resort to her meeting that now she hath a potent party in the country. Now if all these things have endangered us as

from that foundation and if she in particular hath disparaged all our ministers in the land that they have preached a covenant of works, and only Mr. Cotton a covenant of grace, why this is not to be suffered, and therefore being driven to the foundation and it being found that Mrs. Hutchinson is she that hath depraved all the ministers and hath been the cause of what is fallen out, why we must take away the foundation and the building will fall.

Mrs. H: I pray Sir prove it that I said they preached nothing but a covenant of works.

DEP. Gov: Nothing but a covenant of works, why a Jesuit may preach truth sometimes.

Mrs. H: Did I ever say they preached a covenant of works then?

DEP. Gov: If they do not preach a covenant of grace clearly, then they preach a covenant of works.

Mrs. H: No Sir, one may preach a covenant of grace more clearly than another, so I said....

DEP. Gov: I will make it plain that you did say that the ministers did preach a covenant of works.

Mrs. H: I deny that....

DEP. Gov: What do I do charging of you if you deny what is so fully proved.

Gov: Here are six undeniable ministers who say it is true and yet you deny that you did say that they did preach a covenant of works and that they were not able ministers of the gospel, and it appears plainly that you have spoken it, and whereas you say that it was drawn from you in a way of friendship, you did profess then that it was out of conscience that you spake and said. The fear of man is a snare wherefore should I be afraid, I will speak plainly and freely.

Mrs. H: That I absolutely deny, for the first question was thus answered by me to them. They thought that I did conceive there was a difference between them and Mr. Cotton. At the first I was somewhat reserved, then said Mr. Peters I pray answer the question directly as fully and as plainly as you desire we should tell you our minds. Mrs. Hutchinson we come for plain dealing and telling you our hearts. Then I said I would deal as plainly as I could, and whereas they say I said they were under a covenant of works and in the state of the apostles why these two speeches cross one another. I might say they might preach a covenant of works as did the apostles, but to preach a covenant of works and to be under a covenant of works is another business.

DEP. Gov: There have been six witnesses to prove this and yet you deny it.

Mrs. H: I deny that these were the first words that were spoken.

Gov: You make the case worse, for you clearly shew that the ground of your opening your mind was not to satisfy them but to satisfy your own conscience....

Mrs. H: I acknowledge using the words of the apostle to the Corinthians unto him, that they that were ministers of the letter and not the spirit did preach a covenant of works....

Gov: Let us state the case and then we may know what to do. That which is laid to Mrs. Hutchinson's charge is this, that she hath traduced the magistrates and ministers of this jurisdiction, that she hath said the ministers preached



a covenant of works and Mr. Cotton a covenant of grace, and that they were not able ministers of the gospel, and she excuses it that she made it a private conference and with a promise of secrecy, &c. now this is charged upon her, and they therefore sent for her seeing she made it her table talk, and then she said the fear of man was a snare and therefore she would not be affaired of them. . . .

Mrs. H: If you please to give me leave I shall give you the ground of what I know to be true. Being much troubled to see the falseness of the constitution of the church of England, I had like to have turned separatist; whereupon I kept a day of solemn humiliation and pondering of the thing; this scripture was brought unto me—he that denies Jesus Christ to be come in the flesh is antichrist—This I considered of and in considering found that the papists did not deny him to be come in the flesh nor we did not deny him—who then was antichrist? . . . The Lord knows that I could not open scripture; he must by his propheticall office open it unto me. . . . I bless the Lord, he hath let me see which was the cleare ministry and which the wrong. Since that time I confess I have been more choice and he hath let me to distinguish between the voice of my beloved and the voice of Moses, the voice of John Baptist and the voice of antichrist, for all those voices are spoken of in scripture. Now if you do condemn me for speaking what in my conscience I know to be truth I must commit myself unto the Lord.

Mr. NOWELL: How do you know that that was the spirit?

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

DEP. GOV: By an immediate voice.

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

DEP. GOV: How! an immediate revelation.

Mrs. H: By the voice of his own spirit to my soul. I will give you another scripture, Jer. 46, 27, 28—out of which the Lord shewed me what he would do for me and the rest of his servants—But after he was pleased to reveal himself to me. . . . Ever since that time I have been confident of what he hath revealed unto me. . . . Therefore I desire you to look to it, for you see this scripture fulfilled this day and therefore I desire you that as you tender the Lord and the church and commonwealth to consider and look what you do. You have power over my body but the Lord Jesus hath power over my body and soul, and assure yourselves thus much, you do as much as in you lies to put the Lord Jesus Christ from you, and if you go on in this course you begin you will bring a curse upon you and your posterity, and the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. . . .

Gov: The court hath already declared themselves satisfied concerning the things you hear, and concerning the troublesomeness of her spirit and the danger of her course amongst us, which is not to be suffered. Therefore if it be the mind of the court that Mrs. Hutchinson for these things that appear before us is unfit for our society, and if it be the mind of the court that she shall be banished out of our liberties and imprisoned till she be sent away, let them hold up their hands. . . .

Gov: Mrs. Hutchinson, the sentence of the court you hear is that you are banished from out of our jurisdiction as being a woman not fit for our society, and are to be imprisoned till the court shall send you away.

Mrs. H: I desire to know wherefore I am banished?

Gov: Say no more, the court knows wherefore and is satisfied.

## Alice Tilly (1594–c. 1660)

*Petitions in colonial Massachusetts were not happily received by those in authority, and there are even cases on record in which petitioners were penalized for having submitted their complaints. Still, people did petition the General Court when they felt they wanted to protest a decision that had been handed down. When John Wheelwright was banished, a group of men petitioned the General Court; others protested Governor John Winthrop's role in resolving the Hingham militia election by signing a petition. In 1649, when midwife Alice Tilly was convicted, a group of nearly 300 women (and some men) filed a total of six petitions protesting her sentence. The court records are no longer extant, and it is not known precisely what Alice Tilly's offense was, but we do have the petitions, and we do know that the petitioners were successful in their effort to secure Alice Tilly's release so that she could continue to perform her midwife services in the colony. The Tilly case is the earliest known example of collective political action by women in the English colonies and indicates that reproductive issues were significant long before Margaret Sanger's twentieth-century birth control movement. (For other petitions see the full edition of Dissent in America: The Voices That Shaped a Nation.)*

### PETITION FOR THE RELEASE OF ALICE TILLY, 1650

#### PETITION 6: TO THE GENERAL COURT FROM THE WOMEN OF BOSTON, BEFORE MAY 22, 1650

To the right worppl John Endicott Esq Governour, Tho: Dudley Esq Deputy Governor with the rest of the worppl Court.

The humble Petition of divers women in Boston.

