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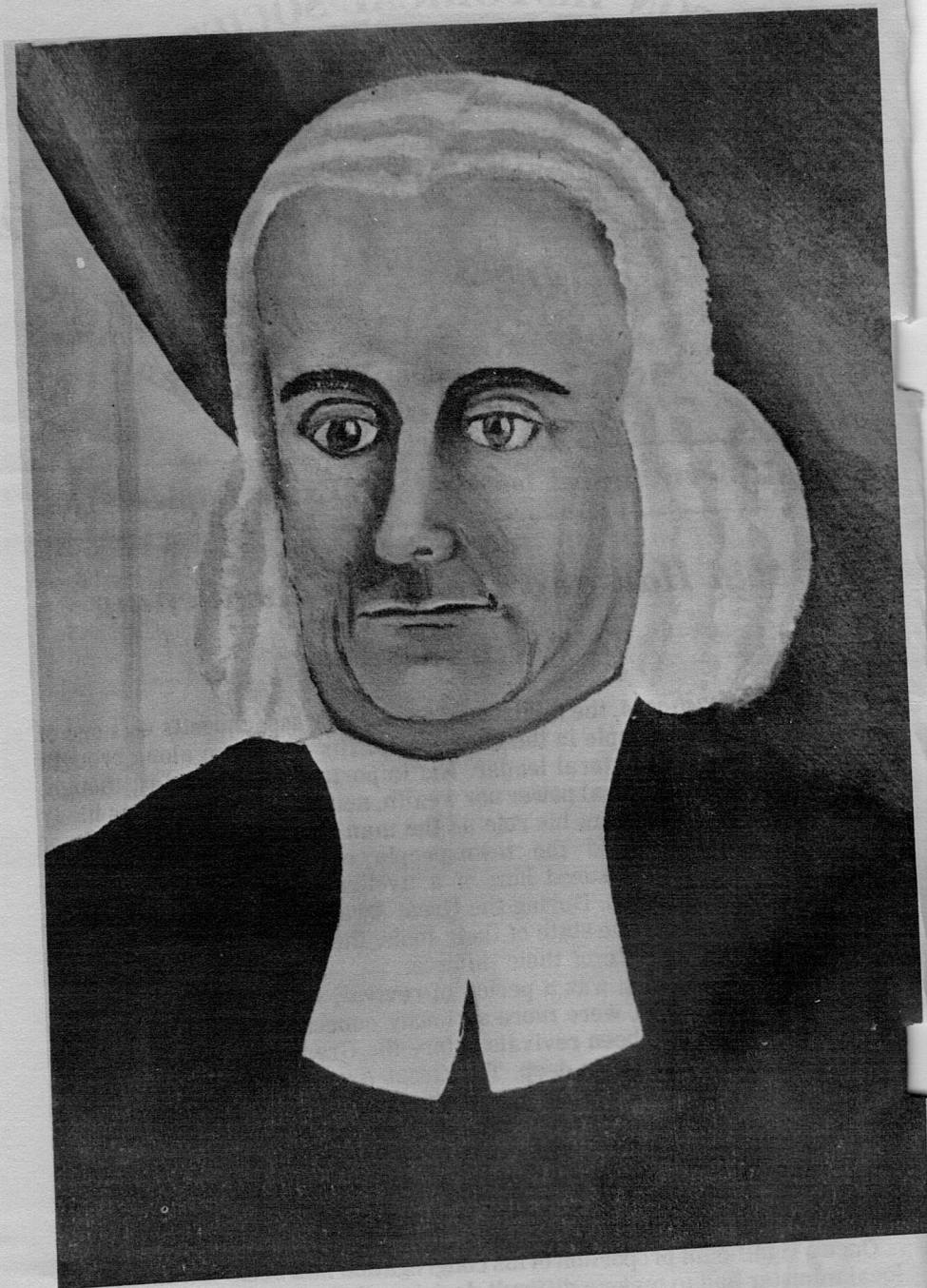
## *David Hall and the Great Awakening*

by Karen Helgesen

In the years 1740-1744, the minister of a town in Massachusetts was one of the most important people in the community. His education alone brought him recognition as a natural leader. His importance as minister, though, came from neither political power nor wealth, neither of which he was likely to possess, but rather from his role as the man entrusted with the care of souls. The minister and the townspeople existed in a state of interdependence. They assured him of a livelihood; and he helped them become sure of salvation. During the Great Awakening, as people became more concerned about the state of their souls, they naturally became more concerned about the role of their minister.

The Great Awakening was a period of revival, when many people, particularly young people, were more seriously concerned about the state of their souls. There had been revivals before the Great Awakening, but none had had effects as broad or deep. The Great Awakening calls to mind the names of such men as George Whitfield, Gilbert Tennent, Jonathan Edwards and Charles Chauncy. Men such as these made the Awakening such a widespread movement. Yet, no less important were the local ministers who were left to carry on the work of God after the Grand Itinerants had inspired the crowd and gone on their way. The local ministers were left for better or worse, with the results of the Awakening.

