

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910455484903321
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Titolo	Making heretics [[electronic resource]] : militant Protestantism and free grace in Massachusetts, 1636-1641 / / Michael P. Winship
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Princeton, N.J., : Princeton University Press, c2002
ISBN	1-282-08753-3 9786612087530 1-4008-2495-8 1-4008-1483-9
Edizione	[Core Textbook]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (340 p.)
Disciplina	277.44/06
Soggetti	Puritans - Massachusetts - History - 17th century Protestantism - Massachusetts - History - 17th century Antinomianism - Massachusetts - History of doctrines - 17th century Religious pluralism - Massachusetts - History - 17th century Religion and politics - Massachusetts - History - 17th century Electronic books. Massachusetts History Colonial period, ca. 1600-1775 Massachusetts Politics and government To 1775 Massachusetts Church history 17th century
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references (p. [247]-311) and index.
Nota di contenuto	Front matter -- CONTENTS -- ACKNOWLEDGMENTS -- ABBREVIATIONS -- Introduction -- ONE. Assurance of Salvation in the Early Seventeenth Century -- TWO. Lively Stones: John Cotton and Anne Hutchinson -- THREE. The Most Glorious Church in the World: Boston, c. 1636 -- FOUR. Practicing Puritanism in a Strange Land: Massachusetts, c. 1636 -- FIVE. Secret Quarrels Turn Public: Summer 1636-January 1637 -- SIX. Convicting John Wheelwright: January-March 1637 -- SEVEN. Abimelech's Faction: March-August 1637 -- EIGHT Reclaiming Cotton: August-September 1637 -- NINE. The November Trials: October-November 1637 -- TEN. An American Jezebel: November 1637-March 1638 -- ELEVEN. Holding Forth Darkly: March 1638-February 1641 --

Sommario/riassunto

Making Heretics is a major new narrative of the famous Massachusetts disputes of the late 1630's misleadingly labeled the "antinomian controversy" by later historians. Drawing on an unprecedented range of sources, Michael Winship fundamentally recasts these interlocked religious and political struggles as a complex ongoing interaction of personalities and personal agendas and as a succession of short-term events with cumulative results. Previously neglected figures like Sir Henry Vane and John Wheelwright assume leading roles in the processes that nearly ended Massachusetts, while more familiar "hot Protestants" like John Cotton and Anne Hutchinson are relocated in larger frameworks. The book features a striking portrayal of the minister Thomas Shepard as an angry heresy-hunting militant, helping to set the volatile terms on which the disputes were conducted and keeping the flames of contention stoked even as he ostensibly attempted to quell them. The first book-length treatment in forty years, Making Heretics locates its story in rich contexts, ranging from ministerial quarrels and negotiations over fine but bitterly contested theological points to the shadowy worlds of orthodox and unorthodox lay piety, and from the transatlantic struggles over the Massachusetts Bay Company's charter to the fraught apocalyptic geopolitics of the Reformation itself. An object study in the ways that puritanism generated, managed, and failed to manage diversity, Making Heretics carries its account on into England in the 1640's and 1650's and helps explain the differing fortunes of puritanism in the Old and New Worlds.
