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Puritanism in America: Image versus Reality

The Puritan First Fathers and the Massachusetts Bay Migrants

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Honors Senior Project
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HONORS THESIS

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Puritanism in America is often misunderstood and misrepresented. Popular understanding of Puritan New England is filled with images of “Pilgrims and the first Thanksgiving, of clustered villages and white steepled churches, of pious founders and stern fathers, of tormented souls...and witchcraft mania.” The modern masses, if they think of it at all, accept this imagery as representative of early colonial conditions and the sources of these stereotypes are rarely questioned outside of academia. While many of these representations have taken hold of the American imagination in the post-revolutionary era, there is one that owes its existence to the Puritans themselves. The image of New England’s First Fathers, characterized by the unity and achievement of their colonial enterprise, is a representation of the second generation of New England Puritans. Historians agree that this idea of a golden age in Massachusetts Bay first came to expression in the colony’s jeremiad sermons of the 1660s and 70s. Often preached on days of election and humiliation, these sermons point to the commonwealth’s founders as examples of the proper relationship of a covenanted community to God and to one another. The second generation ministers idealized their “pious founders and stern fathers” in contrast to their own generation’s backslidings.

The significance of this image and its emergence in second-generation New England has been highly debated. Scholars have consistently attempted to portray the image as a rhetorical device intended to maintain the second generation’s continuity with the first. The result of this effort has been an overwhelming emphasis upon the first generation. Some scholars have attempted to define the image as the ultimate expression of a long tradition of Puritan hermeneutics. They have treated it as the second generation’s amplification of inherited rhetoric. Others have recognized the image as a creation of the second generation, an innovation that is without counterpart in Puritan history. However, the debate between these two positions has consistently centered on the question of the migrants’ original errand. The image is treated as the second generation’s response to their fathers’ undertaking and to the perceived declension of New England from her former glory. Scholars have continued to ask: What was the nature of the first generation’s migration? Was it a world-saving mission or an attempt to recover primitive forms of Christian worship? The importance of the image to those who created it is all but disregarded.

This essay explores the emergence of the image in second-generation Puritan New England. It argues that the ideal is a creation of the ministers of the 1660s and 70s, one that was needed in order to explain the changing...

2 Ibid.
local and global conditions of the period. It maintains that the image was not the result of an inherited rhetorical
tradition, but also that it was not a complete fabrication. The essay begins with a consideration of the image itself.
The second generation's idealizations are traced through an analysis of their jeremiads. Then the discussion turns to
subjects of the celebration. The first generation's motives for migration, their initial organization of the Bay
Colony, and the question of their unity are considered in an effort to explore the accuracy of the second generation's
assertions. A comparison of second generation celebrations and first generation accounts follows. Finally, a review
of twentieth century scholarship is undertaken in order to trace the discussion of the image. The ultimate aim of this
analysis is to demonstrate the need for a shift in the current debate. The image must be considered in light of the
context from which it emerged, rather than in support of a Puritan errand.

The "Fathers to This People:" The Emergence of the Image in Second Generation New England

The image of New England's First Fathers originated in the jeremiad sermons of their successors. The
second generation celebrated their predecessors for who they were, for their migration to New England, and for their
accomplishments in the Bay Colony. While the image is a creation of the Massachusetts Bay Puritans, the sermon
form in which it first appeared is not. As revisionist scholar, Theodore Dwight Bozeman, demonstrates, the
jeremiad was prominent among English Puritans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

English expositors adopted the special hortatory form that has come to be termed the 'jeremiad.' It
provided the structure of many a sermon and of many a passing admonition within sermons directed to
other ends.... Common in medieval and Renaissance preaching,...[the jeremiad,] in sixteenth- and
seventeenth-century England[,]...assumed new prominence.5

The jeremiad followed the standard form of Puritan sermons wherein a biblical verse or precept was asserted and
expounded upon by the minister. The discussion resulted in a doctrine, which was then related to the audience
through a series of applications, or uses. The jeremiad was the variation upon this form in which lamentation
became the rhetoric of covenant maintenance.6 The covenant was the pact between members of a society that
obligated them "to conform national life to the standards of biblical law. To the extent that this was accomplished
and sustained, [they] would enjoy divine favor and material prosperity, while defection from scriptural demands

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4 Shephard, Thomas JR. Eye-Salve or A Watch-Word From our Lord Jesus Christ unto his Churches. (Cambridge,
1673), p. 17.
5 Bozeman, Theodore Dwight. To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism. (Chapel Hill:
6 Ibid., p. 325.
would evoke God's disfavor." The English jeremiads lament England's failure to institute fully the primitive forms of Christianity. While the second generation of New England Puritans employed this familiar form, they replaced the primal age of the faith with the model of their immediate predecessors in the laments of their own declension. The ministers describe their fathers in light of their perceived achievement of primitive Christian forms. The founders are celebrated as having been "eminently for wisdome, faithfulness, piety, zeal for God, tender compassion, [as having possessed] a Spirit of Government, &c. as true nursing Fathers to this people." They are characterized as a community unified by their common religious interest. These celebrations of the first generation by the second created the ideal of New England Puritanism's golden age.

The most common appeal made in the second-generation jeremiads is to the example of the founders' character. The fathers' piety and morality are repeatedly pointed to as examples of the proper disposition of faithful men. This character is taken to be the root of the first generation's migration and the motivation for their organization of colonial institutions. The fathers were good men. The ministers of the second generation repeatedly describe them as possessed with and powered by a love of God. "Your fathers before you served God in their Generation...they lived and died in the faith of the Gospel, and the profession thereof." They "had much of the power of Godliness...the power of Religion." They "were for purity of worship...[and] did endeavour to uphold Religioun in the power of it." The founders' faith is connected to their actions. They are described as having been wholly engaged in prayer, meditation, self-examination and reflection, not only for themselves, but for the benefit of the colony as well. "Our Fathers that are now asleep in Jesus...have with so many Prayers and Tears, hazards, and labours, and watchings, and studies, [worked] night and day to lay a sound and sure, and happy Foundation of prosperity for this people." With such an example laid out before them, the ministers present their audience with the question of their own condition. "There is another trial whether the same faith & faithfulness, which dwelt in our fathers of the first times of these plantations dwell in us, also their children."

The model of the first generation's piety, though usually the first trait to which the second generation ministers appeal, is not the only example left by the fathers for the benefit of their successors. Their morality in

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7 Ibid., p. 291.
8 Shephard, Thomas JR. Eye-Salve., p. 17.
11 Mather, Increase. A Discourse Concerning the Danger of Apostasy (Boston, 1679), p. 57.
speech and conduct are also drawn upon as perfect practices from which the second-generation congregants are held to have departed. Samuel Danforth, the minister of the Roxbury congregation from 1650 to 1674, describes the first generation as "solid, serious, sober Christians, constant and stedfast in the Profession and Practice of the Truth." Increase Mather, the son of first generation minister, Richard Mather, and minister of Boston's North Church from 1664 until his death in 1723, develops Danforth's analysis of a sober first generation. "Our Fathers were Patterns of Sobriety, they would not drink a cup of wine nor strong drink, more than should suffice nature, and conduce to their health." Mather also contributes to the description of the first generation as solid, serious, and steadfast. "Their Fathers did order their conversation according to the holy Rules of the word of God." They left for their posterity "Principles of Truth, which they did with much cost and pains, dig out of the rich veins of the Scripture." The founders did not just preach and hear sermons; they lived them. The ministers' hope was that their generation might return to the practice of their predecessors. But, Increase laments, "We may see here and there, one that hath much of his blessed fathers Spirit and Principles, but how rare are such amongst us?"

The ministers' lengthy accounts of New England's backslidings in the second generation reveal more about the first generation's character than do their direct portrayals of it. For in describing what they had become, these men provide a clear description of what they believed their fathers were not. "If the Children of the Covenant" walk "in the ways of Pride, Sensuality, [and] Unrighteousness" then it is clear that their "Fathers have been of an holy, exemplary conversation." The ministers claim that their "Generation is not like the first." Therefore, if among the successors there are "ignorant...[and] scandalous ones," then their fathers were intelligent and admirable. If there is a "great rudeness amongst [their] young ones" and multiple transgressions in their colony, such as "swearing and sinful gaming," then the youth of the first generation were courteous and well-behaved. If there exists a "degeneracy from the good manners of the Christian world" and a waning of religion's influence upon the "body of this...unconverted Generation," then the fathers were faithful adherents and proper converts. For "such sins...were not [formerly] known in New-England [but have] now become common."

16 Mather, Increase. The Danger of Apostacy, p. 57.
17 Ibid., p. 85.
18 Ibid., p. 65.
19 Ibid., p. 43.
20 Ibid., p. 64.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
The reasons for the first generation’s migration to New England are generally described by their successors as demonstrative of their fathers’ character. In their descriptions of New England’s founding, the second-generation ministers present three motives as central to their predecessors’ decision to migrate. The first of these was religious, specifically, a concern for purity of worship and observation of ordinances free from human inventions. This religious concern characterized the founders’ other reasons for migration, which, according to the second-generation ministers, included a desire to place their children under the proper observance of the Lord’s ordinances, and a hope of propagating the gospel to the colony’s native population.

The religious concern is often appealed to in the jeremiads of the 1660s and 70s as the supreme motive for the first generation’s migration. “Religion is our interest and that which our Fathers came into this land for.” The founders of the commonwealth are said to have “made their bargain with God, and [to have given] up their All elsewhere” that they might better enjoy the purity of his ordinances. According to their successors, the colony’s fathers faced corruption in England’s ecclesiastical institutions, which were governed by Anglican practices that found no scriptural justification. With no hope of reforming these institutions from within, the founders migrated to New England in order to establish pure observance of the Lord’s commands.

[A] main design of God’s people adventuring in to this wilderness was for progress in the work of Reformation.... [T]hey were then in the place from whence there came mixtures in the worship of God...which [they] were grieved with, and [which] vexed their righteous souls from day to day; but here they hoped they might enjoy freedom from those pollutions; and freedom to follow the Lord fully in all his Ordinances and appointments. The founders were righteous men. Not only were they moved by a concern for purity of worship, but they also possessed no desire for material gain. They sought simply to relate themselves to God through the fulfillment of his demands. “Our Fathers did not in their coming hither propound any great matters to themselves respecting this world; only that they should have liberty to serve God; & to walk with him in all the ways of worship.” Unlike England’s other colonies, New England was built upon a religious interest. “There are other out-goings of our Nation, besides these Colonies in New-England, but they are not built upon a Foundation or Interest purely Religious, as is to be affirmed of these Plantations.... Religion and not the World was that which our Fathers came hither for.”

23 Mather, Increase. An Earnest Exhortation., p. 5.
25 Shepard, Thomas JR. Eve-Salve., p. 37.
26 Mather, Increase. The Danger of Apostacy., p.55.
27 Mather, Increase. An Earnest Exhortation., p. 16.
The first generation’s care for the spiritual estate of their children is also presented in the jeremiads as having influenced the founders’ decision to migrate. Increase Mather observes that, “It was in a special manner with respect to posterity, that our Fathers came into this Land, that so their Children might not see evil examples, and be in danger of being corrupted. . . . Many of them ventured their lives into a wilderness for [their children’s] sake.” The fathers’ concern for their children, like their religious interest for themselves, involved spiritual, rather than material security. They came into this land “mainly with respect to the Rising Generation,” not to “leave them a rich and a wealthy people,” not “to leave them Houses, Lands, [and] Livings[,]...but to have God in the midst of them.”

