

January 1631.<sup>32</sup> Here is evidence, then, that when Pride was living in London at the beginning of the 1630s other members of his family had joined him, or he them. The surname is surely too rare for the occurrence in the St. Bride's registers to be a coincidence. The young girl's father could well have been the John Pride who emigrated to America in the late 1630s, perhaps following Lathrop after the suppression of 1632. He was to settle in Massachusetts, and owned land in Essex County that is still known as Pride's Crossing.<sup>33</sup>

Coupled to the friction with the ruling powers that Pride and his associates experienced through their religious beliefs was the issue of social status. Until the early modern period English society had been largely polarised, with society divided between the 'noble' or 'better' sort on the one hand and the 'common', 'meaner' and 'vulgar' sorts on the other. By the 1640s, however, a third group had established itself between the two extremes of rich and poor, between the ruling establishment and its subjects – the 'middle sort'. The term seems to have originated in commerce, with goods of the time being divided into three grades of quality: great, middle and small.<sup>34</sup> The term 'middle sort', then, not only describes a particular social group but identifies the background of urban trade from which the group arose. Unlike the gentry who lived off their rents, and the poor who had to labour under their employers, the middle sort aspired to be their own masters. The defining trait of the middle classes is to achieve, to rise above oneself, and the growth of income that men such as Pride were experiencing allowed them a firmer social footing.

The Marxist interpretation of the English Civil War has fallen out of favour in recent years, but its theory of class conflict correspond with the situation experienced by Pride. It can be said that the Civil War divided society 'vertically', with commoners and gentry on both sides, rather than 'horizontally' in a war that pitted the upper classes against the lower, but social status *did* play its part in drawing-up sides. At Bristol in 1643 the Royalist cause was resisted by 'the middle rank, the true and best citizens'. In Gloucestershire, while Charles I had the support of both the rich and the 'needy multitude', Parliament was supported by 'yeomen, farmers, clothiers and the whole of the middle rank of people'; in Nottinghamshire during the Civil War the majority of the gentry were against Parliament, but 'most of the middle sort, the able and substantial freeholders, and the other commons, who had not their dependence upon malignant nobility and the gentry, adhered to the parliament.'<sup>35</sup> The largest cities in England (respectively: London, Norwich and Bristol) were dominated by merchants; each of those cities would side with parliament at the beginning of the Civil War. This is not to say that the 'middle rank' began the war of their own volition. The city of Worcester, for example, was firmly Royalist during the war because its Parliamentary supporters were 'but of the middle rank of people, and none of any great power and eminence to take their part',<sup>36</sup> and there were no members of the traditional ruling class for the middle sort to unite behind. It is clear, from the above evidence that Parliament drew considerable support from the middle sort, the artisans and tradesmen like Pride.

London's 'middle sort' had a distinct identity, drawn together through shared beliefs that distinguished them from the social groups above and below them. By the end of the 1630s Pride was a part of this new social group that began to question the policing of religion and the control of government. He was one of the urban middle-sort, a prospering brewer. The lack of religious freedom gave Pride a cause to champion; his middle-rank status gave him the power to do so.