Humbly sheweth, tht whereas yor Petitioners having had manifold experiences of the skill & ability (through the good hand of God) of an usefull instrument,

SOURCE: Mary Beth Norton, "The Ablest Midwife That Wee Knowe in the Land: Mistress Alice Tilly and the Women of Boston and Dorchester, 1649–1650," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 55, 1 (Jan. 1998), 105–134.



who by providence is become a prisoner to yor Worppes (namely Alice Tilly wife to Wm Tilly) by having the black side of her actions presented to yor Worppes, & therein severall crimes written on her forehead, wch peradventure God nor her owne conscience may lay to her charge, further then this speaking dispensation, to take her off an ouer-much selfe conceitnes in what shee hath received, tht shee may remember tht shee hath all upon the accompt of receipt, wch yr Petitioners hope shall bee, as pray itt may bee the effect thereof.

Wherefore yor humble Petitioners though in all humility, yett in childlike boldnes, to & wth yor worpps, whose care wee beleve, is as for our good, so for the posterity to succede out of wch care (wee as hope so) desire tht yor Worpps will please to comiserate the condition of so many of yor poore trembling Petitioners, whose burdens wee doubt nott, butt will move yor compassions, as in answering some who have gone before us in this way of petitioning; so to orsetles wth as much fauour as clemency may afford, ouerlooking the line of justice, so farre as will stand with good conscience & Honor, wherein wee dare nott assume aboue or line to direct, butt leave the composure thereof to God & the wisdom given of God to you, who wee doubt nott butt will direct yor worpps therein, so as that his owne honour may bee preserved, the security of yor children, yea those of the weakest sexe provided for, & the humble requests of yor poore petitioners granted, in opening the door of free liberty to or wonted way of instrumentall helpfulnes by her, of whom or experiences are gratt, & necessities greater.

Yor fauours herein given forth will more oblige yor Petitioners, who shall how euer count themselves bound to pray for you, & all of God sett ouer us, while wee shall remaine (though weak e yett) true hearted well wishers, & endeaunours of the publick good of those churches & Comon wealth God hath cast us in.

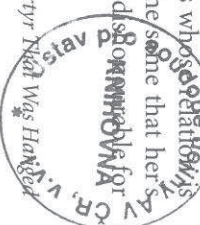
## Mary Dyer (c. 1611–1660)

*Mary Dyer was a follower of Anne Hutchinson during the Antinomian controversy. When Hutchinson was banished, Mary Dyer went with her to Rhode Island. Later, in the 1650s, Dyer went back to England, where she became a Quaker. Returning to Boston in 1657, she began proselytizing for Quakerism. She was imprisoned in 1657 and then again in 1659. When she was released, she was banished from Massachusetts Bay Colony and told that she would be executed if she ever returned. In October 1659 she did go back, was sentenced to death, and, while awaiting her turn on the gallows as two Quaker men (Marmaduke Stephenson and William Robinson) were hanged at her side, she was reprieved and again banished. In May 1660 she visited Boston a final time, knowing exactly what lay in store for her. She was hanged on June first.*

*This is one of the letters she wrote from prison. (For more see the full edition of Dissent in America: The Voices That Shaped a Nation.)*

## MARY DYER'S FIRST LETTER WRITTEN FROM PRISON, 1659

Whereas I am by many charged with the Guiltiness of my own Blood: if you mean in my Coming to Boston, I am therein clear, and justified by the Lord, in whose Will I came, who will require my Blood of you, be sure, who have made a Law to take away the Lives of the Innocent Servants of God, if they come among you who are called by you, 'Cursed Quakers,' altho I say, and am a Living Witness for them and the Lord, that he hath blessed them, and sent them unto you: Therefore, be not found Fighters against God, but let my Counsel and Request be accepted with you, To repeal all such Laws, that the Truth and Servants of the Lord, may have free Passage among you and you be kept from shedding innocent Blood, which I know there are many among you would not do, if they knew it so to be: Nor can the Enemy that stirreth you up thus to destroy this holy Seed, in any Measure contravell, the great Damage that you will by thus doing procure: Therefore, seeing the Lord hath not hid it from me, it lyeth upon me, in Love to your Souls, thus to persuade you: I have no Self Ends, the Lord knoweth, for if my Life were freely granted by you, it would not avail me, nor could I expect it of you, so long as I shall daily hear and see, of the Sufferings of these People, my dear Brethren and Seed, with whom my Life is bound up, as I have done these two Years, and not it is like to increase, even unto Death, for no evil Doing, but Coming among you: Was ever the like laws heard of, among a People that profess Christ come in the Flesh? And have such no other Weapons, but such Laws, to fight with against spiritual Wickedness with all, as you call it? Wo is me for you! Of whom take you Counsel! Search with the light of Christ in you, and it will show you of whom, as it hath done me, and many more, who have been disobedient and deceived, as now you are, which Light, as you come into, and obey what is made manifest to you therein, you will not repent, that you were kept from shedding Blood, tho be a Woman: It's not my own Life I seek (for I chose rather to suffer with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Egypt) but the Life of the Seed, which I know the Lord hath blessed, and therefore seeks the Enemy thus vehemently the Life thereof to destroy, as in all ages he ever did: Oh! hearken not unto him, I beseech you, for the Seed's Sake, which is One in all, and is dear in the Sight of God; which they that touch, Touch the Apple of his Eye, and cannot escape his Wrath; whereof I having felt, cannot but persuade all men that I have to do withal, especially you who name the Name of Christ, to depart from such Iniquity, as shedding BLOOD, even of the SAINTS of the Most High. Therefore let my Request have as much Acceptance with you, if you be Christians as Esther had with Ahasuerus who sought for his was: and he said not, that he had made a Law, and it would be dangerous to change it.





him to revoke it: but when he understood that these People were so prized by her, and so nearly concerned her (as in Truth these are to me) as you may see what he did for her: Therefore I leave these Lines with you, appealing to the faithful and true Witness of God, which is One in all Consciences, before whom we must all appear; with whom I shall eternally rest, in Everlasting Joy and Peace, whether you will hear or forbear: With him is my Reward, with whom to live is my Joy, and to die is my Gain, tho' I had not had your forty-eight Hours Warning, for the Preparation of the Death of Mary Dyar.

