

Epilogue

Because John Davenport opposed the changes that were transforming New England in the post-Restoration era and lost, his reputation suffered a diminishment that has lasted until this day. Because he did not spend most of his New England career in Boston, as did his friends John Cotton and Increase Mather and Increase's son Cotton, he has been neglected in works that focus on that community. Physically on the outskirts of New England, New Haven and its founder have been on the periphery of scholarship. When mentioned in studies of New England puritanism, Davenport is never the focal point, and so there has been no incentive to go beyond the stereotypes that depict him as the hardest of the hard among the clergy of the region. The aspersions cast upon him by those who founded Third Church Boston have contributed to the lack of sympathy that historians and others have shown him.

His reputation before 1668 belies that image. When Davenport arrived in New England in 1637, John Cotton welcomed him "as eyes unto them in the wilderness," and the anonymous author of the preface to Davenport's *Another Essay* wrote that John Cotton had said of him "that he is a man mighty in judgment, and learning, and singular prudence."¹ In a letter to John Winthrop Jr., Samuel Hartlib, his old friend from his days in England, referred to Davenport as his "most reverend and precious friend," one who sought "all public good both in religion, learning, and industry," and "an excellent, holy, and devout soul."² The natives in the New Haven area were amazed at his learning and devotion to his books. Cotton Mather notes that they called him "So big study man."³ In his lifetime he was regarded as one of the "candlesticks" of New England, the godly light from which drew men toward God.