Once a significant proportion of his congregation had been "awakened," a local minister had to make a difficult decision. He had to decide whether to follow the precepts of the "New Lights" or the "Old Lights". The "New Lights" favored the "Awakening"; the "Old Lights" were opposed. Whatever the minister decided, his decision was likely to have reper-



cussions in the congregation. If the minister chose to be an "Old Light", some of the members might separate from him and form another church, quite likely a Baptist church. If he decided to follow the path charted by the "New Lights", he could not be sure that all his flock would follow him. Many ministers tried to effect a compromise between the two extremes, thus making it more likely that their congregations would remain intact. One such minister was David Hall.

In comparison to men like Edwards and Whitfield, the impact of David Hall was small. Yet, he played a significant role in the lives of many people in Sutton and the surrounding towns. A study of his life and attitudes will give us insight into the effects of the Great Awakening on one small community. The most important sources for this study are his diary<sup>1</sup>, an ordination sermon, which he preached in 1744, and his contributions to Thomas Prince's *The Christian History*. By comparing these with other sources, both primary and secondary, we can also determine how typical David Hall was of ministers in the eighteenth century.

The large number of entries in Hall's diary during the period of the Great Awakening, which concern religious matters, is extremely significant. Many dealt with the controversies of the day concerning church doctrine and discipline (e.g. free grace, covenants, the importance of an educated ministry and the nature of the conversion experience). Other entries evidence Hall's great concern for the state of the souls of his congregation and that of his own soul. In his own case, one of his greatest worries was that he might lapse into an excess of spiritual pride. He also took note of some basically secular matters, some natural phenomena and some problems concerning his salary. Although the religious entries most directly relate to the Great Awakening, the secular entries are also significant, for they tell us some of the day-to-day difficulties faced by an eighteenth-century minister.

Before attempting to analyze David Hall's position in the Great Awakening, some background on the town of Sutton is in order. The township of Sutton was originally owned by "John Wampus, alias White, and Company, Nipmuck Indians."<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, the original deed seems to be lost. Nevertheless, the original proprietors were able to keep a record of their proceedings.

The proprietors, (John Conner, James Smith, William Mumford, Joshua Hewes, Paul Dudley, John Jackson, Mary Conner, Elizabeth Pittom, Edward Pratt, and Elizabeth Wilson),<sup>3</sup> were granted the township of Sutton on 15 May 1704 by "John Dudley, Esqr., Captain General and Governor in Chief in and over her Majesties Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England in America."<sup>4</sup> The area these ten proprietors purchased was . . . a tract of waste land eight miles square, lying between the Towns of Mendon, Worcester, New Oxford, Sherburne and Marlborough, embracing within its limits an Indian reservation of four miles square called *Hassanimisco*.<sup>5</sup>

The proprietors did not decide to settle a minister until 1718. At a meeting conducted in Boston on 5 March 1718, they decided to build and furnish a meeting house and to establish the preaching of the gospel.<sup>6</sup> This was in concurrence of a stipulation in the land grant stating: . . . that they settle a town of thirty families and a minister upon said land within seven years of the end of the present war with the Indians.<sup>7</sup>

They decided to call the Rev. John McKinstry.<sup>8</sup> He was ordained on 9 November 1720 and dismissed on 2 September 1722. There is little solid in-

formation about his service or the reasons for his dismissal, since he took the church records with him when he left. The tradition is that he differed with the congregation on matters of church government.<sup>9</sup>

It seems that his views were more Presbyterian than Congregational. It is also possible that he was not receiving a proper salary. In the *Annals of the Town of Sutton* for the years 1721, 1722, 1724, and 1725,<sup>10</sup> there are entries concerning the payment and non-payment of the minister's salary. Perhaps, the grounds for his dismissal were invented in order to obtain a more reasonable minister. The second pastor of the Town of Sutton was David Hall, who received his call in 1729.

David Hall was the seventh son of Joshua and Hannah Hall of Yarmouth. He was born on 6 August 1704. As a youngster, David was surrounded by a pious family. His grandfather was the Rev. John Miller and his father was a deacon. At the age of ten, David was sent to live with the minister of Yarmouth, probably as preparation for college. It seems the most grievous sins of his life were committed in his youth. They consisted of stealing nuts, sweetmeats and fruit and accepting a picture, which another boy had cut out of a book. He put off his evil ways and joined the Cambridge Church on 9 September 1722. Nevertheless, these "boyhood pranks" troubled his conscience twenty years later. He attended Harvard and received his Master's degree in 1727. After a trial period, the people of Sutton voted to make him their pastor and he was ordained on 15 October 1729.<sup>11</sup> In the summer of 1731, Hall married Elizabeth Prescott of Concord, daughter of Dr. Jonathan and Rebekah Prescott. Throughout his life, Hall followed a moderate course in his religious values. He approved of some "New Light" doctrines, but he was by no means a total "New Light". On the other hand, he could not be considered an "Old Light", although he held some of their conservative views.<sup>12</sup>