And know this also, that if through the Enmity you shall declare yourselves worse than Ahasueras, and confirm your Law, tho' it were but the taking away the Life of one of us, That the Lord will overthrow both your Law and you, by his righteous Judgments and Plagues poured justly upon you who now whilst you are warned thereof, and tenderly sought unto, may avoid the one, by removing the other; If you neither hear nor obey the Lord nor his Servants, yet will he send more of his Servants among you, so that your End shall be frustrated, that think to restrain them, you call 'Cursed Quakers' from coming among you, by any Thing you can do to them; yea, verily, he hath a Seed here among you, for whom we have suffered all this while, and yet suffer: whom the Lord of the Harvest will send forth more Labourers to gather (out of the Mouths of the Devourers of all sorts) into his Fold, where he will lead them into fresh Pastures, even the Paths of Righteousness, for his Name's Sake: Oh! let non of you put this Day far from you, which verily in the light of the Lord I see approaching, even to many in and about Boston, which is the bitterest and darkest professing Place, and so to continue as long as you have done, that ever I heard of; let the time past therefore suffice, for such a Profession as bring forth such Fruits as these Laws are, In Love and in the Spirit of Meekness, I again beseech you, for I have no Enmity to the Persons of any; but you shall know, that God will not be mocked, but what you sow, that shall you reap from him, that will render to everyone according to the Deeds done in the Body, whether Good or Evil, Even so be it, saith

Mary Dyar

## Nathaniel Bacon (1647–1676)

*Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 was the result of a series of economic problems and the rising costs of real estate in colonial Virginia. New settlers arriving in the colony and servants finishing their indentures could not afford the more desirable plots of land in the settled areas. As a result, they began moving to the backcountry, where they came into conflict with the Indians. A number of frontiersmen, under the leadership of Nathaniel Bacon, began*

wantonly attacking Indians. When the governor, Sir William Berkeley, attempting to restore peace, reprimanded Bacon for his attacks on the Indians, many settlers took Bacon's side and became critical of the governor. To them, it appeared that Berkeley was siding with the Indians. In July, Bacon and his followers marched on the colonial capital at Jamestown, where he demanded to be given a commission, granting him official authority to fight the Indians. Berkeley relented and, in essence, abdicated power. On July 30, Bacon issued a "Declaration in the Name of the People" in which he cataloged his grievances. For the next two months, Bacon held power in the capital, but when Berkeley tried to regain control, Bacon, on September 19, burned Jamestown to the ground. In October, Bacon suddenly became ill with dysentery and died. The rebellion was over.

*In the past, many historians viewed Bacon's Rebellion as a precursor to the American Revolution. More recently, historians have emphasized the power struggle between the Virginia tidewater elite and the backcountry people.*

## DECLARATION IN THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE, JULY 30, 1676

### THE DECLARACON OF THE PEOPLE

1. For haveing upon specious pretences of publike works raised greater unjust taxes upon the Comonality for the advancement of private favorites and other sinister ends, but noe visible effects in any measure adequate, For not haveing dureing this long time of his Gouvernment in any measure advanced this hopefull Colony either by fortificacons Townes or Trade.
2. For haveing abused and rendered contemptable the Magistrates of Justice, by advancing to places of Judicature, scandalous and Ignorant favorites.
3. For haveing wronged his Majesties prerogative and interest, by assuming Monopoly of the Beaver trade, and for haveing in that unjust gain betrayed and sold his Majesties Country and the lives of his loyall subjects, to the barbarous heathen.
4. For haveing, protected, favoured, and Imboldned the Indians against his Majesties loyall subjects, never contriveing, requiring, or appointing any due or proper meanes of satisfaction for theire many Invasions, robbories, and murders comitted upon us.
5. For haveing when the Army of English, was just upon the track of those Indians, who now in all places burne, spoyle, murther and when we might with

SOURCE: Nathaniel Bacon, "The declaration of the people against Sir William Berkeley, and present governors of Virginia," 1676. In Edward D. Neill, *Virginia Carolinum: The Colony Under the Rule of Charles the First and Second*, A.D. 1625–1685 (Albany, NY: 1886), 361–365.



ease have destroyed them: who then were in open hostility, for then having expressly countermanded, and sent back our Army, by passing his word for the peaceable demeanour of the said Indians, who immediately prosecuted their evil intentions, committing horrid murders and robberies in all places, being protected by the said ingagement and word past of him the said Sir William Berkeley, having ruined and laid desolate a greater part of his Majesties Country, and have now drawne themselves into such obscure and remote places, and are by their success soe imboldened and confirmed, by their confederacy soe strengthened that the cries of blood are in all places, and the terror, and constitution of the people soe greater, are now become, not onely a difficult, but a very formidable enemy, who might at first with ease have beene destroyed.

6. And lately when upon the loud outcries of blood the Assembly had with all care raised and framed an Army for the preventing of further mischeife and safeguard of this his Majesties Colony.

7. For having with onely the privacy of some few favorites, without acquainting the people, onely by the alteracon of a figure, forged a Commission, by we know not what hand, not onely without, but even against the consent of the people, for the raising and effecting civill warr and distruction, which being happily and without blood shed prevented, for having the second time attempted the same, thereby calling downe our forces from the defence of the frontieres and most weekly exposed places.

8. For the prevencon of civill mischeife and ruin amongst ourselves, whilst the barbarous enemy in all places did invade, murder and spoyle us, his majesties most faithfull subjects.

Of this and the aforesaid Articles we accuse Sir William Berkeley as guilty of each and every one of the same, and as one who hath traiterously attempted, violated and Injured his Majesties interest here, by a loss of a greater part of this his Colony and many of his faithfull loyall subjects, by him betrayed and in a barbarous and shamefull manner exposed to the Incursions and murder of the heathen,

And we doe further declare these the ensuing persons in this list, to have beene his wicked and pernicious counsellours Confederates, aiders, and assistants against the Comonality in these our Civill comotions.

Sir Henry Chicheley	William Claiburne Junior
Lieut. Coll. Christopher Wormeley	Thomas Hawkins
William Sherwood	Phillip Ludwell
John Page Clerke	Robert Beverley
John Cluffe Clerke	Richard Lee
John West	Thomas Ballard
Hubert Farrell	William Cole
Thomas Reade	Richard Whitacre
Matthew Kempe	Nicholas Spencer
Joseph Bridger	

And we doe further demand that the said Sir William Berkeley with all the persons in this list be forthwith delivered up or surrender themselves within fower days after the notice hereof, Or otherwise we declare as followeth.

That in whatsoever place, howse, or ship, any of the said persons shall reside, be hid, or protected, we declare the owners, Masters or Inhabitants of the said places, to be confederates and trayters to the people and the estates of them is alsoe of all the aforesaid persons to be confiscated, and this we the Comons of Virginia doe declare, desiering a firme union amongst our selves that we may joyntly and with one accord defend our selves against the common Enemy, and lett not the faults of the guilty be the reproach of the innocent, or the faults or crimes of the oppressours devide and separate us who have suffered by their oppressions.

These are therefore in his majesties name to command you forthwith to seize the persons above mentioned as Trayters to the King and Country and them to bring to Middle plantacon, and there to secure them untill further order, and in case of opposition, if you want any further assistance you are forthwith to demand itt in the name of the people in all the Counties of Virginia.

Nathaniel Bacon  
Generall by Consent of the people.