In *An Earnest Exhortation*, Increase Mather reminds his audience, “Our Fathers came into this Land. . . . that [their children] might be left under the Government and Discipline of Christ in his Church, and be sure to have the advantage of a Religious Education.” The men of New England’s first generation sacrificed everything that they and their posterity might rightly relate themselves to God and to one another. “[B]ehold here are Children, whose Fathers lost their Houses and Estates, and ventured their lives for” their sake.

The founders’ third motive for migrating to New England, a desire to propagate the gospel to the colony’s native population, is not as prominent in the second-generation jeremiads as the founders’ religious concern for themselves and for their children. However, Increase Mather describes the first generation as having shown care and concern for the religious condition of the native people as well. “You know it is expressed in the Patent, as one main end proposed by our Fathers in their coming into this Wilderness, that so they might endeavor the Conversion of the Natives.”

“Our Fathers came hither to this end, that they might Propagate the Gospel, and be instrumental to set up the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus among the Heathen.”

Whatever the motivations for the fathers’ migration were, nearly every second-generation minister agreed that the men who undertook the colonial enterprise were “choice and pick’d ones, whom [God had] eminently prepared and trained up and qualified for this service.” “God hath culled out a people...which he hath also had a great favor towards, and hath brought them by a mighty hand...and here hath he planted them.” The founders were chosen by God to be the fathers of the colony. “God sifted a whole Nation that he might send choice Grain

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31 Ibid., p. 20.
over into this Wilderness." They were "betrusted with the management of the Kingdome of Christ and the Interest of Religion." While their motives for migration were good, their departure had been ordained by God, which in the end was the only reason required. This final justification, as presented by the second-generation ministers, would have served as the ultimate response to any criticism regarding the founding of the colony. It would also justify the fathers' actions upon arrival. The founders had their reasons for leaving, but they were ultimately driven by God to do so. He inspired their removal and ordered their organization of the New World. The Lord "hath spirited his servants here to associate together according to his order."

The first generation's godliness and their motives for removal to New England are often described in the jeremiads in relation to their organization of civil and ecclesiastical institutions in the colony. The founders' land distribution practices and the religious foundation of their civil state and educational institutions are characterized as the proper forms of civic life. Their creation of a congregational church polity, their regulation of church membership, and the content of their worship are celebrated as the realization of unadulterated Christian practice. In all of these descriptions, the second-generation ministers demonstrate the centrality of their fathers' religious concern. The first generation ordered everything according to the principles of their faith and, in doing so, achieved unity within and among the institutions of the commonwealth.

The first generation's land distribution practices are not typically mentioned in the jeremiads. However, Increase Mather uses the example of their early allotment system in *An Earnest Exhortation* to demonstrate the fathers' concern for physical unity. Mather asserts that the migrants "were satisfied with one Acre for each person, as his propriety, and after that with twenty Acres for a family." The founding families accepted these smaller, regulated parcels so that "they might keep themselves together." Their humility contrasts with the second generation's greed. "How have Men since coveted after the earth, that many hundreds, nay thousands of Acres, have been engrossed by one man, and they that profess themselves Christians." Mather treats the covetousness of his own generation as a departure from perfect practice. The fathers sacrificed large holdings in the interest of stability. In doing so, they achieved the proper observation of Christian landholding practices.

38 Shepard, Thomas JR. *Eye-Salve.*, p. 11.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
In relation to the colony's civil polity, the second-generation ministers focus on the religious foundations of the early commonwealth. For, in founding their civic institutions upon a religious concern, the fathers created an environment in which the observation of Christian ordinances could be freely enjoyed. According to the jeremiads, the colony's early leaders were pious, its laws were founded in Scripture, and civil participation was limited to those of faith. Increase Mather summarizes the first generation's set up.

As to our Civil Polity, our Profession hath been, that they that are Rulers should be men that fear God, and that they that choose them should be such also, and that the Laws of the Common wealth should be regulated by the Word of God, that so the Lord Jesus may reign here.\[^{42}\]

The fathers' religious interest is also said to have shaped their government of the Bay Colony. The "wholsome Laws made by the Fathers of this Common wealth...[were] to punish the disturbers of Christs order among us."\[^{43}\] The founders' appointed pious rulers to enforce these laws, who are described as having been successful in doing so by their successors. Increase Mather compares the first generation's success in the regulation of civil affairs with his own generation's waning interest in the task. He frames the comparison in a discussion of the necessity of reformation. "\(W\)hat shall be done in order to prevention of Apostasy? What shall be done, that so succeeding generations in New-England may not forsake the Lord of their Fathers?"\[^{44}\] Mather's responds to his own question, "If Magistrates, Ministers, and People all do what duty requireth, the feared Apostasy...may be prevented."\[^{45}\] He addresses the magistrates first and outlines the duties that these men have neglected. In this discussion, Mather accuses the magistrates of "permit[ing] unorthodox worship to continue unrestrained" in the colony.\[^{46}\] According to Michael G. Hall, Mather is "allud[ing] to both the Baptists and to the Quakers[,]...who had been meeting in private houses in Boston since 1674."\[^{47}\] In his accusation, Mather reminds the magistrates of their fathers' example.

Certainly...if your blessed Fathers, and Predecessors were alive, and in place, it would not be so. If Winthrop, Dudley, [and] Endicot were upon the Bench, such profaneness as this would be suppressed.\[^{48}\]

New England's early leaders are described as having been guided by their "love, and zeal for the Name, Truth, and blessed Ordinances of the Lord Jesus." These founders are celebrated by their successors for having organized and maintained the colony's civil institutions according to a religious interest.

\[^{42}\] Ibid., p. 17.
\[^{43}\] Shepard, Thomas JR. Eye-Salve., p. 17.
\[^{44}\] Mather, Increase. The Danger of Apostacy., p. 68.
\[^{45}\] Ibid.,
\[^{47}\] Ibid.
\[^{48}\] Mather, Increase. The Danger of Apostacy., p. 78.
The first generation's pious government is not the only instance of a religiously motivated civil institution in Massachusetts Bay. The fathers had ventured into the wilderness out of concern for themselves and for the spiritual estates of their children. According to the jeremiads, this care for their successors was expressed in the founders' erection of Harvard College at Cambridge in 1636. "Hence also was it the care which God put into the hearts of the first Generation that planted this Wilderness...to provide Nurseries for Church and Common-wealth, in their ordering Schools of Learning, and in particular the Colledge."\(^9\) With reference to the second generation's waning interest in study, Increase Mather observes:

Our Fathers of the first Generation in New England...did...erect a College at Cambridge, which in their days was signally owned and blessed by the Lord...most of the churches being supplied with Teachers who have there been educated.\(^50\)

Increase, himself, would later become president of the college in 1685 and was a member of the Harvard Corporation when he wrote these lines.\(^51\) He had his own motives for endorsing the institution. However, Mather and his contemporaries celebrated the first generation's construction of Harvard as an expression of their second motive for migration: concern for their posterity.

The first generation's religious practices are celebrated by the second as the most important accomplishment of their colonial enterprise. The fathers are said to have instituted the primitive forms of Christian worship. Their adoption of a congregational model of church polity is treated as the perfect organization of ecclesiastical practice, one in which the regulation of church membership and the purity of worship took on new prominence. The early migrants had refused to conform to England's state-mandated ecclesiastical model. Their implementation of congregationalism was then significant in the eyes of their successors, who viewed them as having "shake[n] off the dust of Babylon" in their departure from England.\(^52\) "We are the Children of the good old Non-Conformists; and therefore are we under the deepest engagement, not only to reject Inventions Humane in the things of God, but to come up to the practice of Institutions Divine."\(^53\) The children of the colony's founders are encouraged to follow their fathers' example by rejecting corruption and affirming the "Congregational way of Church Government.... Indeed the Congregational way truly stated, is that which our Fathers have stedfastly

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\(^9\) Shepard, Thomas JR. *Eye-Salve.*, p. 11.
\(^51\) Hall, Michael G. *The Last American Puritan.*, p. 198.
\(^52\) Mather, Increase. *The Danger of Apostasy.*, p. 56.
owned and avowed...as it is held forth in the platform of Discipline." The founders of New England are described as "Abrahams" in their institution of congregational worship. "So did our Fathers remove out of their own Land, when God called them, and came hither, to build an Altar here to the Everlasting God, yea, and they have set the Altar upon its right Basis too." "As to [New England's] Ecclesiastical constitution, the Congregational way...is that which we profess."

Under the congregational model, each church was composed of a body of congregants who entered into a covenant with one another and with God in which they agreed to properly observe their Christian duties. No authority higher than the individual congregations existed within the system. Despite this lack of a governing body, the first generation churches developed a distinct method for regulating membership, one that is celebrated at length by their successors. As to "the admission of persons into full Communion, we know what our Fathers have taught concerning that matter, viz. that there ought to be an holding forth Faith and Repentance before admision to the Lords Table". The founders took care that full church membership was reserved for those who would not pollute it. Over time, the requirement for membership evolved from a mere confession of faith and demonstration of upright behavior into an account of the working of God's grace upon the applicant's soul. The institution of a conversion narrative in the early years of the colony resulted in what Darrett B. Rutman describes as "a subtle but profound change in the admission procedure." Rutman argues that this change, "in time transform[ed] the church from a gathering of the professedly godly [in]to a gathering of the professed visible saints." Increase Mather points to the importance of the narrative in his lamentations about the second generation's declension from the practice.

[Loaxness in that point, would be a real departure from our former Profession; yet I wish there be not Teachers found in our Israel, that have espoused loose, large Principles here, designing to bring all persons to the Lords Supper, who have an Historical Faith, and are not scandalous in life, although they never had Experience of a work of Regeneration on their Souls, and live in the neglect of secret duties, wherein the life and power of godliness especially consists.]

54 Mather, Increase. The Danger of Apostasy., p. 90.
55 Ibid., p. 56.
56 Ibid.
57 Mather, Increase. An Earnest Exhortation., p. 17.
58 Mather. Increase. The Danger of Apostasy., p. 84.
60 Ibid.
61 Mather, Increase. The Danger of Apostasy., p. 84.
Mather asserts that this laxness in church admission "would corrupt Churches, and ruine all in a little time." For him, leniency in admission was a departure from the practice of the first generation, which had recognized the importance of restricting access to the Lord's Supper to only those individuals found to be pure Christians. Mather encourages his audience to reaffirm the practice of their predecessors.

[0]ur Fathers [left] us Principles of Truth, which they did with much cost and pains, dig out of the rich veins of Scripture. We have need therefore to be much in Prayer, and Humiliations before the Lord, that so he might vouchsafe to shew us the form of the House, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof.63

The jeremiads of the 1660s and 70s depict the founders' practices as examples of the proper institution of covenantal responsibilities. Having escaped from a system in which worship was diluted by the observance of human inventions, the fathers are described as having held fast to the necessity of scripturally based practice. "Our Fathers always owned and avowed this Principle of Truth, that nothing should be admitted into the worship of God, but what there is Scripture warrant for, nor anything neglected which the Lord hath instituted."64 The founders migrated "with a desire to observe all the Ordinances of the Lord Jesus, and to reject the mixtures of humane inventions in the Worship of God, contrary to the Second Commandment."65 "Purity" meant removal of practices that found no scriptural justification, such as bowing at the name of Christ and the wearing of surplices by the clergy. The jeremiads describe the fathers as having achieved the purity they sought.