After the town decided to accept him as pastor, they had to consider what would be an "Honorable Salary"<sup>13</sup> to bestow on Mr. Hall. The issue took six months to settle. At first, it was:

*Voted in the affirmative to give Mr. Hall a Salary of One Hundred Per year in Province Bills, or the Equal value of one Hundred Pounds per year in Province Bills as they are now valued, as long as he shall serve them in the work of the ministry.*<sup>14</sup>

Although on 8 September 1729, there was a committee report to set a value on money, their decision could not and did not remain constant in the following years. Being a shrewd man, Hall provided for inflation and changing personal circumstances in his answer to the call. He accepted the salary at the contemporary value, but added the condition that: . . . *he doubt(s) not and expect (s) that as my necessities shall require, you will continue to make Good your obligation as God shall bless you, that my necessities and charges if they should increase may nevertheless be honourably supplied.*<sup>15</sup>

Throughout the thirties there are several mentions of committees to revalue money and come to an agreement with Mr. Hall. By 1743, his salary had been increased to two hundred and fifty pounds O.T.

The collection of the minister's salary was another matter. In the beginning, every family was expected to contribute to the support of the minister. There were times, though, especially in the early years, when both the taxes and minister's rates were in arrears. The first minister, Rev.

McKinstry was promised a salary of 60 pounds per year. In 1726, Constable Daggets collected only 52 pounds on the minister's rate. In 1727, Constable Millers collected only 9 pounds. The inability of the constables to collect a full salary may well have been a sign of the growing discontent of the congregation with Rev. McKinstry. In 1728, the year that McKinstry was dismissed, Constables Helmans, Nicols and Hazeltons were able to collect a total of 87 pounds on the minister's rate - a sign, perhaps, that the people did not hesitate to support a minister, but that Rev. McKinstry was a special case. During the years of the Awakening, there is no mention of any difficulty in paying Hall's salary. This is in spite of the exemption of Baptists from contributing, which commenced in 1740. Perhaps, during the Awakening, Hall's services were more appreciated.

At the time of his call, there was an agreement on the amount of land that Hall would be granted in addition to his salary. The town first voted to lease Hall some of the Ministerial land at six pence per acre. Two months later, they voted to give him a deed for the same land.<sup>7</sup> Again, Hall decided to include a condition in his acceptance, of the call, this time concerning his allotment of land. Rather than accepting the town's offer of a section of the ministerial land, he preferred to accept a portion of the undivided land. On 25 July 1729, the meeting voted to accept Mr. Hall's proposal and on 12 August 1729, the Proprietors met and

*Voted, that the committy chosen to lay out the remaining undivided lands shall forthwith lay out to the Reverend Mr. David Hall one hundred and thirty two acres of the undivided lands which we give him for his comfort and encouragement provided he is ordained Minister for this town of Sutton which is in lieu and full of the one hundred acres the Inhabitants promised to give him.*<sup>14</sup>

Hall lived in Sutton for eleven years before he started his diary. Most entries concerned the souls of the congregation and his own soul. Even many of the secular entries have religious overtones. Hall saw the hand of God in many natural disasters.

*I am convinced that God has a great controversey with New England and that he calls us to great searching of heart; he sends war, sore sickness, and seems to be sending evil arrows of famine.*<sup>17</sup>

The "sore sickness" was undoubtedly the epidemic of 1735-40 known as the throat distemper. On 6 April 1741, Hall mentioned the deaths of several people " . . . 19 with lung fever and many more of the throat distemper."<sup>18</sup> Gaustad in *The Great Awakening in New England* rejected the assumption that there was a direct relationship between the throat distemper and religious revivals. In light of this Hall's reaction to a canker in his throat is extremely interesting.

On 17 October 1743, Hall first mentioned the canker. He reflected that he was taking medicine for his physical sickness, but he wished that God would cure the filth in his heart. He does not mention his recovery from the canker until 9 December 1743. At the same time, he felt himself recovered from his spiritual sickness. In the next twelve days, he preached ten sermons, five of them extemporaneously. In fact, he was so appreciative of his recovery that he remarked, "I find myself able to preaching as I have been ever in my life."<sup>19</sup> This does not establish a simple relationship between the throat distemper and revivals, but it does seem to indicate that there is a significant interplay between physical health and religious zeal.

Another natural phenomenon, in which Hall found religious significance was the comet in the winter of 1743. Hall perceived it as a symbol of impending doom. To the modern reader, Hall's entries concerning the comet seem paradoxical. His description in February is very scientific. He gives a detached and rigorous description of the comet's path. Yet, on the same day as his most lengthy scientific description, he begins to write in a very different vein:

*The Lord sanctify so awful a token of an approaching God who here hangs out his Insign in the Skies: that the nations might tumble before him.*<sup>20</sup>

There is, of course, no inherent contradiction between scientific rigor and religious faith, yet the two are so close together strike us as odd. They give us some inkling as to the type of education Hall received at Harvard. Also, and perhaps more significantly, the emphasis on the comet as a symbol of God's wrath more than as an object of curiosity gives us some idea of Hall's position in the spectrum of eighteenth-century thought.