## Quaker Antislavery Petition

*The earliest significant antislavery document from the colonial period is this seventeenth-century petition issued by the Germantown Quaker Meeting. The chief author of the petition was the Meeting's founder, Francis Daniel Pastorius, who reveals that even before slavery was deeply ensconced in the colonies, some Quakers had already adopted a strong antislavery position. The petition was passed along to the Monthly Quaker Meeting and then to the Quarterly and Yearly Quaker Meetings, but since not all Pennsylvania Quakers were as committed to an antislavery stance as those who signed the petition, nothing came of it.*

*Notice that when Pastorius writes, "In Europe there are many oppressed for conscience sake; and here there are those oppressed who are of a black colour," he is, in effect, equating the physical attribute of skin color with the deeply personal faculty of an individual's conscience. Racial discrimination and oppression, to Pastorius, is thus equivalent to religious persecution and oppression. Also notice that the Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meetings simply "pass the buck" and take no action on the petition.*



## A MINUTE AGAINST SLAVERY, 1688

### ADDRESSED TO GERMANTOWN MONTHLY MEETING

This is to ye Monthly Meeting held at Richard Worrell's.

These are the reasons why we are against the traffick of men-body, as foloweth. Is there any that would be done or handled at this manner? viz., to be sold or made a slave for all the time of his life? How fearful and faint-hearted are many on sea, when they see a strange vessel,—being afraid it should be a Turk, and they should be taken, and sold for slaves into Turkey. Now what is this better done, as Turks doe? Yea, rather it is worse for them, which say they are Christians; for we hear that ye most part of such negers are brought hither against their will and consent, and that many of them are stolen. Now, tho they are black, we can not conceive there is more liberty to have them slaves, as it is to have other white ones. There is a saying that we shall doe to all men like as we will be done ourselves; making no difference of what generation, descent or colour they are. And those who steal or robb men, and those who buy or purchase them, are they not all alike? Here is liberty of conscience wch is right and reasonable; here ought to be liberty of ye body, except of evil-doers, wch is an other case. But to bring men hither, or to rob and sell them against their will, we stand against. In Europe there are many oppressed for conscience sake; and here there are those oppressed wh are of a black colour. And we who know that men must not comitt adultery,—some do comitt adultery, in separating wives from their husbands and giving them to others; and some sell the children of these poor creatures to other men. Ah! doe consider well this thing, you who doe it, if you would be done at this manner? And if it is done according to Christianity? You surpass Holland and Germany in this thing. This makes an ill report in all those countries of Europe, where they hear of, that ye Quakers doe here handel men as they handel there ye cattle. And for that reason some have no mind or inclination to come hither. And who shall maintain this your cause, or pleid for it. Truly we can not do so, except you shall inform us better hereof, viz., that Christians have liberty to practise these things. Pray, what thing in the world can be done worse towards us, than if men should rob or steal us away, and sell us for slaves to strange countries; separating husbands from their wives and children. Being now that this is not done in the manner we would be done at therefore we contradict and are against this traffick of men-body. And we who profess that it is not lawful to steal, must, likewise, avoid to purchase such things as are stolen, but rather help to stop this robbing and stealing if possible. And such men ought to be delivered out of ye hands of ye robbers, and set free as well as

in Europe. Then is Pennsylvania to have a good report, instead it hath now a bad one for this sake in other countries. Especially whereas ye Europeans are desirous to know in what manner ye Quakers doe rule in their province;—and most of them doe look upon us with an envious eye. But if this is done well, what shall we say is done evil?

If once these slaves (wch they say are so wicked and stubborn men) should join themselves,—fight for their freedom,—and handel their masters and mastresses as they did handel them before; will these masters and mastresses take the sword at hand and war against these poor slaves, licke, we are able to believe, some will not refuse to doe; or have these negers not as much right to fight for their freedom, as you have to keep them slaves?

Now consider well this thing, if it is good or bad? And in case you find it to be good to handle these blacks at that manner, we desire and require you hereby lovingly, that you may inform us herein, which at this time never was done, viz., that Christians have such a liberty to do so. To the end we shall be satisfied in this point, and satisfie likewise our good friends and acquaintances in our natif country, to whose it is a terror, or faithful thing, that men should be handeld so in Pennsylvania.

This is from our meeting at Germantown, held ye 18 of the 2 month, 1688, to be delivered to the Monthly Meeting at Richard Worrell's.

Garret henderich  
derick up de graeff  
Francis daniel Pastorius  
Abraham up Den graef.

#### MONTHLY MEETING RESPONSE:

At our Monthly Meeting at Dublin, ye 30 – 2 mo., 1688, we have inspected ye matter, above mentioned, and considered of it, we find it so weighty that we think it not expedient for us to meddle with it here, but do rather comitt it to ye consideration of ye Quarterly Meeting; ye tenor of it being nearly related to ye Truth. On behalf of ye Monthly Meeting,

Signed, P. Jo. Hart.

#### QUARTERLY MEETING RESPONSE:

This, above mentioned, was read in our Quarterly Meeting at Philadelphia, the 4 of ye 4th mo. '88, and was from thence recommended to the Yearly Meeting, and the above said Derick, and the other two mentioned therein, to present the same to ye above said meeting, it being a thing of too great a weight for this meeting to determine.

Signed by order of ye meeting,  
Anthony Morris.



## YEARLY MEETING RESPONSE:

At a Yearly Meeting held at Burlington the 5th day of the 7th month, 1688.

A Paper being here presented by some German Friends Concerning the Lawfulness and Unlawfulness of Buying and keeping Negroes, It was adjusted not to be so proper for this Meeting to give a Positive Judgment in the case, It having so General a Relation to many other Parts, and therefore at present they forbear It.

## Letter from an Anonymous Slave

*This recently discovered letter by an anonymous slave is a petition to the Bishop of London to influence King George I to grant freedom. Though the letter failed to receive a response from the bishop, it is an important early example of the efforts made by some slaves to protest their condition by appealing to the powers that be.*

## RELEASE US OUT OF THIS CRUELL BONDEGG, 1723

AUGUST THE FORTH, 1723

to the Right Raverrand father in god my Lord arch Bishop of Lonnd....

this coms to sattesfe your honoour that there is in this Land of verjennia a Sort of people that is Calld molatters which are Baptised and broucht up in the way of the Christian faith and followes the ways and Rulles of the Chrch of England and sum of them has white fathars and sum white mothers and there is in this Land a Law or act which keeps and makes them and there seed Slaves forever....

wee your humbell and poore partishiners doo begg Sir your aid and assistance in this one thing... which is that your honour will by the help of our Sufering Lord King George and the Rest of the Rullers will Release us out of this Cruell Bondegg....

wee are commanded to keep holey the Sabbath day and wee doo hardly know when it comes for our task mastrs are has hard with us as the Egyptians was with the Chillardann of Issarall... wee are kept out of the Church and

SOURCE: Thomas N. Ingersoll, "Release Us Out of This Cruell Bondegg: An Appeal from Virginia in 1723," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 51 (October 1994), 776-782.

matrimony is denied us and to be plain they doo Look no more upon us then if wee ware dogs which I hope when these Strange lines comes to your Lord Ships hands will be Looket in to....