The unity of the first generation commonwealth is the ultimate theme of the second-generation jeremiads. The society's concern for the well being of its inhabitants and the cooperation of its leaders are pointed to as perfect demonstrations of godliness in the world. The fathers' sought to remain physically close to one another,66 they established civil, educational, and ecclesiastical institutions so that they and their children might be united under a common religious interest. They cooperated with each other to maintain this interest. The first generation is described as having kept a "brotherly watch" over one another.67 They are characterized as tender, kind, merciful, and forgiving.68

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62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., p. 85.
64 Ibid., p. 90.
65 Shepard, Thomas JR. Eve-Salve., p. 11.
66 See above, p. 7.
68 Ibid.
O how your Faith grew exceedingly...O how our Love and Charity towards each other abounded! O what comfort of Love! what bowels and mercies! what affectionate care was there one of another! what a holy Sympathy in Crosses and Comforts, weeping with those that wept, and rejoicing with those that rejoiced.

[A] notable spirit of self -denial, love, courage, [and] zeal for the interest of Christ in the publick, was [the] first breathing among this people and was crowned from heaven with glorious success by the God of our mercy.

The second-generation jeremiads describe the magistrates and ministers of the first generation as having worked with one another in ways that were later questioned, if not entirely abandoned. The early magistrates, ministers and the people are said to have shared a common religious interest. Their cooperation and their efforts to maintain unity are described as the perfect relation of a society to itself and to the Lord. Thomas Shepard, Jr., the namesake of one of New England’s famous first generation divines, gives the most direct and lengthy appeals to social unity in Eye-Salve. In the sermon, Shepard laments the assertions that magistrates should be “unconcerned in matters of Religion” and that the churches should maintain a “rigid independency.” Concerning these propositions, he declares:

[To affirm that Churches need not the help, watch, & assistance either of the Civil Magistrate above them, or of the neighbour Churches about them...This hath not been the doctrine, nor the practice of our first Leaders...this power of the Magistrate in matters of Religion hath been asserted by our first Leaders, by those in the Common-wealth, as appears by their constant practice; and also by, those in the Churches, witness the writings of our famous Divines now at rest with God.]

Among the magistrates and the ministers, there was friendly cooperation. Shepard points to “the Ministers meetings, in several Towns...[to the] greater Synods...and also [to] lesser Synods or Councills” as evidence of the collaboration of the ecclesiastical bodies and their leaders. [If there hapned to be some mis-understanding at any time, it was reasoned out placidly, and still Ministerial communion was maintained...when any Church hath wanted light or peace...if help were not asked, it was sent them without asking: and it was not then accounted an infringement of the Liberty of Churches so to do.]

The people respected and followed the example of their leaders.

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69 Danforth, Samuel. Errand into the Wilderness, p. 12.
70 Shepard, Thomas JR. Eye-Salve., p. 31.
71 Shepard, Thomas JR. Eye-Salve., pp. 27 & 23.
72 Ibid., pp. 23-27.
73 Ibid., p. 28.
74 Ibid., pp. 29-30.
75 Ibid.
O there was not at first that Contempt of the Magistrates, or Ministers or Churches for their zeal for God herein, as begin's to grow up among us in these days...their People trembling at the Word of God delivered by [the Ministers], reverencing them in the Lord, esteeming them highly for their work sake, subjecting to their power and rule in the Lord.76

Samuel Danforth describes New England families in much the same light. "What readiness was there in those days to call for the help of Neighbor-Elders and Brethren, in case of any Difference or Division that could not be healed at home."77 The commonwealth of the first generation is celebrated by its successors for perfect unity. The ministers of the second generation advocate a return to this model in their descriptions of its excellence.

The colony's fathers are generally described in the jeremiads as having "procured days of tranquility."78 They are never said to have failed in any of their endeavors. Divisions at any level of the colony are seldom mentioned. When they do appear, it is always as a prelude to the commonwealth's harmonious resolution of such discord. Early families are characterized as having sought the help of their neighbors in the resolution of family disputes. Magistrates and ministers are described as having made use of each other in the governance of the colony. If they did differ in opinion, a "right understanding was mutually obtained."79 Churches, if they ever ran into error or darkness, were assisted by neighboring ministers, who provided such assistance while maintaining "Ministerial communion"80. Like these general references to colonial disagreements, when specific divisions are alluded to in the second-generation jeremiads, it is always in prelude to a demonstration of the colony's unity.

Hence the Leaders of this people have, from the first, born express witness against Rigid Separation, Carnal Ceremonies, Profane unholy persons in Doctrine and Life: Search the printed Records of these things in the Works of our New-England Divines, and it will be found so.81

[Examine the experience of former times, and Anabaptisme we shall finde hath ever been lookt at by the Godly Leaders of this people as a Scab, and not part of the Faith to be contended for, but contended against; our Fathers, the leaders of this People, never espoused it as any part of the interest of Christ.82

Unity is the supreme example of the first generation's success. This model of the early migrants dominates many of the most interesting New England jeremiads. The fathers are repeatedly appealed to as the perfect example of a covenanted community. They are described as good men who came to New England with a religious interest for themselves, their posterity, and their neighbors. In the eyes of their children, these men successfully applied this

76 Ibid., pp. 22-29.
77 Danforth, Samuel. Errand Into the Wilderness., p. 12.
78 Mather, Increase. Renewal of Covenant: The Great Duty Incumbent on Decaying or Distressed Churches. (Boston, 1677), p. 17.
79 Shepard, Thomas JR. Eve-Salve., p. 29.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid., p. 42.
82 Ibid., p. 24.
interest in their establishment of New England’s civil, educational, and ecclesiastical institutions. In a word, they got what they came for.

Our Fathers have been Davids, that is to say, eminent Reformers...there never was a Generation that did so perfectly shake off the dust of Babylon, both as to Ecclesiastical and civil Constitution, as the first Generation of Christians, that came into this Land for the Gospels sake. 3

The founders’ accomplishments are so remarkable because they were so universal. The jeremiads do not celebrate a small segment of the colony’s population banding together against a corrupt and divided majority. On the contrary, it is the first generation’s escape from this condition and their establishment of the colony upon its true foundation that warrants such praises in the sermons of their successors. Not only was there unity, but there was God. It is the founders’ relationship to one another and to the Lord that is significant. Their motives for migration, as well as their organization upon arrival, are important because they were expressions of the fathers’ religious interest.

The second generation presents their fathers’ success in the context of New England’s subsequent backslidings. The ministers of the colony in the 1660s and 70s saw signs of declension and apostasy all around them. Magistrates were failing to uphold the colony’s religious interest. Ministers were becoming lenient in church admissions. The colony as a whole was suffering from “inordinate worldly cares, predominant lusts, and malignant Passions and Distempers.” 4 They had failed to live up to their fathers’ pious example and in that failure, they had neglected their covenantal responsibilities.

O New-England, thy God did expect better things from thee and thy Children; not Worldliness, and an insatiable desire after perishing things; not Whoredomes and Fornications; not Revellings and Drunkenness; not Oaths & false swearings; not Exactions and Oppression; not Slanderings and Backbitings; not Rudeness and Incivility...not Formality and Profaneness, to loath Manna, to despise holy things, to grow Sermon-proof and Ordinance-proof; not Contentions and Disorders; not an Itching after new things and ways...not a Contempt of Superiours...not a growing weary of Government, and a drawing loose in the Yoke of God: Not these things, but better things, O New-England, hath thy God expected from thee. 5

The second-generation jeremiads are filled with harsh rebukes and specific lamentations. No class is safe, as all have declined from their former glory. The colony is said to have become divided, self-interested, and worldly. Increase Mather observes the extent of this division. “We are divided in our Judgements; and if that were all, the matter were not much: but we are divided in our Affections, divided in our Prayers, divided in our Counsels: And will not a house divided be brought to desolation?” 6 The ministers allege that New England’s backsliding has

3 Mather, Increase. The Danger of Apostacy., p. 56.
4 Danforth, Samuel. Errand Into the Wilderness., p. 15.
6 Mather, Increase. The Day of Trouble is Near., p. 23.
placed its inhabitants in danger of God's judgment. Their fathers, they say, entered into a covenant with the Lord and their successors are still bound by its obligations. Fear of an imminent judgment is the theme of nearly every second-generation jeremiad. The sons' declension from their fathers' glory is important because it endangers the entire colony. "You are departed from God, and by your sins have provoked him so to punish you." 

The ministers of the second generation did not lament the colony's backslidings merely for rhetorical purposes. They were not solely attempting to invoke the interest and attention of their audiences. Rather, they sought to explain a series of devastating local and global events that had rocked the colony's stability and security. Perhaps the most serious of these events was the outbreak of the King Philip's war in 1675. Lasting just over a year, the conflict resulted in heavy losses of colonial life and property.

Of the eighty or ninety towns to be found in Plymouth and Massachusetts colonies in 1675, ten or twelve were utterly destroyed, while forty more were partially burned. Nor was the loss of property the most serious result of the contest. Between five and six hundred young and middle-aged men—a tenth of all of military age in the colonies—lost their lives; and to these victims must be added the scores of women and children who perished.

The war was not the only affliction visited upon the colony. Crop blights, cold, two fires in the heart of Boston, multiple shipwrecks, and an outbreak of smallpox were also pointed to as evidence of God's wrath. "Was it so in the dayes of our Fathers? were there such general killing and diseases? such a long continuing war? so many hundreds cut off by the Sword, yea, so many Familyes brought to ruine?" As if the local problems weren't enough, to these warnings were added the threat of changing political circumstances in England. In 1660, Charles II ascended to the throne and ended over a decade of independent rule that had begun in England with the execution of Charles I in 1649. The return of an English monarch dashed all hope of Puritan reform in the homeland and gave "Massachusetts authorities...good reason to fear encroachment upon the colony's traditional liberties, perhaps even revocation of her charter." This threat and the series of colonial disasters required an explanation. The one most consistently proffered in the jeremiads is that of divine judgment. The ministers identify the colony's failure to meet its covenantal obligations to God as the chief cause of its woes. "Why hath the Lord done thus to this Land! and wherefore is all this great anger of the Lord? why hath the Lord done thus unto such a people? unto his people?"

87 Mather, Increase. The Danger of Apostasy., p. 64.
89 Mather, Increase. The Danger of Apostasy., p. 64.
The Answer should be, *because they have forsaken the covenant with their God.* As Increase Mather observed, the second generation had become a divided people. They had become self-interested, abandoning their brotherly watch over one another, "growing heady, and high-minded, and running deep upon the score of those sins of the last times."

The chief example of the colony's division is the Halfway Covenant of 1662, which recognized the place of baptized, yet unconverted church members and gave the right of baptism to their children. The problem of the baptized and unconverted had risen steadily in the first and second generations. The recognition of these members had been highly contested. By the end of the 1650s, the growing number of unconverted children demanded attention. In an effort to resolve the issue, a ministerial meeting was held in 1657 and a Synod was called in 1662. The result of these meetings was wider tolerance in the admission of church members. "The majority decisions of the Synod of 1662... affirmed liberal standards of baptismal eligibility and consociational authority. [This result was] repudiated by an articulate clerical minority and resisted by most of the congregations for nearly two decades." The Halfway Covenant, while it recognized the position of unconverted members within the church, affirmed the restriction of their access to the Lord's Supper. With access to this sacrament as the primary distinction between regenerate and unregenerate members, leniency in requirements for full church membership proved quite threatening in the decades following the Synod of 1662. In the late 1670s, Solomon Stoddard, minister of the Northampton congregation after 1672, challenged the standard practice of restricting access to the sacrament. "That spring, Increase Mather inveighed against weakening admission requirements in both his major published sermons, *Renewal of Covenant the Great Duty* (March) and *Danger of Apostasy*, the election sermon in May. Perhaps he had Stoddard in mind." The persistent opposition to the Halfway Covenant produced just one of the colony's internal divisions. Another, the division of Boston's First Church into North and South congregations, also proved to be a popular example in the jeremiads of New England's discord.