David Hall was very influential in church government. The number of councils, to settle disputes between pastors and congregations, on which he was invited to sit, is some proof of his high standing in his profession. In his diary, there were three specific references to councils during the period 1741-44. A council in New Haven, during which he found time to attend the Commencement at Yale, is only mentioned without any detail. Probably, the council concerned the church of Joseph Noyes, an "Old Light", and the "New Light" separatists, who appealed to many Yale students.

Hall evidently found the council dealing with the dismissal of Rev. Bliss, the pastor at Concord, rather significant. Bliss was basically charged with being a radical "New Light." The evidence lay in his ability to induce a state of frenzy in his congregation and his itinerant preaching. Therefore, his plain style of preaching brought the charge of imprudence against him. Several councils were held in an attempt to settle this dispute, the first being on 13 June 1742. David Hall participated in these councils as a member of the "New Light" faction, even though he disapproved of enthusiasm. He saw Bliss as a troublesome man, but still worthy as a preacher of God. From June 21 till June 24, 1743, two councils met simultaneously, the "New Lights", appointed by the church, and the "Old Lights", consisting of aggrieved brethren. Hall described this meeting in his 21 June 1743 entry:

*It appeared to me Mr. Bliss had been greatly wronged; and that he was indeed a man of Goodness and piety but was thus used thro' Envy in those who were Enemies and Enemies to the power of Godlyness.*<sup>21</sup>

The councils never reconciled Bliss and his critics. Instead, they founded what became known as the Black Horse Parish. The two churches did not reunite until after Bliss's death on 11 May 1764.

Hall served on another council, this time in Upton. This ecclesiastical council met occasionally from March till December in 1744. Their deliberations concerned the Rev. Weld, a bachelor, and his relations with the daughter of his landlord. This case also came to the notice of the Civil and Superior Courts. In December, the ecclesiastical court dismissed Weld from his position.<sup>23</sup> In this case, Hall's sympathies were with the congregation rather than with the preacher.

*My soul is grieved for the poor devout people. We could do nothing for them by reason of the obscurity of their affairs and the different sentiments of the council*<sup>24</sup>

Hall probably sympathized with the congregation because of the ill effect that the whole affair had had on the name of the town. According to the Rev. Ebenezer Parkman, Hall had been given the duty of composing the rough drafts of the result of the council's June deliberations. Parkman disapproved of the finished copy.<sup>25</sup> According to Parkman, sometime in December, Hall came to share this view about the finished copy of the result:

*Mr. Hall of Sutton greatly sensible of Wrong done by the former Result. He endeavours to compose a New Plan, the main of which was afterwards accepted.*<sup>26</sup>

Evidently, this new plan involved the dismissal of Mr. Weld.

Hall was, of course, greatly concerned about the souls of his own congregation. It is possible to trace the flood and ebb, to use Gaustad's terms, of the Great Awakening in the entries of his diary. In 1741 and 1742, he occasionally referred to the times as a "Season of Grace."<sup>27</sup> Hall saw many people under great concern of soul, although there were many others who were, in his opinion, insufficiently concerned. Yet Hall saw many, who were affected by "Great Awakenings." On 8 February 1741 and 1 January 1741/ 2, he mentioned the presence of Great Awakenings in two private homes.

Although Hall thought he could clearly see the hand of God at work, he did not forget about Satan:

*God works I trust is going on amongst us but the adversary seems exceedingly with us. Some he stirs up to vain disputing. Hath done no little mischief. Others he labours to drive into irregular methods and I fear has gotten bodily possession of one T.S. The Lord Jesus rebuke him and cast him out.*<sup>28</sup>

In the intermediate period between flood and ebb, Spring 1743, Hall's remarks were varied in nature. At the end of March, he was concerned about the "... daily enemies rising up against the cause and Kingdom of Jesus." He was also concerned about people, who he had considered friends, who were now against him.<sup>29</sup> Within a week, his attitude had again changed. He reflected on his Wednesday preaching:

*God seemed to come into the assembly as a rushing wind . . . Many were smitten with terrible apprehensions of the wrath to come. Some fell into Tremblings with Terrors of God.*<sup>30</sup>

Hall saw the Ebb of the Tide in March 1744. He realized that the "Spirit of Conviction" was touching fewer people and that zealous Christians were hated by the world.<sup>31</sup> He saw the Ebb, but also felt that the last four years had been a time of great spiritual prosperity both in Sutton and throughout New England.

*During this season of religious interest, "some who in point of morals were far from God were brought in; and a considerable number who were visible professors were not brought home to Christ." The additions to the Church during this period were ninety-eight by profession and forty by letter.*<sup>32</sup>

For a town as small as Sutton, the addition of 138 church members was highly significant in terms of the religious life of the community. David Hall had been a successful preacher during these years.