And Sir wee your humble petricners do humbly beg... that our childarn may be broatt up in the way of the Christian faith and our desire is that they may be Larrnd the Lords prayer the creed and the ten commandments and that they may appeare Every Lord's day att Church before the Curatt to bee Examond for our desire is that godlines Should be abound amongs us and wee desire that our Childarn be putt to Scool and Larrnd to Reed through the Bybell.

My Riting is varfy bad... I am but a poore Slave that writt itt and has no other time butt Sunday and hardly that att Sumtimes... wee dare nott Subscribe any mans name to this for feare of our masters for if they knew that wee have sent home to your honour wee Should goo neare to Swing upon the gallass tree.

## Native American Voices (1609-1752)

The indigenous people of the New World faced a grave crisis with European settlement. From their first encounters with Columbus and the Spanish, their culture was profoundly threatened. The Indian population dropped so precipitously through disease and murderous onslaughts that the results might as well be labeled genocide, although not all that befell them was intentional. The term dissent does not adequately describe Native American resistance or the valiant attempt to preserve their disappearing way of life. Though they expressed their grievances against the conquerors in petitions and speeches, few such documents have survived. The reason for this is twofold. Much of their resistance and protest took the form of warfare, and the Indian tradition is primarily an oral one. Few of their speeches or petitions, especially in the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries, were written down. Those that were often were transcribed by Europeans who rarely understood the nuances and subtleties of the Indian perspective or who intentionally distorted what the Indians wanted to express. Furthermore, many of the documents that have survived were written down years and even decades after the event and so must be read with additional skepticism. Yet documents from the colonial period do exist and shed some light on the Native American point of view. Four of these documents are reprinted here. (For more, see the full edition of *Dissent in America: The Voices That Shaped a Nation*.)



## POWHTATAN

*One of the most familiar tales about colonial America is the story that the Jamestown settlers would never have survived the winter of 1607–1608 without the aid of the Powhatan Indians. Even with that help, only half the settlers were still alive by the spring of 1608. But deep-seated English distrust and belligerence toward the Indians elicited distrust of the settlers from the Powhatan tribe. By 1609, tensions between the two groups erupted into open warfare. In 1612, after his return to England, Captain John Smith published an account of the Jamestown colony in which he recorded the following speech by the Indian chief Powhatan.*

### SPEECH TO JOHN SMITH, 1609

Captaine Smith, you may understand that I having seene the death of all my people thrice, and not any one living of these three generations but my selfe; I know the difference of Peace and Warre better than any in my Country. But now I am old and ere long must die, my brethren, namely Opitchapam, Opechancanough, and Kekataugh, my two sisters, and their two daughters, are distinctly each other successors. I wish their experience no lesse then mine, and your love to them no lesse then mine to you. But this bruit from Nandsamund, that you are come to destroy my Country, so much affrighteth all my people as they dare not visit you. What will it availe you to take that by force you may quickly have by love, or to destroy them that provide you food. What can you get by warre, when we can hide our provisions and fly to the woods? Whereby you must fanish by wronging us your friends. And why are you thus jealous of our loves seeing us unarmed, and both doe, and are willing still to feede you, with that you cannot get but by our labours? Thinke you I am so simple, not to know it is better to eate good meate, lye well, and sleepe quietly with my women and children, laugh and be merry with you, have copper, hatchets, or what I want being your friend: then be forced to flie from all, to lie cold in the woods, feede upon Acornes, rootes, and such trash, and be so hunted by you, that I can neither rest, eate, nor sleepe; but my tyred men must watch, and if a twig but breake, every one cryeth there commeth Captaine Smith: then must I fly I know not whether: and thus with miserable feare, end my miserable life leaving my pleasures to such youths as you, which through your rash unadvisednesse may quickly as miserably end, for want of that, you never know where to finde. Let this therefore assure you of our loves, and every yeare our friendly trade shall furnish you with Corne; and now also, if you would come in friendly manner to see us, and not thus with your guns and swords as to invade your foes.

SOURCE: Philip L. Barbour, ed., *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), vol. 1, 247.

## GARANGULA

*Garangula, an Onondaga, met with the governor of New France in 1684 on the shores of Lake Ontario, and after listening to the Frenchman's bullying attempt to coerce his people, replied in a fashion that made it clear that the Five Nations of the Iroquois were not to be intimidated. Garangula's eloquent comments reveal both his pride in the Iroquois and his scathing contempt for the French and the English. The result was a reversal for the French, for Governor La Barre signed a treaty obliging the French to leave the next day.*

### SPEECH TO GOVERNOR LA BARRE OF NEW FRANCE, 1684

Yonnondio [La Barre], I Honour you, and the Warriors that are with me all likewise honour you. Your interpreter has finished your Speech; I now begin mine. My words make haste to reach your Ears; hearken to them.

Yonnondio, You must have believed, when you left Quebec, that the Sun had burnt up all the Forests which render our Country Unaccessible to the French, or that the Lakes had so far overflown the Banks that they had surrounded our Castles, and that it was impossible for us to get out of them. Yes, Yonnondio, surely you must have thought so, and the Curiosity of seeing so great a Country burnt up, or under Water, has brought you so far. Now you are undeceived, since that I and my Warriors are come to assure you that the Sennekas, Cayugas, Onondagas, Oneydoes and Mohawks are yet alive. I thank you, in their Name, for bringing back into their Country the Calumet which your Predecessor received from their hands. It was happy for you that you left under ground that Murdering Hatchet which has been so often dyed in the Blood of the French. Hear Yonnondio, I do not Sleep, I have my eyes Open, and the Sun which enlightens me discovers to me a great Captain at the head of a Company of Soldiers, who speaks as if he were Dreaming. He says that he only came to the Lake to smoke on the great Calumet with the Onondagas. But Garangula says that he sees the Contrary, that it was to knock them on the head, if Sickness had not weakened the Arms of the French.

I see Yonnondio Raving in a Camp of sick men, whose lives the Great Spirit has saved by Inflicting this Sickness on them. Hear Yonnondio, Our Women had taken their Clubs, our Children and Old Men had carried their Bows and Arrows into the heart of your Camp, if our Warriors had not disarmed them, and retained them when your Messenger, Ohguesse appeared in our Castle. It is done, and I have said it.

SOURCE: Cadwallader Colden, *History of the Five Indian Nations*, part 1 (London, 1727), 53–55.



Hear, Yonnonidio, we plundered none of the French but those that carried Guns, Powder and Ball to the Twiltwies [The Miami] and Chictaghicks [The Illinois], because those Arms might have cost us our Lives. Herein we follow the example of the Jesuits, who stove all the Barrels of Rum brought to our Castle, lest the Drunken Indians should knock them on the Head. Our Warriors have not Bevers enough to pay for all those Arms that they have taken, and our Old Men are not afraid of the War. *This Belt Preserves my Words.*

We carried the English into our Lakes to traffick there with the Uawawas [The Ottawa] and Quatoghies [The Huron] as the Adirondacks [The Algonkin] brought the French to our Castles to carry on a Trade which the English say is theirs. We are born free. We neither depend on Yonnonidio nor Corlaet [the Governor of New York].