The division in New England and the colony's subsequent misfortunes turned the threat of divine judgment into an impending reality in the minds of second-generation ministers. Increase Mather preached several sermons to this effect, entitling one, *The Day of Trouble is Near*. The jeremiads affirm the inevitability of God's wrath. The

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91 Shepard, Thomas JR. *Eye-Salve*, p. 34.
92 See Footnote 85.
93 Shepard, Thomas JR. *Eye-Salve*, p. 34.
94 A synod was an assembly of religious officials for the discussion of ecclesiastical affairs.
96 Hall, Michael G. *The Last American Puritan*, p. 149.
commonwealth’s plights are presented as warnings meant to encourage reformation. “It is high time for us to remember whence we are fallen, and repent, and do our first works.” The prescribed means of such repentance is covenant renewal. Congregations are encouraged to repent of their backslidings and to reaffirm their covenantal interest. In 1677, Increase Mather pushed magistrates to advocate renewal of the colony’s church covenants.

“I...now apply myself to you; it is this, that you would recommend unto the Churches in this Colony a solemn renewal of their Covenant with God and one another. That is a great Scripture expedient for Reformation.” He justified this prescription with an appeal to the first generation. “Do not think that this is an new notion, but it is a known Principle owned and avowed by...the good old non-Conformists, (whose Children we are)...and therefore I the rather insist upon it.... [T]his is the way to prevent Apostasy.”

The theme of imminent judgment and the necessity of covenant renewal dominate the jeremiads of the 1660s and 70s. However, in 1679, Increase Mather and “eighteen of the more prominent of his ministerial brethren” decided to take their analyses a step further. They petitioned the colony’s General Court to issue a summons for a Synod to determine the “Causes & State of Gods Controversy” with New England. The Court granted their request. The ministerial meeting was ordered to address two pressing questions. “[Question] I. What are the euills that haue provoked the Lord to bring his judgments on New England? [and] 2 [Quest]. What is to be done that so those evils may be reformed.” The result of the Synod, “known as the Necessity of Reformation,” reads like the jeremiads of the ministers who produced it. The document is filled with idealizations of the colony’s founders. Its preface points to the second generation’s declension from their fathers’ example as the cause of the colony’s misfortune.

If we look abroad over the face of the whole earth, where shall we see a place or people brought to such perfection and considerableness, in so short a time?... If we had continued to be as once we were, the Lord would have continued to doe for us, as once he did.

The second generation’s backslidings are described at length as evidence of God’s displeasure with the colony.

97 Danforth, Samuel. Errand Into the Wilderness, p. 19.
98 Mather, Increase. The Danger of Apostacy, p. 89.
99 Ibid.
101 Ibid., p. 414.
102 “Petition to the Legislature.” In Williston Walker’s Creeds and Platforms, p. 415.
That God hath a Controversy with his New-England People is undeniable... It is not for nothing that the merciful God, who doth not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of man, hath done all these things unto us.... There are visible, manifest Evils, which without doubt the Lord is provoked by.  

The description of New England’s sins include a visible decay of Godliness; pride; contention; neglect of Church Fellowship, and other divine institutions; profanity; Sabbath-breaking; improper family government; intemperance; promise-breaking; inordinate affection to the world; the prevailing power of a worldly Spirit; and opposition unto the work of Reformation. Nearly every one of these “evils” is presented in contrast the upright example of Bay Colony’s first generation. Of the second generation’s growing worldliness, the Synod asserts, “Farms and merchandising have been preferred before the things of God. In this respect, the Interest of New-England seemeth to be changed.... It was not any worldly consideration that brought our Fathers into this wilderness, but Religion.” The Synod proclaims: New England requires reformation. The colony is encouraged to “remember whence she is fallen, and doe the first works.” If that were achieved, “there is reason to hope that it shall be better with us then at our beginnings.” Covenant renewal is prescribed as the primary “way to prevent, (and also to recover out of) Apostasy.” Also recommended are faithfulness to Christ through the observation of church duties, the support of church officers, magisterial protection of such officers, the establishment and enforcement of wholesome laws, engagement against sin, and the inspection and encouragement of schools of learning.

The Necessity of Reformation was presented to the General Court at its October session in 1679. The Court voted to adopt the Synod’s recommendations.

This Court, having persued the result of the late synod of Septemb, 1679, doe judge it meete to commend the same to the serious consideration of all the churches and people in this jurisdiction, hereby enjoying and requiring all persons in their severall capacitjes concerned to a carefull and diligent reformation of all those provoking evils mentioned therein, according to the true intent thereof, that so the anger and displeasure of God, which hath binn many wayses manifested, maybe averted from this poore people, and his favour and blessing obteyned, as in former times; and for this end hath ordered the same to be printed.

The General Court’s adoption of the Synod’s result affirmed the ministers’ analysis of New England’s declension from her former glory. The Court recognized the ministers’ idealization of their fathers. A return to the condition of the first generation was the Court’s primary goal in approving the Synod. They accepted the result and its

106 Ibid., pp.427-432.
107 Ibid., p. 431.
108 Ibid., p. 425.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid., pp. 435-436.
111 Ibid., pp. 433-437.
112 Printed in Walker Williston’s Creeds and Platforms, pp. 419-420.
prescriptions “so...[that God’s] favour and blessing [may be] obtayned, as in former tijmes.” The Synod addressed
and attempted to rectify, through its prescription of covenant renewal, the backsliding of the second generation that
had been diagnosed in the jeremiads of the period. The convening of the Synod and the General Court’s approval of
its conclusions indicate the seriousness with which the colony’s leaders took the idealized image of their fathers and
their declension from it.

The second generation jeremiads present a fairly detailed description of the colony’s founders and the early
years of the New England commonwealth. The jeremiads give their audience the image of the “stern fathers and
pious founders” that has since captured the American imagination. However, the source and content of this image
is only part of the picture. In order to fully understand its significance, one must also consider its accuracy. Who
were the fathers? Why did they embark upon their colonial enterprise? What were their accomplishments? And
above all, to what degree was the unity so much celebrated by their successors actually exist among the early
colonists? One does not have to take the image set forth in the jeremiads at face value. The early migrants left a
rich collection of written remains to which one may turn in the consideration of these questions. Their arguments in
favor of migration and the records of their colonial towns provide a wealth of information which ultimately
speaks to the accuracy and to the significance of the second generation celebrations.

“To Remove from Old England to New:” The Reasons for Migration

Much has been alleged concerning the migration of the first generation of New England Puritans. Their
successors celebrated their reasons for leaving England and their accomplishments upon arrival. Historians have
attempted to define the mission upon which these migrants embarked. Their true intent has been debated and
reconsidered, often with little regard for what the migrants themselves had to say. The overriding tendency in these
discussions is to treat the migration to New England as a “conscious, explicit, collective...world mission.” This
theory was first suggested by Perry Miller in his 1952 essay, “Errand Into the Wilderness.” His analysis of the early
migration characterized over a generation of scholarship after him. Despite its influence, the notion of a Puritan

113 Ibid., p. 420.
114 Conforti, Joseph A. Saints and Strangers, p. 1.
115 As described in twentieth-century town studies.
world mission finds little support in the records of the first generation. These men had much to say concerning the prospect of removal. They expressed their arguments eloquently and thoroughly. Their motives are outlined in great detail, leaving little room for doubt regarding their true intent.

Religion and the proper practice of Christian ordinances are often given as the primary concerns of the migrant Puritans. Their successors celebrated the colonists for their common religious interest and for their quest for pure worship. Scholars have interpreted the religious motive for removal in light of the assumption of a Puritan world mission. They have said that the migration was an errand aimed at providing the world with a working model of Reformed Christianity. While the religious objective is indeed essential to the consideration, it is not the only argument presented by the migrants in favor of the plantation. Most sources record both positive and negative proposals in support of removal from Old England to New. In their reasons for migration, the colonists express a desire to get away from something as much as a need to create something. They intended to achieve the proper practice of Christian ordinances; however, they also favored the colony as a refuge, a place to which they could remove in order to escape the troubling political, religious, and economic conditions of England. Living as a persecuted minority in a society characterized by royal predominance and ecclesiastical alliance with the king, many Puritans interpreted the economic and personal hardships of the country as indications of God's impending judgment. England, as a community in covenant with God, had an obligation to live according to his laws. Their failure to do so would most certainly bring his wrath upon them. The first generation of New England Puritans believed that England was not fulfilling this obligation. Their arguments in favor of the colony indicate their desire to escape the Lord's imminent wrath. In New England, the migrants saw the possibility of achieving a well-disciplined community, in the safety and security of which the essential ordinances of preaching and sacramental purity could be properly observed. They sought to escape and to create in hope of fulfilling their obligations to the Lord.

The term Puritan was originally a derogatory expression used to describe religiously conservative individuals who believed that the Church of England had failed to "fully embrace the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century." These individuals, who later came to accept and make use of the label, sought to purify the church, to excise what they viewed to be the remnants of Catholicism. This purification was essential in their eyes in light of England's covenantal relationship to God.

Every nation or people, the Puritans believed, existed by virtue of a covenant with God, an agreement whereby they promised to abide by His laws, and He in turn agreed to treat them well. To help carry out their part of the bargain, people instituted governments, and the business of governments was to enforce God’s law by punishing every detectable breach.\footnote{Morgan, Edmund S. \textit{The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop}. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958), p. 19.}

The indispensable role of government in the maintenance England’s covenant was the lens through which the first generation leaders viewed the political conditions in the country prior to their removal in the 1630s. The ascension of Charles I to the throne in 1625 dashed any hopes for a government-sponsored reform that had been previously held by the Puritan minority. Charles, a Catholic sympathizer and supporter of Arminianism,\footnote{Ibid., p. 28.} challenged both the spiritual and civil security of his Puritan subjects. His appointment of an Arminian as Bishop of London, as well as his adversarial relationship with Parliament, were sources of concern. In response to the king’s religious sympathies, English Puritans had begun to look “more and more to Parliament for relief.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 27.} However, Charles soon made it clear that parliamentary challenges were both unwelcome and unacceptable. “When his first Parliament refused to grant him the funds he wanted and began to talk about his policies, he dissolved it” and summoned a new one.\footnote{Ibid., p. 29.} When this Parliament questioned the king’s taxation practices in 1629, he “formally dissolved [it] and made it plain that he did not intend to call another.”\footnote{“John Winthrop to — —.” \textit{Winthrop Papers}. Vol. 2: 1623-1630. (New York: Russell Russell, 1968), p. 122.} Charles’ religious sympathies, coupled with his overt tendency toward royal supremacy obliterated the possibility of further reform in the eyes of the Puritan minority.

Explicit references to the above-described conditions are absent from the records of the first generation’s arguments for New England. While this appears troubling, it makes sense. Few who undertook the colonial enterprise would have openly condemned the government that had sanctioned it. Instead, these men spoke of the numerous sins and horrific conditions that permeated England and their desire to distance themselves from these.

If we imytayte Sodom in her pride and intemperance, if Laodicea in her lukewarmnesse, if Eph[esus] Sardis etc. in the sins for which their Candlesticke was removed, If the turks and other heathen in their abominations, yea if the Sinagogue of Antichrist in her superstition, where is yet the good should content vs? but it may be it is to be found in the civill state; what means then the bleating of so many oppressed with wronge, that drink wormwood, for righteousness? Why do so many seely sheep that seek shelter at the judgment seates retume without their fleeces?\footnote{Ibid., p. 29.}
In this passage, John Winthrop, the leader of the Massachusetts Bay Company and the first governor of the Bay Colony, describes the "estate of our Churche and Com[on]w[alth]."\(^{125}\) He enumerates the religious shortcomings of his country and demonstrates the insufficiency of the civil state in the correction of these; for those who sought assistance returned from "the iudgment seates...without their fleeces."\(^{126}\) The political conditions in England were important to arguments for migration because of their obvious religious implications. If the government's job was to enforce the observance of God's laws, its refusal to do so in the face of repeated breaches would certainly be cause for concern.