Although his concern for the souls of his people is evident in his diary, many of the most striking passages concern the state of his own soul. A large proportion of the entries are prayers and private exhortations to God asking help to resist the temptations leading to worldliness and to promote a feeling

of spirituality in his own soul. Hall felt that he was too tied up with the cares of the world. The complaints, most often repeated, were his debts, his neglect of his studies and his failure to praise God sufficiently.

Many entries dealt with Hall's struggle with personal spiritual pride. Hall was usually an effective preacher. There were days when Hall would begin an entry with good feelings about delivering a well-received sermon, and finish the entry with a prayer to cleanse himself of evil thoughts, because he had felt pride in the effectiveness of his preaching.

Hall's great concern about spiritual pride may have been heightened by the influence of Jonathan Edwards. According to Tracy, Hall was an intimate friend of Edwards, who was in Sutton during the week of 3 February 1741/ 2. Edwards believed that spiritual pride was one of the major sources of the Great Awakening. Friendship with Edwards and others of like mind may have led Hall to share this view. The large number of remarks about his own spiritual pride lead the reader to think that Hall was extremely introspective. Writing in his diary may well have been a way to release his inner frustrations. Also, Hall may have shared Edwards' view that:

*Spiritual Pride is very apt to suspect others: whereas a humble saint is more jealous of himself, so he is so suspicious of nothing in the world as he is of his own heart.*<sup>33</sup>

This was a perfect description of Hall as we see him through his diary. He was jealous of himself and his own heart; he feared that he would show pride in his sermons and drive his listeners away. In an attempt to repress this pride, he constantly rededicated himself to Christ.

Fortunately, not all of David Hall's entries concern his personal life. The introspective entries are important in that they give us an insight into the private thoughts of an eighteenth-century minister. He also entered in his diary some of his thoughts on the controversies concerning the Great Awakening. Hall was a Calvinist, as were most Congregational ministers during this period. His church followed the Cambridge Platform. His views on free grace and the features accompanying some conversions were in no way unusual for this period. Hall also had strong views about the duties and qualifications for the ministry.

Hall's Calvinistic views are apparent in an ordination sermon, which he spoke to the people of Leicester. Calvinists believed that only the worthy, "the visible saints", should be admitted to church membership. This belief was one of the major causes of the schism from the Established Church in England which admitted everyone to full membership.<sup>34</sup> In New England where the Congregational Church was itself the Establishment, limitation of membership was continued. In his sermon, Hall combined the idea of the Elect with that of faithful ministers:

*Indeed the LORD CHRIST will have his Elect, he will not come short of his precious Seed; but then I may also add, and he will likewise have his faithful ministers.*<sup>35</sup>

Hall went on to say that these ministers are God's instruments of conversion, but that all the glory belonged to God. The minister was a witness for God both in what he said explaining the truths of the Gospel and also in his way of life, which was an example to sinners.<sup>36</sup>

Another controversial matter mentioned by Hall was church discipline. The History of Sutton states that "The church was organized upon the Congregational platform, of the simplest and most rigid character."<sup>37</sup> Most Congregational churches during this period subscribed to either the Cam-



bridge or the Saybrook Platform. The town history is confusing on this point. The Cambridge Platform allowed a dissenting member to be tried before a council of ministers and laymen from other churches. The Saybrook Platform, according to Bushman, called for such matters to be tried before a council of elders from the person's own church. The latter system created the danger of the development of oligarchic control.

The History of Sutton states:

*Subsequently (i.e. after McKinstry's dismissal) an effort was made to introduce the Eldership into the church, according to the Cambridge Platform, but the proposition was unanimously rejected.*<sup>38</sup>

It seems that the authors of the history confused the two platforms. It is very evident that the Sutton congregation subscribed to the Cambridge Platform, if for no other reason than that Hall was frequently called to sit on councils at other churches. Also, after Hall's return from commencement ceremonies at Yale he wrote in his diary:

*My heart aches to see the compression that lies upon the Christians there, the severe laws of the colony and the symptoms of tyranny asserted in the way of the Seabrook (sic)*<sup>39</sup>

The church also allowed the practice of the "Half-Way Covenant." The Town History suggests that the admission of people to Baptism, but not Communion was a source of controversy between pastor and people. From the records of baptism of church members quoted in the History, it seems that the church allowed the "Half-Way Covenant" to the extent that adults could own the covenant and be baptized even though they had no relatives who were church members. Several names were preceded with:

*The following have owned the covenant of Baptism and some of them were baptized.*<sup>40</sup>

A necessary condition for full church membership was the direct experience of divine grace. A person who could give evidence of such an experience was admitted to the Lord's Supper. Apparently Sutton did not follow the ideas of Stoddard and allow full membership to all who were baptized and over the age of fourteen. The arguments over the Half-Way Covenant, which began in 1730, do not necessarily imply that the people countenanced the admission of all baptized members to full membership.