We may go where we please, and carry with us whom we please, and buy and sell what we please. If your Allies be your Slaves, use them as such. Command them to receive no other but your people. *This Belt Preserves my Words.*

We knockt the Twiltwies and Chictaghicks on the head because they had cut down the Trees of Peace which were the Limits of our Country. They had hunted Beyer on our Lands. They have acted contrary to the Custom of all Indians; for they left none of the Bevers alive, they kill'd both Male and Female. They brought the Satanas [The Shawnees] into their Country to take part with them, and Arm'd them, after they had concerted ill Designs against us. We have done less than either the English or French, that have usurp'd the Lands of so many Indian Nations, and chased them from their own Country. *This Belt Preserves my Words.*

Hear Yonnonidio, What I say is the Voice of all the Five Nations. Hear what they Answer, Open your Ears to what they Speak. The Sennekas, Cayugas, Onnondagas, Oneydoes, and Mohawks say, That when they buried the Hatchet at Cadarackui (in the presence of your Predecessor) in the middle of the Fort, they planted the Tree of Peace in the same place, to be there carefully preserved, that in a place of Retreat for Soldiers, that Fort might be a Rendevouze of Merchants; that in place of Arms and Munitions of War, Bevers and Merchandize should only enter there.

Hear, Yonnonidio, Take care for the future, that so great a Number of Soldiers as appear here do not choke the Tree of Peace planted in so small a Fort. It will be a great Loss, if after it had so easily taken root, you should stop its growth and prevent its covering your Country and ours with its Branches. I assure you, in the Name of the Five Nations, That our Warriors shall dance to the Calumet of Peace under its leaves, and shall remain quiet on their Mats, and shall never dig up the Hatchet till their Brethren, Yonnonidio, or Corlaet, shall, either jointly or separately endeavour to attack the Country which the Great Spirit has given to our Ancestors. *This Belt preserves my Words; and this other, the Authority which the Five Nations have given me.*

## LORON SAUGUARUM

*The following is a rare narrative, from the Indian point of view, of the negotiations that led to the Casco Bay Treaty of 1727, in which the British claimed the Indians had relinquished their sovereignty. Loron Sauguarum, a Penobscot, was one of the delegates negotiating with the English.*

## NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE CASCO BAY TREATY, 1727

I, Panaouanskeyen, do inform ye—ye who are scattered all over the earth take notice—of what has passed between me and the English in negotiating the peace that I have just concluded with them. It is from the bottom of my heart that I inform you; and, as a proof that I tell you nothing but the truth, I wish to speak to you in my own tongue.

My reason for informing you, myself, is the diversity and contrariety of the interpretations I receive of the English writing in which the articles of Peace are drawn up that we have just mutually agreed to. These writings appear to contain things that are not, so that the Englishman himself disavows them in my presence, when he reads and interprets them to me himself.

I begin then by informing you; and shall speak to you only of the principal and most important matter.

First, that I did not commence the negotiation for a peace, or settlement, but he, it was, who first spoke to me on the subject, and I did not give him any answer until he addressed me a third time. I first went to Fort St. George to hear his propositions, and afterwards to Boston, whither he invited me on the same business.

We were two that went Boston: I, Laurance Sagouarrab, and John Ehennekouit. On arriving there I did indeed salute him in the usual mode at the first interview; but I was not the first to speak to him. I only answered what he said to me, and such was the course I observed throughout the whole of our interview.

He began by asking me, what brought me hither? I did not give him for answer—I am come to ask your pardon; nor, I come to acknowledge you as my conqueror; nor, I come to make my submission to you; nor, I come to receive your commands. All the answer I made was that I was come on his invitation to me to hear the propositions for a settlement that he wished to submit to me.

Wherefore do we kill one another? he again asked me. 'Tis true that, in reply, I said to him—You are right. But I did not say to him, I acknowledge myself the cause of it, nor I condemn myself for having made war on him.

He next said to me—Propose what must be done to make us friends. 'Tis true that thereupon I answered him—It is rather for you to do that. And my reason for giving him that answer is, that having himself spoken to me of



an arrangement, I did not doubt but he would make me some advantageous proposals. But I did not tell him that I would submit in every respect to his orders.

Thereupon, he said to me—Let us observe the treaties concluded by our Fathers, and renew the ancient friendship which existed between us. I made him no answer thereunto; much less, I repeat, did I, become his subject, or give him my land, or acknowledge his King as my King. This I never did, and he never proposed it to me. I say, he never said to me—Give thyself and thy land to me, nor acknowledge my King for thy King, as thy ancestors formerly did.

He again said to me—But do you not recognize the King of England as King over all his states? To which I answered—Yes, I recognize him King of all his lands; but I rejoined, do not hence infer that I acknowledge thy King as my King, and King of my lands. Here lies my distinction—my Indian distinction. God hath willed that I have no King, and that I be master of my lands in common.

He again asked me—Do you not admit that I am at least master of the lands I have purchased? I answered him thereupon, that I admit nothing, and that I knew not what he had reference to.

He again said to me—If, hereafter, any one desire to disturb the negotiation of the peace we are at present engaged about, we will join together to arrest him. I again consented to that. But I did not say to him, and do not understand that he said to me, that we should go in company to attack such person, or that we should form a joint league, offensive and defensive, or that I should unite my Brethren to his. I said to him only, and I understand him to say to me, that if any one wished to disturb our negotiation of Peace, we would both endeavor to pacify him by fair words, and to that end would direct all our efforts.

He again said to me—In order that the peace we would negotiate be permanent, should any private quarrel arise hereafter between Indians and Englishmen, they must not take justice into their own hands, nor do any thing, the one to the other. It shall be the business of us Chiefs to decide. I again agreed with him on that article, but I did not understand that he alone should be judge. I understood only that he should judge his people, and that I would judge mine. Finally he said to me—There's our peace concluded; we have regulated every thing.

I replied that nothing had been yet concluded, and that it was necessary that our acts should be approved in a general assembly. For the present, an armistice is sufficient. I again said to him—I now go to inform all my relatives of what has passed between us, and will afterwards come and report to you what they'll say to me. Then he agreed in opinion with me.

Such was my negotiation on my first visit to Boston.

As for any act of grace, or amnesty, accorded to me by the Englishman, on the part of his King, it is what I have no knowledge of, and what the Englishman never spoke to me about, and what I never asked him for.

On my second visit to Boston we were four: I, Laurence Sagourrah, Alexis, Francois Xavier and Migounambe. I went there merely to tell the English that all my nation approved the cessation of hostilities, and the negotiation of peace,

and even then we agreed on the time and place of meeting to discuss it. That place was Caskebay, and the time after Corpus Christi.

Two conferences were held at Caskebay. Nothing was done at these two conferences except to read the articles above reported. Every thing I agreed to was approved and ratified, and on these conditions was the peace concluded. One point only did I regulate at Caskebay. This was to permit the Englishman to keep a store at St. Georges; but a store only, and not to build any other house, nor erect a fort there, and I did not give him the land.