The pride, intemperance, lukewarmness, superstition, and other abominations alleged by Winthrop and company express their view of England's religious estate in the early part of the seventeenth century. During the period directly preceding the Great Migration, tensions that had existed for decades between the Anglican majority and the Puritan minority came to a boiling point. The appointment of William Laud as the Bishop of London in 1628 intensified the already tenuous relationship between English Puritans and the King. Bishop Laud sought to bring the Church of England in line with the Crown. Any toleration or leniency that had previously been afforded to Puritan believers quickly vanished. Ministers were displaced from their pulpits and strict adherence to the Anglican prescriptions for worship was demanded.

Laud devoted himself to combating the Puritans and to enforcing a form of service in strict accordance to the Book of Common Prayer. The wearing of surplices, the placing of the communion table—railed off from the congregation...and such ceremonies as bowing at the mention of the name of Jesus were imposed.... [T]o religious radicals, all such reforms seemed moves toward popery.\(^{127}\)

Laud viewed preaching, which for Puritans was "the essential task of the ministry," as "a dangerous source of 'differences' in religion to be curtailed and controlled.... The printed word was dangerous, too...[and] celebrated Puritan propagandists...were mutilated and imprisoned."\(^{128}\)

Laud's persecution of the Puritans and his support of the king's supremacy created an untenable situation for the Puritan minority. In their arguments for migration, the disenchanted Englishmen repeatedly cite the state of England's religious affairs as sufficient cause for removal. John Cotton, one of the colony's foremost divines, made this argument nearly three years prior to his own migration.

\(^{125}\) Ibid., p. 121.
\(^{126}\) Ibid., p. 122.
\(^{128}\) Ibid.
There are Evils to be avoided, that may warrant Removal. When some grievous sins overspread a Country, that threaten desolation... When the People say to them that prophicke, Prophecie not; then... Arise then, this is not your rest.\textsuperscript{129}

Richard Mather, another of the early migrant ministers, develops Cotton's "some grievous sins," citing ecclesiastical impurity and persecution in nearly every one of his arguments in favor of the colony.

To remove from a corrupt Church to a purer is necessary for them that are not otherwise tyed.... To remove from a place where the Truth and the professors of it are persecuted... is necessary for them that are free.... [T]hat the Removal is necessary for the enjoyment of some of Gods Ordinances, as for Preaching of the Word, will not be denied.... To remove from a place where the Ministers of God are unjustly inhibited from the execution of their Functions... is necessary.\textsuperscript{130}

English Puritans advocated migration under such circumstances. However, the group of future migrants never went so far as to proclaim total separation from the Church of England. John Winthrop explicitly asserts the continuity between the anticipated colonial congregations and the English Church from which he intended to remove. "[S]ince Christes time the Church is to be considered vnivesall without distinction of Countries, soe as he that doeth good in one place serues the Church in all places in regard of the vnity."\textsuperscript{131} Winthrop favored the preservation of a pure remnant of the church elsewhere over the continued struggle for what little progress could be obtained at home.

"The takinge off a Scandall from a wholl Churche and Religion it selue is to be preferred before the betteringe of the same Churche."\textsuperscript{132}

While civil and ecclesiastical arguments dominate the considerations in favor of the New England colony, two other motives appear as well: the declining English economy and God's impending judgment on the country for its failure to fulfill its covenantal responsibilities. Regarding the economic situation, England during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries experienced "rapid population growth, periodic agricultural depression, and difficulties in [the] preeminent industry of textile manufacture."\textsuperscript{133}

In the 1620's the textile industry suffered a depression that affected the whole country. Clothworkers were unemployed, hungry but unable to pay for country produce; clothiers could not market their fabrics; farmers could not pay their rents. The cost of caring for the poor and unemployed rose steadily.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{129} Cotton, John. God's Promise to His Plantations. 1630. (Boston: Samuel Green, 1686), p. 9.
\textsuperscript{130} Mather, Increase. The Life and Death of That Reverend Man of God, Mr. Richard Mather. (Cambridge, 1670), pp. 12-16.
\textsuperscript{131} "Reasons to Be Considered, And Objections with Answers." Winthrop Papers. Vol. 2., pp. 141-142.
\textsuperscript{132} "General Conclusions and Particular Considerations: Later Draft." Winthrop Papers. Vol. 2., p. 133.
\textsuperscript{134} Morgan, Edmund S. The Puritan Dilemma., p. 21.
In his "General Observations," Winthrop describes the growing number of Englishmen and the country’s mounting poverty: “the land growes weary of her inhabitants, so that man, which is the most precious of all creatures, is here more vile and base than the earth they tread upon.” Winthrop develops this imagery in the conclusion of a letter “to some friend who had sent objections to [his] argument for the plantation.”

We [meet] so many wandering ghostes in shape of men, [there are] so many spectacles of misery in all our streets, our houses [are] full of victuals, and our entryes of hunger-starved Christians...our shoppes full of riche wares, and under our stalles lye our own fleshe in nakednesse.

In the letter, Winthrop argues for removal under such depraved conditions.

A lande ouerburdened with people may ease it self, by sending a parte into some other Countryes which lye wast and not replenished: but suche is the condition of our lande...the whole lande of the kingdom as it is reconed is scarce sufficient to give imployment to one half of the people: all our townes complain of the burden of poore people and strive by all menes to ridde any such as they have.

In the face of declining opportunities and rising population, Winthrop asks, “Why then should we stand striving here for places of habitation etc. (many men spending as much labour and coste to recouer or keepe sometimes an acre or twoe of Land, as would procure them many C[hundred] as good or better in another Countrie).” Winthrop continues his analysis by arguing that the shortage of opportunities and the mounting poverty have corrupted England’s remaining economic practices.

Wee are growen to that excess and intemperance in all excess of riot as no meane estate almost will suffice to keep saile with his equals, and he that fayles in it must live in sorrow and contempt. Hence it comes to passe that all arts and trades are carried in that deceitful manner and unrighteous course as it is almost impossible for a good upright man to maintayne his chardge and live comfortably in any of them.

John Cotton shares Winthrop’s analysis and endorses migration as a means of escaping the country’s perverse commercial practices. “So when the hive of the Common-wealth is so full, that Tradesmen cannot live by one another, but eat up one another, in this case it is lawful to remove.” Those Puritans who opted for emigration considered the economic conditions in England along with the country’s political and religious persecution. They saw little opportunity for security under any circumstances. Many chose to take their chances with the colonial enterprise rather than to lie in wait for total ruin to overtake them.

136 Ibid., p. 121, n. 1.
138 Ibid., p. 123.
139 “Reasons to be Considered, and Objections with Answers.” Winthrop Papers. Vol. 2., p. 139.
England's increasing economic distress is often cited by the leaders of the first generation as a sign of God's displeasure with his covenanted people. Bouts of the plague and the ever-present threat of the Counter-Reformation also loomed large in the minds of those who chose to migrate.

After the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War in 1618, the Protestant cause stumbled through years of defeat on all fronts. With the Catholic recovery of Bohemia (1620) and the Palatinate (1623), the fall of the last stronghold (La Rochelle, 1627), and Geneva in standing jeopardy, the very survival of Protestantism was placed in question. When the bloody march of Catholic armies through much of Protestant Europe was pondered in the light of covenantal failure at home, a terrifying probability emerged: England was next.\(^{142}\)

Fear of impending judgment characterizes many of the arguments in favor of migration. Winthrop, Cotton, and Mather all point to its imminence. In the most descriptive of these arguments, Winthrop cites examples of others who have been subject to such judgment in an effort to demonstrate the necessity of seeking refuge while there is still time. "All other churches of Europe are brought to desolation, and it may be justly feared that the like judgment is coming upon us."\(^{143}\) In response to the objection that "wee have feared judgment a long tyme, but yet we are safe," he observes:

> It is likely that this consideration made the churches beyond the seas as the Palatinate and Rochel, etc. to sit still at home, and not look out for shelter while they might have found it, but the wofull spectacle of their ruine may teach us more wisdom to avoid the plague while it is forseene, and not to tarry as they did till it overtooke them.\(^{144}\)

Cotton and Mather make similar arguments in support of emigration. In his reasons for leaving, Richard Mather reviews the multiple signs of the country's impending punishment. These include the abundance and impunity of sin and sinners, the want of general security, the "taking away of Gods dear and faithful Servants," England's apparent unwillingness to profit from former judgments, and the "warnings by the Lords Ministers."\(^ {145}\) Mather asks his audience to:

> [Consider]...examples of Gods wrathful Judgments on others no worse sinners...the same sins which brought the Captivity of 70 years on Judah, do as much abound in England as ever they did in Judah, and that therefore we may certainly expect desolation for our sins, unless course were taken speedily by general Repentance and Reformation to pacifie the Lords wrath.\(^ {146}\)

Winthrop, Cotton, and Mather encourage removal in light of England's failure to fulfill its covenantal responsibilities to God. Like those before them, Englishmen should expect to suffer the consequences of such dereliction of duty.

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\(^{144}\) Ibid., p. 119.

\(^{145}\) Mather, Increase. The Life and Death of...Richard Mather., pp. 17-18.

\(^{146}\) Ibid.
Despite the overtly negative tone of the above arguments, the migrant Puritans did record several positive reasons in support of the colony. Coupled with the motivation to escape England, is an equally important desire to create for themselves the physical, political and religious conditions that had been unattainable at home. The leaders of the first generation of New England Puritans did not intend to escape into an empty wilderness and hope for the best. They went with the intention of removing to a safe environment, in which they could be assured of their preservation from England’s imminent punishment. Once there, the establishment of civil and ecclesiastical discipline would allow them to implement and observe the prescriptions of their covenant with God. The ministers would be able to preach openly, without Laudian interference; the congregations would take steps to ensure the purity of the sacraments; and religious discipline would encourage personal and communal piety.

The desire to achieve safety and security characterizes many of the arguments for New England. Without a “well-grounded hope of preservation,” little could be expected in the way proper religious observance. Richard Mather cites this concern as one of his first arguments in support of the colony. “To remove from a place” of persecution “unto a place of more quietness and a safety, is necessary for them that are free.” John Winthrop discusses the possibility of security in his Reasons to be Considered for the colony. “Whoe knows, but that God hath provided this place to be refuge for many whome he meanes to saue out of the generall calamity.” New England is considered as “a shelter and a hidinge place.” With such uncertainty in England, the promise of secure surroundings was essential to any argument for removal.

With the assurance of safety was the equally important promise of civil and ecclesiastical discipline. The insecurity that had been fostered by Charles I and Bishop Laud was quite troubling. Those who would be willing to leave their established lives in order to escape it would do so only in support of a more disciplined community. John Winthrop, in what is probably the most quoted piece of first generation literature, cites the search for this discipline as the “worke [at] in hand” in the migration. The achievement of such discipline required the establishment of civic and religious institutions, as well as the cooperation of those who sought it.

