tions. This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people was the real American Revolution.”

What Adams was pointing to was the fundamental shift in “the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people” that lay at the center of American colonial history and the Revolution itself. In no other area was this change more pronounced or had such profound consequences as the colonial attitude toward power. Essentially this was a development from a deferential to a democratic understanding of the nature of society and government.

The case for the deferential society was put forth succinctly by John Winthrop in his *Modell of Christian Charity*, formulated for the Massachusetts Puritans. “God Almighty in his most holy and wise providence,” Winthrop declared, “hath soe disposed of the Condition of mankinde, as in all times some must be rich, some poore, some highe and eminent in power and dignities; others meane and in subieccion.”

The duty of those who were “poore . . . meane and in subieccion” was clear. They should respect God’s wise ordering of the world and obey those who were granted power, wealth, and dignity. They were required to defer to those blessed with better blood, more land, and more influence. Here there was no rags-to-riches or log-cabin-to-White-House mythology; social mobility was unthinkable and contrary to God’s law.

Obviously this was one of the “sentiments and affections” which had to be undermined before there could be any American Revolution, for a blind deference toward power was incompatible with any serious questioning of British authority. The most fundamental factor in eroding the attitude of deference was unquestionably economic. Puritans and other colonists discovered that in contrast to the Old World, the poor did not always remain poor. Their lands produced bountiful harvests; their trade increased. The static, stratified society envisioned by Winthrop and ordained by God gave way under the pressure of the increasing economic prosperity of American land. As Hannah Arendt has suggested, people “began to doubt that poverty is inherent in the human condition, to doubt that the distinction between the few, who through circumstances or strength or fraud had succeeded in liberating themselves from the shackles of poverty, and the laboring poverty-stricken multitude was inevitable and eternal. This doubt,” she argues, “or rather the conviction that life on earth might be blessed with abundance instead of being cursed by scarcity was prerevolutionary and American in origin; it grew directly out of the American colonial experience.”

Closely associated with this new perception was a theological change in the conception of human nature. Calvinism, which became the domin-

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