These are the principal matters that I wished to communicate to you who are spread all over the earth. What I tell you now is the truth. If, then, any one should produce any writing that makes me speak otherwise, pay no attention to it, for I know not what I am made to say in another language, but I know well what I say in my own. And in testimony that I say things as they are, I have signed the present minute which I wish to be authentic and to remain for ever.

## MASHPEE

*This petition is an example of an attempt by Indians to protest their treatment at the hands of English colonists. The petition did result in the Mashpee (who had converted to Christianity) being granted self-government, and for several years they were satisfied that their grievance had been heard. However, their satisfaction was short-lived, for when the American Revolution came to an end, their right to self-government was rescinded.*

## PETITION TO THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL COURT, 1752

Barnstable, June 11, 1752

Oh! Our honorable gentlemen and kind gentlemen in Boston in Massachusetts Bay, here in New England, the great ones who oversee the colony in Boston, gentlemen. Oh!, gentlemen, hear us now, Oh! ye, us poor Indians. We do not clearly have thorough understanding and wisdom. Therefore we now beseech you, Oh!, Boston gentlemen. Oh! Hear our weeping, and hear our beseeching of you, Oh!, and answer this beseeching of you by us, Oh!, gentlemen of Boston, us poor Indians in Mashpee in Barnstable County.

Now we beseech you, what can we do with regard to our land, which was conveyed to you by these former sachems of ours. What they conveyed to you was this piece of land. This was conveyed to us by Indian sachems. Our former Indian sachems were called Sachem Wuttammohkin and Sachem Quettaset, in



Barnstable County, the Mashpee Indian place. This Indian land, this was conveyed to us by these former sachems of ours. We shall not give it away, nor shall it be sold, nor shall it be lent, but we shall always use it as long as we live, we together with all our children, and our children's children, and our descendants, and together with all their descendants. They shall always use it as long as Christian Indians live. We shall use it forever and ever. Unless we all peacefully agree to give it away or to sell it. But as of now not one of all of us Indians has yet agreed to give away, or sell, or lend this Indian land, or marsh, or wood. Fairly, then, it is this: we state frankly we have never conveyed them away.

But now clearly we Indians say this to all you gentlemen of ours in Boston: We poor Indians in Mashpee, in Barnstable County, we truly are much troubled by these English neighbors of ours being on this land of ours, and in our marsh and trees. Against our will these Englishmen take away from us what was our land. They parcel it out to each other, and the marsh along with it, against our will. And as for our streams, they do not allow us peacefully to be when we peacefully go fishing. They beat us greatly, and they have houses on our land against our will. Truly we think it is this: We poor Indians soon shall not have any place to reside, together with our poor children, because these Englishmen trouble us very much in this place of ours in Mashpee, Barnstable County.

Therefore now, Oh! you kind gentlemen in Boston, in Massachusetts Bay, now we beseech you: defend us, and they would not trouble us any more on our land.

## John Peter Zenger (1697–1746)

*John Peter Zenger began publishing one of the first newspapers in New York in 1733. The New York Weekly Journal, edited by James Alexander, was very critical of Governor William Cosby, a notoriously corrupt appointee of the Crown. It was common knowledge that Cosby had rigged elections, bribed judges and legislators, and dipped into the public treasury. When The Journal ran several articles calling for freedom of the press and condemning the governor's actions, Cosby seized the newspaper and had Zenger arrested for libel. In the eighteenth century, all that had to be proved at the trial to convict Zenger of libel was that he had published the articles. Even though the articles dealt with facts, truth—according to British law—was not considered a defense against libel. Philadelphia lawyer Andrew Hamilton, however, argued that truth was a defense: "If libel is understood in the unlimited sense urged by the attorney general, there is scarce a writing I know that may not be called a libel or scarce a person safe from being called to account as a libeler. Moses, meek as he was, libeled Cain—and who is it that not libeled the devil?" Zenger's acquittal was a precedent-setting victory for freedom of the press.*

*The following article appeared in The Journal in November 1733 and led to Zenger's eventual arrest and trial. Much of the argument echoes John Locke's Second Treatise of Government, one of the philosophical cornerstones for the revolution to come. (For a second article see the full edition of Dissent in America: The Voices That Shaped a Nation.)*

## THE NEW YORK WEEKLY JOURNAL, 1733

NOVEMBER 12, 1733

The liberty of the press is a subject of the greatest importance, and in which every individual is as much concerned as he is in any other part of liberty: Therefore it will not be improper to communicate to the public the sentiments of a late excellent writer upon this point. Such is the elegance and perspicuity of his writings, such the inimitable force of his reasoning, that it will be difficult to say anything new that he has not said, or not to say that much worse which he has said.

There are two sorts of monarchies, an absolute and a limited one. In the first, the liberty of the press can never be maintained, it is inconsistent with it; for what absolute monarch would suffer any subject to animadvert on his actions when it is in his power to declare the crime and to nominate the punishment? This would make it very dangerous to exercise such a liberty. Besides the object against which those pens must be directed is their sovereign, the sole supreme magistrate; for there being no law in those monarchies but the will of the prince, it makes it necessary for his ministers to consult his pleasure before anything, can be undertaken: He is therefore properly chargeable with the grievances of his subjects, and what the minister there acts being in obedience to the prince, he ought not to incur the hatred of the people; for it would be hard to impute that to him for a crime which is the fruit of his allegiance, and for refusing which he might incur the penalties of treason. Besides, in an absolute monarchy, the will of the prince being the law, a liberty of the press to complain of grievances would be complaining against the law and the constitution, to which they have submitted or have been obliged to submit; and therefore, in one sense, may be said to deserve punishment; so that under an absolute monarchy, I say, such a liberty is inconsistent with the constitution, having no proper subject to politics on which it might be exercised, and if exercised would incur a certain penalty.

But in a limited monarchy, as England is, our laws are known, fixed, and established. They are the straight rule and sure guide to direct the king, the ministers, and other his subjects: And therefore an offense against the laws is such an offense against the constitution as ought to receive a proper adequate punishment; the several constituents of the government, the ministry, and all subordinate magistrates, having their certain, known, and limited sphere in which they move; one part may



certainly err, misbehave, and become criminal, without involving the rest or any of them in the crime or punishment.

But some of these may be criminal, yet above punishment, which surely cannot be denied, since most reigns have furnished us with too many instances of powerful and wicked ministers, some of whom by their power have absolutely escaped punishment, and the rest, who met their fate, are likewise instances of this power as much to the purpose; for it was manifest in them that their power had long protected them, their crimes having, often long preceded their much desired and deserved punishment and reward.