It is by mutuall consent through a speciall overruleing providence, and a more then an ordinary approbation of the Churches of Christ to seeke out a place of Cohabitation and Consorteshipp under a due forme of

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147 Ibid., p. 17.
148 Ibid., p. 13.
149 “Reasons to be Considered, and Objections with Answers.” Winthrop Papers, Vol. 2., pp. 138-139.
150 “John Winthrop to His Wife.” Winthrop Papers, Vol 2., p. 91.
Government both civil and ecclesiastical. In such cases as this the care of the publique must oversway all private respects.  

Like most Puritans, Winthrop believed that governments existed strictly to institute and enforce the laws of God. He had worked as “an attorney in [England’s] Court of Wards.” In light of this political experience, Winthrop observes that, “the welfare of [the New England] Com[mon]w[alth] standes vpon 2: main pillars Religion and Lawe.” He understood that without the latter, the former would have little hope of colonial success. Of the importance of religious discipline in the prospective colony, Winthrop asserts:

> Whatsoever wee did or ought to have done when wee lived in England, the same must wee doe and more alsole where wee goe: That which the most in theire Churches maineteine as truthe in profession onely, wee must bring into familiar and constant practise.

Richard Mather develops Winthrop’s argument for discipline in his reasons for leaving.

> If Discipline be a part of Christs Kingdome, and a necessary and effectual means for preserving the Church and the other Ordinances from corruption, then...to remove from Old England to New is to remove from a Church where the Discipline of Christ is wanting, to a Church were it may be enjoyed.

Mather explicitly describes the lack of religious discipline in England as the inability of ministers to “freely execute their functions,” the chief of which is to properly reprove the errors of those under their guidance and direction.

> To remove from such a place where the Pastors of the Congregation cannot exercise the Lords Discipline by Ruling and Governing their own Flocks by Censuring those that ought to be Censured, &c. to a place where they may do it, is necessary for them that are free.

Both Winthrop and Mather recognize that the opportunity to achieve civil and religious discipline in New England came with the obligation to take it. God would not “beare with such faileings at [the migrants’] hands as he dothe from those among whome [they had] lived.”

The migrant’s emphasis upon the importance of discipline was not founded solely upon their desire to escape to the judgment that was soon expected to befall their countrymen. The first generation leaders also sought the ability to fulfill their covenantal obligations in order to be of maximum service to God. In Winthrop’s “Model,” the purpose of the “worke...[at] hand” is explicit.

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152 Ibid.
156 Mather, Increase. _The Life and Death of...Richard Mather_, pp. 15-16.
157 Ibid., p. 16.
158 Ibid., p. 19.
160 Ibid., p. 90.
The end is to improve our lives to doe more service to the Lord...that ourselves and our posterity may be better preserved...to work out our Salvation under the power and purity of his holy Ordinances.\textsuperscript{161} The migrants wanted to secure what John Cotton terms "the liberty of Ordinances."\textsuperscript{162} These included the freedom to preach God's word and to restrict access to his sacraments. In the achievement of this end, they hoped to secure God's favor both for themselves and for their posterity.

The desire to be of service to God abounds in John Winthrop's meticulously kept records of his arguments for leaving. In these, Winthrop reflects upon the colony with the anticipation of his increased capacity for public and covenantal service. "I think I am the rather bounde to take the opportunitye for spendinge the small remainder of my tyme, to the best service of the Church which I may."\textsuperscript{163} "If I should let passe this opportunitye, that talent which God hath bestowed on me for publike service, were like to be buried."\textsuperscript{164} Winthrop believed that others, like himself, would feel called to be of service in the colony. Answering this call was important because, "everye one who hath meet gifts, hathe not a will to the worke."\textsuperscript{165} An inclination toward migration was to be understood as an urging from God. "When God intendes a man to a worke he settes a Byas on his heart."\textsuperscript{166} New England was a place wherein many could increase their capacity to serve the Lord. "The members of that Church may be of more use to their mother Church here than many of those whom she shall still keepe in her owne bosome."\textsuperscript{167} As members of God's covenanted community, the migrants were obligated to take the opportunity. "Which way the streame of God['s] providence leads a man to the greatest good, he may, nay he must go."\textsuperscript{168} For if all responded to God's call, the migrants would be able to carry out "a service to the church of great consequence" in transporting "the gospel into those parts of the world, and [raising] a bulwarke against the kingdom of Antichrist."\textsuperscript{169}

The anticipated reward for this service to God was "life" and "prosperity" for those engaged in the enterprise and for their descendants.\textsuperscript{170} In England, the prospective migrants had little hope of securing the spiritual welfare of their posterity. Children were faced the constant threat of corruption. Winthrop describes this danger in his "Reasons to be Considered" for the colony. "Most children (even the best witts and of fairest hopes) are

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{162} Cotton, John. God's Promise., p. 9.
\textsuperscript{163} "General Conclusions and Perticular Considerations: Early Draft." \textit{Winthrop Papers}. Vol. 2., p. 126.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{165} "General Conclusions and Perticular Considerations: Later Draft." \textit{Winthrop Papers}. Vol. 2., p. 132.
\textsuperscript{166} General Conclusions and Perticular Considerations: Early Draft." \textit{Winthrop Papers}. Vol. 2., p. 126.
\textsuperscript{167} "General Conclusions and Perticular Considerations: Later Draft." \textit{Winthrop Papers}. Vol. 2., p. 133.
perverted, corrupted, and utterly overthrown by the multitude of evil examples and the licentious government of... Seminaries.”\textsuperscript{171} In the face of such a threat, the assurance of success for their posterity was definitely a concern to the future migrants. Winthrop, in the final lines of his “Model,” urges the migrants to “choose life, that wee, and our Seede, may live; by obeying [God’s] voice, and cleaving to him, for hee is our life, and our prosperity.”\textsuperscript{172} In response to doubts concerning the immediate success of the colony, he points to the promise of future generations. “The fruit of any publice designe is not to be discerned by the immediate success... It is noe wonder for great things to arise from smale and contemptible beginnings.”\textsuperscript{173} The efforts of the first generation migrants were expected to not only fulfill their own covenantal obligations to God, but to ensure the possibility of prosperity for their descendants as well.

The modern notion that the first generation of New England colonists understood their departure from England as the undertaking of a world mission is not supported by the voices of the period. These men left their homeland to escape political, religious, and economic declension, as well as the threat of divine judgment. They hoped to obtain physical safety and to create the civil and ecclesiastical forms that had been unattainable in England. They desired to undertake the observance of covenantal ordinances in order to be of maximum service to God and for the benefit of themselves and their posterity. If Winthrop and company were so explicit with regard to their motives for the colonial enterprise, where did the notion of a Puritan world-saving mission come from?

Perry Miller, the original exponent of this idea, maintained that the Puritan migrants were on what Samuel Danforth would later call an “errand into the wilderness.”\textsuperscript{174} In his essay, Miller refers to this errand in an effort to explain second and third generation lamentations about declension.

This errand was being run for the sake of Reformed Christianity; and while the first aim was indeed to realize in America a due form of government, both civil and ecclesiastical, the aim behind that aim was to vindicate the most rigorous ideal of the Reformation, so that ultimately all Europe would imitate New England.\textsuperscript{175}

Miller’s interpretation has become deeply ingrained in the popular imagery of American Puritanism. Theodore Dwight Bozeman observes that, “By the 1960s the founding errand had made its way into the textbooks and there it

\textsuperscript{171} “Reasons to Be Considered, and Objections with Answers.” \textit{Winthrop Papers}. Vol. 2., p. 139.
\textsuperscript{172} Winthrop, John. “A Model of Christian Charity,” p. 93.
\textsuperscript{175} “Reasons to Be Considered, and Objections with Answers.” \textit{Winthrop Papers}. Vol. 2., pp. 142-143.
\textsuperscript{176} Danforth, Samuel. \textit{Errand Into the Wilderness}. Cambridge, 1671.
The "Model" says much about the aims of the first generation migrants. It follows the typical pattern of Puritan preaching. The conclusion of the sermon comprises three applications of Winthrop’s doctrine of Christian Charity. These include a description of the migrants, a definition of their immediate efforts, and the identification of their main end. The phrase of the "Model" upon which Miller bases his interpretation does not appear in this section. As Bozeman notes, it does “not stand as climax or conclusion to Winthrop’s principal arguments. [The lines] occur, instead, in passing, in the midst of a paragraph that commences with and proceeds to other and thematically more important matters.” The phrase appears as Winthrop is closing his exhortation. In his final appeal, he stresses the importance of “brotherly Affeccion” and societal unity. To this end, he warns the migrants:

Wee must Consider that wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are uppon us; soe that if wee shall deale falsely with our god in this worke wee have undertaken and soe cause him to withdrawe his present help from us, wee shall be made a story and a by-word through the world...wee shall shame the faces of many of gods worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into Cursses upon us.

Far from being the statement of the colonists’ expectations, as Miller makes them out to be, these lines serve to warn the migrants against declension and failure. The idea that they were to be as a “Citty upon a Hill” was not for the benefit of all people, but addressed the possibility of the “failure of New England’s enterprise.” Their stated aims would be held up to ridicule. Those in England who had supported the migrants’ efforts would be shamed by their failure.

So if Miller’s notion of Winthrop’s objective is not the “Model’s” stated aim, what was? We may remember that Winthrop speaks explicitly about to the ultimate goal of the colony.

177 Ibid.
178 “We may say that the migration was running an errand...for history.... Winthrop was aware of this aspect of the mission—fully conscious of it. ‘For wee must Consider that wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are upon us’” (Miller, p. 11).
179 Ibid., p. 92.
181 Ibid., p. 93.
182 Ibid.
The end is to improve our lives to doe more service to the Lord the conforte and encrease of the body of christe whereof wee are members that our selves and posterity may be the better preserved from the Common corrupcions of this evil world to serve the Lord and work out our Salvacion under the power and purity of his holy Ordinances.183

The goal was self-improvement through service and the fulfillment of covenantal responsibilities. The only mention of the world in relation to the New England colony is an observation of its corruption and wickedness. Nowhere does Winthrop assert that the Massachusetts plantation is charged with the correction of these evils. On the contrary, he points to the colony as a place where those members of the “body of christe” may seek to “be the better preserved” from the world’s corruption. Not only is Miller’s idea of a redemptive errand not supported by the sermon upon which it is based, the imagery of New England as a “city upon a hill” does not appear in any of Winthrop’s extant writings.

Had [Winthrop’s] perception of the colony’s mission actually revolved around the wish to create a beacon for the nations, as is routinely maintained, it is reasonable to expect that this ideal frequently and forcefully would come to expression in his written remains... Nowhere in the entire corpus [of these] is [the Bay project] pictured as a redemptive city upon a hill, a light to the nations, or a decisive pattern for English, European, or world-wide reform.184

The first generation of Puritan migrants did not embark upon such an exact and easily definable errand as been argued by Miller and his followers. However, the colonists’ arguments for New England do illustrate the duality of their motives for removal. They hoped to escape and to create in the undertaking of their colonial enterprise. The ultimate goal was to fulfill their duties to God. Free from the declining political, religious, and economic conditions of England, as well as the threat of its imminent judgment, these men could establish for themselves the forms that had been unattainable at home. In doing so, they could possess a well-grounded hope of God’s protection and favor, for both themselves and for their posterity.

“Smalle and Contemptible Beginnings:” Early Organization in the Bay Colony185

The second generation of New England Puritans celebrated their fathers’ motives for migration. However, the migrants’ removal is only part of the picture. Their achievements in Massachusetts Bay receive the bulk of their successors’ praise. The second generation’s image of their fathers must be considered in light of what the colonists

183 Ibid., p. 90.
actually did. A description of the early colonists and their efforts at organization will illustrate the continuity, or lack thereof, between first generation accounts and second generation celebrations.