Hall's views on free grace are fairly typical for the period. He believed that there were a certain number of people who would receive grace; they were the Elect. No one could be sure of his or her election while on this earth, but it was still considered important to lead a pious life, even though it would not assure one of election. In his diary, Hall summarized his views on free grace in criticizing the sermon of another minister:

*... he preached warmly but falls into common error that if men do but improve common means of Grace they shall certainly obtain special grace. I observed to him that rational probability was enough to let the world a work, as God was Sovereign and we at best did our duty. So we could never merit any (grace) so as to challenge on change it of God.*<sup>41</sup>

Thus, good works in this life would not change God's mind about your future life. Yet, at the same time acceptance into heaven was well worth seeking.

Edwards agreed with Hall's interpretation of free grace. They also shared many other views on the controversies of the period. Both men had serious reservations about the crying and screaming, that was encouraged by the

"New Lights." They did not feel that it was either a necessary or a desirable part of the conversion experience. As one author puts it:

*\* He (Edwards) and Dr. Hall were intimate friends, and united in opposing those who rejected the revivals of the day as the work of God's Spirit - and those who by their extravagancies had brought the work into odium.*<sup>42</sup>

Both Hall and Edwards were hoping for the best from the Great Awakening, though they had some doubts about some of the things associated with it. They probably shared the view of Mr. Parsons of Lyme who believed that the hysteric reactions could have other cause than the conversion experience (e.g. imagination or physical disease). They would not however, totally deny the possibility that they could be the result of visitations of the Holy Spirit.<sup>43</sup>

Hall did not keep his views concerning enthusiasm private. Although he does mention his disapproval of it in his diary, he also publicly denounced overenthusiasm in two separate articles defending the Great Awakening in *The Christian History*. In the first article, published 13 August 1743, he wrote:

*Moreover I have not been without Fears, lest Some at this Day run into Antinomian and Pamifictal Errors; and that others would fall into enthusiasmick (sic) Phrensies, Evils by all means to be watched and guarded against: And who in this life is out of Danger?*<sup>44</sup>

The second article was an account of the revival at Sutton. He still defended the Awakening in spite of over-enthusiasm.

*However, I am not unsensible that some have been tainted too much with Enthusiasm: but I am as sure it is not generally the case with the Subjects of this Work.*<sup>45</sup>

Both Hall and Edwards felt that the Awakening had been beneficial to religion, but Hall did not believe that it benefitted the clergy.

It is possible to construct Hall's conception of the duties of and qualifications for the ministry from his remains. Most important was the minister's realization of the sacred trust committed to him. He believed that a minister should be both converted and educated. Thus, while he did not feel a seminary graduate was necessarily qualified for the ministry, he also opposed the use of uneducated lay exhorters, a practice popularized by the "New Lights."

Hall's stress on the need for ministers to be aware of the importance of their trust can be seen in the ordination sermon which was published in 1744. As was mentioned above, he saw Christ's ministers as instruments to encourage the conversion experience. They also had the heavy responsibility of interpreting the truths of the Gospel to their people. Their explanation helped to bring the people to Christ. This is one reason that many sermons during this period were explications of biblical passages. It was also the duty of the minister to encourage upright behaviour in the congregation by setting a good example and by more direct methods. Included in the sermon are the following responsibilities which Hall felt a minister should undertake:

*It is committed to Ministers to watch over and defend the Flock.*

*- Ministers are entrusted with the Key of Discipline.*<sup>46</sup>

Hall's conception of the role of the minister as expressed in this sermon can be termed moderate "New Light." His views concerning the responsibility of the pastor to his congregation were essentially conservative and

followed the precepts of the Puritanical view of the ministers as a leader to whom the people bring all problems both religious and civil. Yet, his views are also "New Light", because of his strong insistence not only on the education of the minister, but also on his conversion.

During the Great Awakening, many people attacked the principle of the Great Awakening. This was a result of the lay exhorters, who along with the itinerants, provided people with an alternative to the local church. The qualifications Hall supported for the ministry might allow for itinerants, but definitely excluded lay exhorters.

*There were itinerant exhorters as well as itinerant ministers, but exhorters were objects of scornful criticism whether they itinerated or not. The exhorters, unordained and usually uneducated, posed a new and pernicious threat to the New England clergy.*<sup>47</sup>

Hall agreed with the exhorters on the primary importance of a converted ministry. Yet, he also believed in the necessity of education for ministers. It was necessary that the minister be both educated and converted, for:

*He is an Usurper and an Invader, that assumes the Sacred work without being properly called, and regularly authorized thereto.*<sup>48</sup>

This was certainly in line with Gilbert Tennent's belief that unconverted ministers were a danger to morality.