That might overcomes right, or which is the same thing, that might prevails and defends men from punishment, is a proverb established and confirmed by time and experience, the surest discoverers of truth and certainty. It is this therefore which makes the liberty of the press in a limited monarchy and in all its colonies and plantations proper, convenient, and necessary, or indeed it is rather incorporated and interwoven with our very constitution; for if such an overgrown criminal, or an impudent monster in iniquity, cannot immediately be come at by ordinary Justice, let him yet receive the lash of satire, let the glaring truths of his ill administration, if possible, awaken his conscience, and if he has no conscience, rouse his fear by showing him his deserts, sting him with the dread of punishment, cover him with shame, and render his actions odious to all honest minds. These methods may in time, and by watching and exposing his actions, make him at least more cautious, and perhaps at last bring down the great haughty and secure criminal within the reach and grasp of ordinary justice. This advantage therefore of exposing the exorbitant crimes of wicked ministers under a limited monarchy makes the liberty of the press not only consistent with, but a necessary part of, the constitution itself.

It is indeed urged that the liberty of the press ought to be restrained because not only the actions of evil ministers may be exposed, but the character of good ones traduced. Admit it in the strongest light that calumny and lies would prevail and blast the character of a great and good minister; yet that is a less evil than the advantages we reap from the liberty of the press, as it is a curb, a bridle, a terror, a shame, and restraint to evil ministers; and it may be the only punishment, especially for a time. But when did calumnies and lies ever destroy the character of one good minister? Their benign influences are known, tasted, and felt by everybody: Or if their characters have been clouded for a time, yet they have generally shined forth in greater luster: Truth will always prevail over falsehood.

The facts exposed are not to be believed because said or published; but it draws people's attention, directs their view, and fixes the eye in a proper position that everyone may judge for himself whether those facts are true or not. People will recollect, enquire and search, before they condemn, and therefore very few good ministers can be hurt by falsehood, but many wicked ones by seasonable truth: But however the mischief that a few may possibly, but improbably, suffer by the freedom of the press is not to be put in competition with the danger which the KING and the people may suffer by a shameful, cowardly silence under the tyranny of an insolent, rapacious, infamous minister.

## Eighteenth-Century Runaway Women

According to English law, married women were *femes covert*; that is, their identity was "covered" by their husbands. Legally they did not exist,<sup>1</sup> their property (including whatever wages they might earn and even the clothes they wore) belonged to their husbands, and it was their duty to serve and obey them. Husbands had complete control over their wives. They had the legal right to beat them, when necessary, to enforce that control. It was illegal for women to run away, but, because it was virtually impossible to obtain a divorce, many wives did just that.

These advertisements, published in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* in the mid-eighteenth century, are an intriguing glimpse into marital relations in colonial America. Husbands who advertised that they would not pay their runaway wives' debts were hoping to starve their wives into submission, shame them for unfeminine behavior, or finally be rid of them. Abused women, however, frequently asserted themselves and presented their own side by responding with advertisements of their own in the same paper, thus revealing that women were far from the submissive, docile creatures that many scholars have assumed them to be. And so it seems that feminist stirrings were already brewing in the pre-Revolutionary period.

### ADVERTISEMENTS FROM THE *PENNSYLVANIA GAZETTE*, 1742-1748

March 25, 1742:

Whereas ELIZABETH DUNLAP, Wife of JAMES DUNLAP of Piles Grove, Salem County in the Province of New-Jersey, hath lately eloped from the said James Dunlap her Husband. These are therefore to forwarn and forbid any Person to trust said Elizabeth for any Goods or other things whatsoever for that her said Husband will pay no Debt or Debts contracted by her after the Date hereof. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Women could not legally make contracts. If there was a divorce, husbands had automatic custody over the children. If a wife was injured and the husband sued the responsible party to recover money damages, the recovery belonged to him, not to her.

SOURCE: *Runaway Women: Elopements and Other Miscreant Deeds As Advertised in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1789* (Together with a Few Abused Wives and Unfortunate Children), compiled by Judith Ann Highley Meier (Apollo, PA: Closson Press, 1993), 5, 6, 11, 13.



*June 17, 1742:*

Whereas JAMES DUNLAP, of Piles Grove, in the County of Salem, in the province of New-Jersey, by an advertisement lately inserted in the American Weekly Mercury and in the Pennsylvania Gazette, did publish the elopement of ELIZABETH DUNLAP his Wife, and forewarned all Persons to trust her for any goods or other things, etc.

These are therefore to certify all Persons whom it may concern, that the contents of the said advertisement as to the elopement of the said Elizabeth is utterly false, for the said Elizabeth never eloped from the said James Dunlap her Husband, but was obliged in safety of her life to leave her said Husband because of his threats and cruel abuse for several years past repeatedly offered and done to her, and that she went no farther than to her Father's House in said county, where she has resided ever since her departure from her said Husband, and still continues to reside. And the same James Dunlap having a considerable estate in lands in said county, which the said Elizabeth is informed he intends to sell as soon as he can, she therefore thought proper to give this notice to any Person or Persons that may offer to buy, that she will not join in the sale of any part of said lands, but that she intends to claim her thirds (or right of dower) of and in all the lands the said James Dunlap has been seized and possessed of since their intermarriage, whosoever may purchase the same.

Elizabeth Dunlap.

*July 31, 1746:*

Whereas MARY, the Wife of JOHN FENBY, Porter, hath eloped from her said Husband without any cause; this is to forwarn all Persons not to trust her on his Account; for he will pay no Debts she shall contract from the Date hereof.

*August 7, 1746:*

Whereas JOHN, the Husband of MARY FENBY, hath advertised her in this Paper, as eloped from him, &c., tho'tis well known, they parted by Consent, and agreed to divide their Goods in a Manner which he has not yet been so just as fully to comply with, but detains her Bed and Wedding Ring: And as she neither has, nor desires to run him in Debt, believing her own Credit to be full as good as his; so she desires no one would trust him on her Account, for neither will she pay any Debts of his contracting.

MARY FENBY

*June 9, 1748:*

Whereas JANE, the wife of PETER HENRY DORSIUS, of Philadelphia county, the daughter of DERRICK HOGELAND of Bucks county, hath eloped from her said husband; this is to desire all persons not to trust her on his account, for he will pay no debts of her contracting, from the date hereof.

*June 16, 1748:*

Whereas PETER HENRY DORSIUS hath in the last Gazette advertised his wife JANE, as eloped from him, &c. This is to certify whom it may concern, that after a long series of ill usage patiently borne by the said Jane, and after a course of intemperance and extravagance, for which he has been suspended the exercise of his ministerial office in the Dutch Congregation in Southampton; when he had squandered most of his substance, sold and spent great part of his household goods, and was about to sell the remainder; tho' he had before in his sober hours, by Direction of a Magistrate made them over for the use of his Family; when he had for several Days abandoned his Dwelling, and left his wife and their children nothing to subsist on, her father found himself at length under a necessity to take her and them into his care and protection, and accordingly fetch'd them home to his own house, which he would not otherwise have done, having besides a large Family of his own to provide for.

DERRICK HOGELAND