All accounts indicate that the first generation of Massachusetts Bay colonists did not work out the details of their civil and ecclesiastical polity before the emigration. While Winthrop and company sought physical safety, civil and ecclesiastical discipline, and the proper observation of their covenantal ordinances, they apparently gave little thought to the forms these ideals would take in the new world. With a clear idea of what they were escaping from and lofty ideals of what they would create, the Puritan migrants set sail for the New England colony. Upon arrival, questions of land distribution, civil polity, and church organization arose. Attempts to negotiate answers were undertaken in light of the community's covenantal relationship to God and to one another. The migrants' solutions began at the colonial level, with the establishment of the General Court in 1630. The allotment system of land gave rise to several towns, which operated through frequent town meetings and the election of selectmen. Churches were gathered under a congregational model and conversion narratives developed as a common, though not universal, admissions requirement. Puritan families were understood as "little commonwealths," in which emphasis upon literacy and education promoted the stability of the colony. Individual responsibilities, communal meetings, and the election of and submission to officials characterized every development of the early New England community.

Those who made their way to New England differed from those who populated England's other colonies. Rather than the "impoverished and unfree young Englishmen" of the southern colonies, families made up the majority of those who traveled to Massachusetts Bay. Neither particularly wealthy nor destitute, these "middling families" were comprised of free, literate and quite often educated people. They paid their own way to New England and could afford to transport bound servants as well. The ratio of colonial men and women in New England was "unusually balanced." Joseph A. Conforti observes that, "The dominant patterns of Puritan migration yielded a heavily free, family-centered, middle-class society of wide property ownership." This balanced community promoted stability in the colony. The migrants did not have to contend with overwhelming

187 Conforti, Joseph A. Saints and Strangers, p. 57.
188 Ibid., p. 44.
189 Ibid.
190 Ibid., p. 45.
191 Ibid.
poverty nor with an abundance of unattached young men. The relative stability of the early migrants created an environment in which their covenantal concerns could shape the development of colonial institutions.

Arriving in Massachusetts Bay, the migrants faced the immediate problem of land distribution. While those landing between 1630 and 1632 often resorted to what Darrett B. Rutman has termed an "impromptu division of land," further colonization necessitated an organized and deliberate allocation of property.\(^\text{192}\) It was commonly accepted that "divine providence" had foreordained that all men be "ranck into two sortes, riche and poore."\(^\text{193}\) One's rank was not a result of one's character and good deeds, or lack thereof, but rather was "for the glory of [the] Creator and the Common good of the Creature."\(^\text{194}\) As such, when the time came to allot New England lands, the colonists did not anticipate equal distribution. Three factors determined the size of a man's plot: wealth, social status, and service to the community. A fourth, the size of the man's household,\(^\text{195}\) would also have been taken into account. In general, those who had been the wealthiest and most influential in England, as well as those in a position to be of greatest service to the commonwealth,\(^\text{196}\) received the largest parcels of land. In Boston, these "gentry," some thirty families, were allotted about half of the available lands by 1637.\(^\text{197}\) Each family was granted an average of slightly less than 200 acres, with the land allocation to gentry exceeding 5,000 acres in all.\(^\text{198}\) In contrast, "the generality," which made up the rest of Boston's nearly three thousand inhabitants, received less than 1,500 acres total, an average of less than 30 acres per family.\(^\text{199}\)

The Massachusetts Bay Company, the trading corporation headed by John Winthrop, was granted the original charter for the colony in 1629. In New England, the company used the document to establish the colony's government. The charter specified that the company's shareholders, "fi-eemen," were "to meet four times a year in a 'Great and General Court,' to make laws for both company and colony."\(^\text{200}\) At one of these meetings, the company was to elect a governor, a deputy governor, and eighteen assistants to be responsible for managing "affairs between meetings of the General Court."\(^\text{201}\) Originally, the freemen to whom the charter referred were those who had

\(^{192}\) Rutman, Darrett B. Winthrop's Boston., p. 68.
\(^{194}\) Ibid.
\(^{195}\) A man's household would include his immediate family members, as well as his servants and wards. Each individual residing within the home, whether free or bound, would be counted in the assessment of its size.
\(^{196}\) Such as John Winthrop and other leaders.
\(^{197}\) Rutman, Darrett B. Winthrop's Boston., pp. 79-80.
\(^{198}\) Ibid., p. 80.
\(^{199}\) Ibid.
\(^{200}\) Morgan, Edmund S. The Puritan Dilemma., p. 85.
\(^{201}\) Ibid.
By general vote of the people of Massachusetts, the assistants were transformed from an executive counsel into a legislative assembly; and the term ‘freeman’ was transformed from a designation for the members of a commercial company, exercising legislative and judicial control over that company and its property, into a designation for the citizens of a state, with the right to vote and hold office. Morgan suggests that the broadening of the term “freeman” can be accounted for by the covenant theme in Puritan thought. “The idea of a ‘covenant,’ or contract between God and man… was the basis of an individual’s salvation; it was the origin of every true church and also of every state… the [colony’s] ‘due form of government’… could originate only from a covenant between the settlers and the men who were to rule them.” As such, those admitted into freemanship, nearly all of the early male migrants, entered into a civil covenant between themselves and their elected officials. Each had obligations to the other; the officials were responsible for the management of the colony and the freemen for obedience and assistance.

The importance of a civil covenant is also apparent in the establishment of individual New England towns. Dedham, an inland town to the southwest of Boston, was founded in 1636 by the Dedham Covenant, “a document in which the founders of the town simultaneously set forth their social ideal, outlined the policies by which they would attempt to bring that ideal to reality, and pledged themselves to obey those policies.” According to Kenneth A. Lockridge, Dedham sought to create a community of “seekers after [the] true faith in the Lord Jesus.” No room existed for members who did not share this quest for faith. As such, prospective townsmen were required to apply for acceptance into the community. Lockridge describes the application process in *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years*.

Suitable men would be culled from among the applicants and the rest refused... The culling began at the first [town] meeting, on the 18th of August, 1636... Every candidate would undergo a public inquisition in which his entire past could be brought to light. The discovery of a lie would be grounds for instant

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202 Ibid., p. 91.
203 Ibid.
204 Ibid., pp. 93-94.
205 “The transformation of trading company to commonwealth was completed at the next meeting of the General Court, when one hundred and sixteen persons were admitted as freemen. (This was probably most, if not all of the adult males, excluding servants, then in the colony)” (Morgan, p. 91).
207 Ibid.
exclusion. After November of 1636 a member of the town could not sell or rent for more than a year any of his land unless the prospective customer was already a member of the town or had been approved by a majority of “the whole Company.”

The first townspeople entered into a covenant among themselves, in which they agreed to fear and reverence God, to exclude those who could not satisfactorily do the same, to maintain peace among themselves through the mediation of differences, and to submit to the town’s laws and policies. In the acceptance of this covenant, the townsmen sought to promote unity among themselves and to exclude those who they felt could not live up to its prescriptions. While Dedham presents a more extreme example of a civil covenant, their practice appears to have resulted in the unity that it was undertaken to produce. “In the fifty years after its foundation the town was entirely free of the prolonged disputes which racked some towns nearby.”

Despite Dedham’s stringent application of the covenantal ideal, the rest of the colony appeared to share the town’s appreciation of societal unity and a common quest for faith. At the second meeting of the colony’s General Court, the newly admitted freemen voted that “noe man shall be admitted to the freedome of this body politicke, but such as are members of some of the churches within the lymitts of the same.”

As the townspeople of Dedham after them, the colony’s freemen sought to create a community unified by their common faith. Those who fell outside the scope of this faith and its institutions were not fit for admission into citizenship.

The government of New England towns was quite similar to that of the colony. In practice, the towns were fairly autonomous. When each town received its allotted land, it came with the single stipulation, that it not enact any policies contrary to the interests of the colony. The town’s members would meet and elect a number of “selectmen…to run local affairs between town meetings.” These men oversaw local finances, “apportioned taxes set by the town meeting, maintained the meetinghouse, ensured the collection of the minister’s salary, and hired the local teacher.”

One or more of them would serve as the town’s representatives at the quarterly meetings of the General Court. Overall, these men were fairly prominent and wealthy members of their communities. “In most towns freemen repeatedly returned the same selectmen to office, and they elected new leaders who shared the social

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208 Ibid., p. 8.
209 Ibid., pp. 4-7.
210 Ibid., p. 15.
211 Quoted in Edmund S. Morgan’s The Puritan Dilemma., pp. 91-92.
212 Conforti, Joseph A. Saints and Strangers., p. 56.
213 Ibid., p. 57.
profile of their predecessors." These selectmen were responsible for maintenance of the town and the townsmen were charged with obedience to their elected officials.

The organization of the church was of utmost importance to the early colonists. Their desire to fulfill their obligations to God had contributed to the decision to migrate. Ministers had been sought before their departure and many took up residence among the small groups that settled around the colony between late July and September of 1630. The question of how to create a formal church structure was discussed among these ministers in a "series of conferences in mid-1630." They considered two possible systems: allowing the Assistants, or leaders of town government, to organize and regulate the churches or the alternative, allowing church members to govern themselves without the interference of other congregations or external authority. The latter, congregationalism, was accepted and prescribed by the leaders in the Charlestown covenant on July 30, 1630. Darrett B. Rutman describes the membership limitations affirmed by the covenant.

The church (or churches following the dispersal) [was limited] to those explicitly covenanting themselves 'wholly unto the Lord Jesus, to do him faithful service, observing and keeping all his statutes, commands, and ordinances' rather than open membership to the whole populace. The choice of organization also accepted "the fact that authority over the church rested in this select congregation and in no higher body or man." The church was to be autonomous, its members joining together in covenant to one another and to God. The congregants would call a minister and a teacher to whom they would look for instruction and discipline. Like the colony's towns, these congregations placed limitations upon full membership and were organized according to the wealth and influence of its members. "A committee assigned seats based on wealth, age, and standing in the community. Seating in the meetinghouse mapped a town's social structure."

As a community of covenanted people engaged in the worship of God and the observation of his ordinances, the church operated as a restricted group of "visible saints." However, church attendance was practically universal during the early years of the colony and mandatory after 1635. It was believed that the unregenerate, those who had not yet received the free gift of God's saving grace, should be exposed to the word of

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214 Ibid., pp. 56-57.
215 Rutman, Darrett B. Winthrop's Boston., p. 27.
216 Ibid., p. 49.
217 Ibid., pp. 53-54. The Charlestown covenant was later transferred with the church to Boston, becoming the covenant of Boston's church.
218 Ibid., p. 49.
219 Ibid.
220 Conforti, Joseph A. Saints and Strangers., p. 59.
221 "Not for five years would absences from church services be such as to require a law commanding attendance" (Rutman, 55).
God in the preaching of the sermon. If these men and women were elected to receive his grace, the sermon was the means through which it would be transmitted. Among the first generation of churchgoers, nearly every townsperson was also a member of the regenerate. However, there were unconverted individuals within these early congregations. As such, the fledgling ecclesiastical communities required a process by which to distinguish between regenerate prospects and unregenerate attendees.