When the lay exhorters attacked a system of ministerial education that emphasized instruction over experience, Hall may have felt the attack personally. For although he was very spiritual, he was, as a Harvard graduate a product of that system. From his diary, we gain some idea of the depth and breadth of his education. His entries about the comet were written using scientific terms and included a reasonable estimate of the length of the tail. Inserted in his diary is a list of books which he donated to Dartmouth College in 1782. Among these was John Calvin's *Exposition on Daniel* which included both the Latin and Greek texts, in a folio edition. He made constant references to his desire to devote more time to his studies. And we can see from his sermon that he had a command of the language. It is not difficult to see why he might resent and suspect the success of uneducated laymen. On 12 January 1743, he wrote of exhorters:

*I fear however lest some zealous laymen amongst us will finally hurt the cause of our Lord Jesus presuming to exhort, as they call it, and to do it in an unwarrantable manner. Who moreover seem to be too much swept upon men's crying out under conviction, falling down or falling into raptures after they obtain comfort.*<sup>49</sup>

Strangely enough, Hall himself at one time was accused of maintaining that education was not necessary for ministers. This was the result of the publication in *The Christian History* of a statement by Hall that plain preaching was more effective in the conversion of souls than dull sermons concerned with doctrine or theology. This created such a controversy that Hall had to publish an apology. He was sorry that some people had assumed that he thought learning was unnecessary and the truth of the matter was that he thought it was useful in its place. He maintained, though, that sermons which converted souls should be attributed to the work of the Spirit of God.<sup>50</sup>

In conclusion, based on the religious views expressed in his diary, sermon and published articles, we can classify Hall as a moderate New Light. It is interesting to note that the opinions in his diary are consistent with those that he published. Hall was in favor of the Great

Awakening. In the articles submitted to *The Christian History*, he expressed the belief that God had been present in the land, and that the Great Awakening should not be discredited because of overenthusiasm or other unworthy occurrences. We cannot call Hall an Old Light, for he believed in a converted ministry; neither can we call him without reservation, a New Light, for he believed in an educated ministry. Thus, we call him a moderate New Light.

Was Hall a typical minister of the eighteenth century? Apparently, he was for most of his life. It is, however, difficult to determine what was typical during the Great Awakening. A radical New Light, such as Solomon Prentice, was certainly not typical. It might be valid to term Old Lights, such as Charles Chauncy, as typical, if it were possible to enumerate them. It seems more likely that the average minister would attempt to compromise between the two factions in order to satisfy the majority of his congregation. These "average ministers" probably considered themselves moderate New Lights. If this definition is accepted, then David Hall can be considered a typical minister during the Great Awakening. For the greater part of his life, if one accepts the descriptions in Ola Winslow's *Meeting-house Hill*, Hall was fairly typical for the period. As a country minister, his life differed little from those of his parishioners. To survive, he had to work on his allotted land. This accounts for the small number of entries in his diary during the particularly July, and his constant complaint that he could not devote enough time to his studies. He also had a difficult time collecting his salary and never received it in full. Like most ministers of the period, Hall never resigned from preaching. He outlived the original members of the church<sup>51</sup>, the last one dying in 1778.<sup>52</sup> The Rev. David Hall died on 8 May 1789.<sup>53</sup>

David Hall's diary is a valuable document for it allows us to study the mind of a minister during this period. I totally disagree with the author of Hall's biography in Sibley's *Harvard Graduates*, who wrote:

*His diary is of little value in the earlier years because it is entirely concerned with the state of his soul, but by this time (1768) it becomes a record of secular events.*<sup>54</sup>

One of the main values of Hall's diary is that it allows us to examine his thoughts, we presume, and compare them with his actions. Had his diary been a record of secular events during this period, it would have been less valuable, because it would have to a great extent duplicated other sources.

An interesting further study of Hall's diary would be one that sought to determine how and to what extent his attitudes changed as he got older.

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## ENDNOTES

1. **The Diary of David Hall** was kept from 1740-89. Entries were intermittent, sometimes several in a short period of time, and at other times omitting whole months. It seems his entries were made when his soul was troubled. It's possible he started it for therapeutic reasons.
2. Rev. William A. Benedict and Rev. Hiram A. Tracy, **History of the Town of Sutton, Massachusetts, From 1704 to 1876; Including Grafton until 1813; and Parts of Northbridge, Upton and Auburn**, (Worcester: Sanford & Co., 1878), p. 9.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 12
4. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 10
6. *Ibid.*, p. 23
7. *Ibid.*, p. 10
8. Also spelled Macinstree, MAKINSTREY, Mckinstrey, and McKinstre.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 428-9.
10. *Ibid.*, pp 28, 29, 32
11. *Ibid.*, p. 433.
12. Clifford K. Shipton, **Sibley's Harvard Graduates, 1722-1725**, Vol. 7 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1945), pp. 345-355.
13. Benedict and Tracy, **History of Sutton**, p. 37
14. *Ibid.*, p. 37
15. *Ibid.*, p. 432
16. *Ibid.*, p. 38
17. **The Diary of David Hall**, Microfilm of manuscript, 7 March 1740/ 1.
18. *Ibid.*, 6 April 1741
19. *Ibid.*, 6 April 1741.
20. *Ibid.*, 15 February 1743
21. *Ibid.*, 27 June 1743.
22. Shipton, **Harvard Graduates**, Vol. 9, pp. 130-38.

