

Remarks of Rev. Reed Baer, Pastor and Teacher at West Parish of Barnstable, United Church of Christ

Let me begin my brief remarks today by thanking Lucy Loomis and the Sturgis Library for putting together this lovely rededication ceremony for the historic Lothrop Bible, and for bringing together in one place representatives of so many of the significant strands of Rev. John's legacy.

I would also like to compliment the Library for the lovely new case which protects Rev. John's Bible, sealing it off from the many environmental forces which threaten to harm it.

It is only fitting and proper, however, that the Bible have such protection, although I cannot help but wonder, looking back at its history, if the party more in need of such protection are those standing on *this* side of that beautiful protective case.

The records reveal that Rev. John and his followers brought few possessions with them when they emigrated in 1634, and there can be no doubt that the most dangerous of those possessions was not a sword, not a musket, not a pistol – no, their most dangerous possession was this book.

For Rev. John, this was no mere book. This was the very word of God, a word that cut like a knife through the centuries of accumulated pomp and ceremony and privilege that he saw in the established church of his country, the Church of England, the church in which he had been baptized and ordained.

For Rev. John, this was no mere book. This was the very word of God, a word that held that the authority of God flows not through the King, but directly from the members of the local congregation, who gather to seek the divine guidance to be discerned between these leaves.

For Rev. John, this was no mere book. This was the very word of God, which would brook no impediment between a person and their God other than their conscience.

On the authority of this book, of this Bishop's Bible, Rev. John gave up the security and privilege for himself and his wife and his five children, and left his career in the Church of England and became minister of the First Independent Church of London.

On the authority of this book, Rev. John endured imprisonment in the Clink, London's notorious jail, faced trial before Archbishop William Laud, and refused to take the oath of conformity, the penalty for which included execution.

On the authority of this book, Rev. John and his congregation braved the stormy Atlantic and set out to make a new life here on the shores of Cape Cod Bay.

Perhaps you can see why I believe that this book was Rev. John's most dangerous possession. And so while we have gathered here today thinking that we are protecting a

book, I can't help but wonder if, by sealing it away in this manner, we are unconsciously trying to protect ourselves....

Thank you.