23. Ibid., Vol. 7, pp. 273-4.
24. Hall's Diary, 19 March 1743/ 4.
25. Ebenezer Parkman, *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, ed. Francis G. Wallet, (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1974), 8 June 1744, p. 98
26. Ibid., 5 December 1744, p. 108.
27. Hall's Diary, 15 February 1741.
28. Ibid., 26 February 1741.
29. Ibid., 29 March 1743.
30. Ibid., 2 April 1743.
31. Ibid., 25 March 1743.
32. H.A. Tracey, *A Brief History of the First Church in Sutton, Massachusetts Contained in a Sermon Preached Jan. 20, 1842*, (Worcester: Lewis Metcalf, 1842), p. 12.
33. Edwin Scott Gaustad, *The Great Awakening in New England*, (Chicago: Quadrangle Paperbacks, 1968), p. 92.
34. Michael Zuckerman, "The Social Context of Democracy in Massachusetts," *WMQ* 3rd Series, XXV (1968), p. 525.
35. David Hall, *The Vast Importance of Faithfulness in Gospel Ministers: A Sermon Preach'd at the Ordination of Mr. Joshua Eaton. To the Pastoral Care of a Church in Leicester, November 7th, 1744*, (Boston: S. Kneeland T. Green, 1745), p. 16. N.B. underlining replaces italics.
36. Ibid., p. 16.
37. Benedict and Tracy, *History of Sutton*, p. 428.
38. Ibid., p. 428.
39. Hall's Diary. 24 September 1744.
40. Benedict and Tracy, *History of Sutton*, p. 433.
41. Hall's Diary, 25 November 1742.
42. H.A. Tracy, *A Brief History*, p. 12.
43. William Cary, "Revival Experienced during the Great Awakening in 1741-1744, in New London County," *New Englander*, VLII (Nov. 1803), pp. 735.

44. David Hall, Letter No. XIII dated 30 June 1743, in **The Christian History, Containing Accounts of the Revival and Propagation of Religion in Great Britain & America, for the Year 1743**, ed. Thomas Prince, Jr. (No. 24, 13 August 1743), p. 186.
45. David Hall, "Account of the Revival of Religion at Sutton in the County of Worcester, finished," in **The Christian History for the Year 1744**, *Ibid.*, (No. 74, 20 July 1744). p. 171.
46. David Hall, **The Vast Importance of Faithfulness**, p. 8.
47. Gaustad, **The Great Awakening in New England**, p. 72.
48. David Hall, **The Vast Importance of Faithfulness**, p. 10.
49. Hall's Diary, 12 January 1743.
50. David Hall, "Account of the Revival at Sutton", pp. 169, 415, 416.
51. Ola Elizabeth Winslow, **Meetinghouse Hill, 1630-1783**, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), pp. 172-239.
52. Shipton, **Harvard Graduates**, Vol. 7, p. 354.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 355
54. *Ibid.*, p. 351

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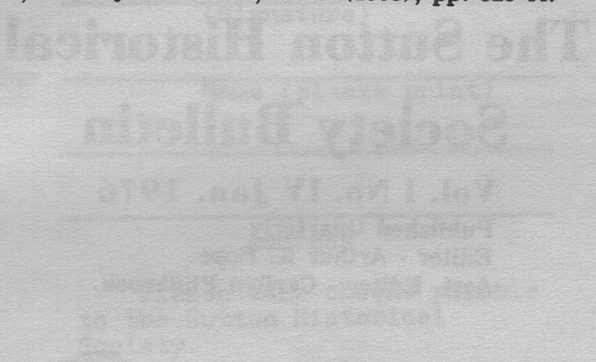
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## **EDITOR'S NOTE:**

This particular issue of our bulletin is published in commemoration of the Bicentennial of the United States of America.

It is fitting that we should dwell on one of the most important Sutton figures in the revolutionary period as well as one of the most important events contributing to the revolutionary involvement of our people.

It also seems fitting that this article should reflect the work of a contemporary young person taking a hard look at the forces that shaped us.

Karen Helgesen is a student at Holy Cross. She originally prepared this paper for a class in Provincial America with Dr. Ross Beales. It is perhaps the most significant historical study of early Sutton to be published in recent years.

Adding to its timeliness are the efforts of the Sutton Bicentennial Committee who have commissioned Marc P. Smith, Executive Producer and Resident Playwright of the Worcester Foothills Theater to write a play based on David Hall's Diary kept between the years 1740-1789.

The play will be produced by local townspeople and the Worcester Foothills Theater in the First Congregational Church for several nights later in this Bicentennial year.

The oil painting of Dr. David Hall reproduced here is the work of Robert Corey, a senior at Sutton High School, and is based on the work of a limner sent to Sutton in 1780 by Dr. Jonathan Hall to take his parents' effigies.

**Arthur K. Pope**

# **The Sutton Historical Society Bulletin**

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