The way in which the early New England Churches attempted to separate the faithful from the sinful was through the requirement of a public examination before admission. Prior to 1633, the process typically involved a profession of faith and the demonstration of Christian knowledge on the part of the applicant. The candidate’s “outward behavior” was also considered by the congregation as their assessment of his or her sincerity. However, sometime in the mid 1630s, the practice underwent “a subtle but profound change.” The idea was introduced “that admission to the church should be dependent not merely on the outward behavior and knowledge of the faith of the applicant, but [also] on the church’s evaluation of the applicant’s profession of the working of Christ within him.” The introduction of this idea is often attributed to John Cotton, who arrived in the colony in 1633. The resulting conversion narrative was to be delivered publicly and to the satisfaction of the entire congregation before membership was granted. “The would-be members [were] required to acknowledge ‘the great mercy and grace of God, in receiving them to his grace: and changing their heart and life by such or such means.’ The narrative provided a more developed solution to the problem of distinguishing the actually saved from the merely hopeful. The latter could study the principles of the faith and discipline their behavior; however, it was thought that only the former could satisfactorily describe the working of God’s grace upon their souls.

The colony, its towns, and its churches were all organized according to the covenant theme. The smallest of New England’s covenanted communities was the Puritan family. Like the members of the larger communities, those of the family had their own responsibilities. Monitored by the selectmen of their town, each family was responsible for the literacy, education, biblical instruction, and general moral supervision of its members. The family was “a civic institution where children first learned the importance of order, piety, and literacy.” Fathers served as patriarchs of the home and representatives of the family in town affairs. Mothers were responsible for the

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222 Rutman, Darrett B. Winthrop’s Boston, p. 115.
223 Ibid.
224 Ibid.
225 Ibid., p. 116.
226 Conforti, Joseph A. Saints and Strangers, p. 57.
education of the children and the upkeep of the home. Husbands and wives were joined together in a marital
covenant in which each agreed to fulfill these obligations. Joseph A. Conforti observes that, “For Puritans, the
stability of the Bible commonwealth depended on the maintenance or restoration of family order.” Single men
and women who migrated to the colony were incorporated into families in an effort to maintain this stability. Order
was imposed through an emphasis upon supervision and direction.

With their organization of familial, ecclesiastical, and civic institutions, the New England Puritans
attempted to fashion for themselves the community that had been unavailable to them in England. They followed
English practice in the distribution of their lands and observed the typical hierarchical structure of English society.
They created for themselves colonial, local, ecclesiastical, and domestic commonwealths, wherein each member was
to operate according to his or her covenantal obligations to others and to God.

The “First Breathing among this People:” Dissent and Division

The second generation celebrated the first as the model of a wholly unified community. The colonists’
cooperation is the supreme example from which their successors are said to have declined. An analysis of the first
generation in respect to the reality of its civil and ecclesiastical unity will reveal the image of New England’s First
Fathers as truly a creation of their successors.

Despite the first generation’s attempts to organize itself according to its covenantal responsibilities,
Massachusetts Bay soon faced diversity and dissent. Over time, the character of the region’s population changed as
migration from England increased. The problem of survival had resolved itself by the fall of 1631 and growing
economic opportunities on land and at sea attracted individuals more interested in material success than in the
maintenance of a godly community. The mounting discrepancy between colonial citizenship and the colony’s
population necessitated the recognition of these newcomers by the commonwealth’s government. This recognition
eventually led to a disjunction between colonial citizenship and church membership. The churches themselves
would suffer disagreement, radicalism, and separatism. This dissent, along with growing English criticism and the
Independent rise to power in England, necessitated the calling of the Cambridge Synod in 1648. The resulting

227 Ibid., p. 61.
228 Shepard, Thomas JR. Eye-Salve., p. 31.
229 “By the fall of 1631...Winthrop knew that he no longer needed to worry excessively about the simple problem of
survival.... Under his guidance the people had left starvation behind” (Morgan, p. 68).
platform defines the Bay Colony's congregational church polity. It elaborates the nature of church, state, and visible saints in relation to one another and to God. While the Cambridge Platform served to defend the colony from external critics and provided a written example for the newly empowered Independents in England, it would not have been necessary had the unity described by the second generation of New England Puritans actually existed among the first.

New England was never a community strictly composed of Puritan reformers. From the beginning, "indentured servants and free artisans joined pious colonists in settling the region." The migrants relied on these outsiders, whose occupations were indispensable to the success of the commonwealth. Many of these "strangers" were recruited prior to the departure from England. Carpenters, stonemasons, soldiers, a surgeon, and a midwife were among those solicited for participation in the colonial enterprise. These men and women were examined by the leaders of the migration, who sought to determine whether or not they possessed an "honest conviction" toward the godliness of the venture and faithfulness and diligence to [their] work or "calling". Those who passed the examination were recruited for the New England project. No particular creed or belief was required of these outsiders. The "hope was that the whole body of male inhabitants exclusive of servants would eventually be freemen, participating citizens of the town, property holders, and church members." However, as migration continued throughout the 1630s, the number of unregenerate strangers increased. In the face of an escalating population of outsiders, the anticipated conversion of these strangers was abandoned.

The Puritan colonists who accompanied John Winthrop in 1630 were fairly homogeneous. Out of the 141 settlers of known origin, "forty were from villages immediately surrounding Winthrop's manor at Groton" and eighty-three were "from the East Anglian counties of Suffolk and Essex." "For the most part [these migrants] had been associated with agriculture and small household manufactures." However, migration soon increased as Laudian persecution, economic depression, and fear of impending judgment escalated in England. "[I]ncreasingly, [these] later emigrants were from towns rather than villages—Norwich, Boston, London." Men and women boarded ships, crossed the Atlantic and took up residence in the colony without examination. The godly society had

230 Conforti, Joseph A. Saints and Strangers., p. 69.
231 A distinction made by Conforti in Saints and Strangers.
232 Rutman, Darrett B. Winthrop's Boston, p. 135.
233 Ibid., p. 136.
234 Ibid., p. 142.
235 Ibid., p. 138.
236 Ibid., p. 139.
237 Ibid., p. 140.
little control over who arrived and was forced to accept growing diversity within its midst.\textsuperscript{238} The number of unattached men and women rose and children arrived without parents at a growing rate. According to Darrett B. Rutman:

The pressure of both numbers and complexity broke the unity of congregation and town…. The number of newcomers was far too great to be readily absorbed; the variety of backgrounds, outlooks, desires, and personalities was too much to be pressed into a common matrix, the newcomers [ranged] from the intensely devout…and urbane…through shopkeepers, farmers, artisans, free laborers, and servants.\textsuperscript{239}

Increasing diversity created a wholly mixed community in Boston before 1640. Inland towns, such as Dedham, were able to maintain their cohesion a bit longer by placing restrictions upon citizenship and requiring applications for membership.\textsuperscript{240}

The variety of newcomers was the result, in part, of increased economic opportunities in the colony. As the problem of survival was resolved in the early 1630s, New England’s coastal landscape began to attract fishermen and the growing agricultural towns brought farmers and other laborers to the region. “By the middle of the seventeenth century…a burgeoning fishing industry emerged as New England’s most important commercial enterprise.”\textsuperscript{241} Increasingly, non-Puritan fishermen set up shop in and around Boston. Joseph A. Conforti describes the impact of this rising population of “fisherfolk.”

Fishermen, sailors, and maritime workers …were typically nominal Anglicans [and] the demands of fishery life fostered a work culture alien to Puritanism’s more sober, disciplined habits…. Many [fishermen] fell into profane ways [and]….[the group] forged a counterculture to Puritanism [in the colony].\textsuperscript{242}

In addition to these maritime workers, came farmers and laborers ready to make a living for themselves off of the land. Many were drawn by the opportunity to profit from the large numbers of incoming migrants. “The newcomers brought little in the way of material goods…Whatever…they needed they [w]ould buy from the already established settlers.”\textsuperscript{243} The development of Boston as center for international trade further attracted non-Puritan opportunists. The effects of this increasingly mixed population upon the colony were augmented by its contact with

\textsuperscript{238} This is not to suggest that all were admitted to town and church membership. See below, pp. 66-68, for the status of these newcomers.

\textsuperscript{239} Ibid., pp. 140-142.

\textsuperscript{240} These towns would later face increasing diversity and dissension. As such, a look at the changing character of Boston will serve to illustrate the changes wrought upon the colony as a whole. Also, Boston, as the colony’s port, was the largest and most influential town in the commonwealth. Diversity and difficulties within that town would have affected the entire colony.

\textsuperscript{241} Conforti, Joseph A. Saints and Strangers., pp. 74-78.

\textsuperscript{242} Ibid., pp. 76-77.

\textsuperscript{243} Rutman, Darrett B. Winthrop’s Boston., p. 180.
The surge in New England's population that accompanied the Great Migration of the 1630s, as well as the diversity of the colony's newcomers, created a problematic situation for the government of the commonwealth. Previously, it had been assumed that colonial citizenship and church membership would parallel one another in the Bay Colony. Based on this assumption, the General Court had limited admission to freemanship in 1630 to those who were "members of...the churches within the lymitts of" the "body politick." Edmund S. Morgan notes that this limitation was "in fact an open invitation to every future church member in Massachusetts to take up the privileges" of membership in the commonwealth. But by 1635, few had accepted the invitation. Less than half of the Boston's population of approximately 5,000 were members of the First Church. Under the commonwealth's previous policies, these outsiders were not eligible for citizenship. More than half of Boston's adult males lived not only outside of the church, but also as aliens within the community. The colony as a whole fared no better.

"Though the population of Massachusetts was probably over 15,000 [by] 1643, only 1,708 persons had become citizens in the Colony." As Rutman observes, this disparity necessitated the recognition of such outsiders.

The pressure of an ever-growing population brought the abandonment of the fiction that linked land and church membership. Commonwealth law recognized in 1635...the ownership of land by non-freemen, while in 1636 [Boston] gave up the policy of granting land only to those who were, or would eventually become, church members...These acts in effect created a new status, that of "inhabitant," a resident who was not necessarily a church member or a freeman, but nevertheless possessed the broad rights and privileges of a citizen of the town.

Like the abandonment of the association of land and church membership, soon the distinction between land-holding inhabitants and strangers without land fell by the wayside. By the beginning of the 1640s, "men were admitted...without regard to house or holdings." Admissions, however, were not universal. Selectmen conferred inhabitantship "in a specific act entered into the records after a due consideration of the character and quality of the applicant." Despite these limitations, the recognition of non-church members as deserving of the "rights and privileges" of town citizenship marked a turning point in the relationship between New England's civil and

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244 Morgan, Edmund S. *The Puritan Dilemma*, p. 92.
245 Ibid.
246 Rutman, Darrett B. *Winthrop's Boston*. Chart on p. 147.
248 Rutman, Darrett B. *Winthrop's Boston*, pp. 156-157. – These broad rights and privileges did not include the ability to vote, which was reserved for freemen.
249 Ibid., p. 158.
250 Ibid.
ecclesiastical institutions.\(^{251}\) It increased the already significant gap between the two. The creation of a civic space for nonbelievers resulted in a shift of focus within Boston's ecclesiastical community. Rutman describes this shift:

> Turning inward, the church eschewed its social function. It no longer screened men for society; rather it was becoming an end in itself, a society within the total society. In the early years, it had been the guardian of public morals throughout the town...Church and town had to all intents and purposes been but two facets of the same society...In subsequent years...a fine line was being drawn between sacral and secular...The town gradually assumed to itself the right to judge the character of would-be residents.\(^{252}\)

This disjunction between the civil and ecclesiastical elements of the colony marked a departure from the ideals of the first migrants. Rather than a near parallel part of a single whole, the churches were becoming an isolated component of a complex society.

In addition to their changing role in the colony, the New England churches experienced internal controversies throughout the 1630s and 40s. Dissent, religious radicalism, and separatism plagued first generation congregations. Disagreements over the institution of the conversion narrative marked an early division within the colony's ecclesiastical institutions. The increased arrival of separatists and religious radicals, such as Roger Williams and Ann Hutchinson, disrupted the cohesion of the early congregations. In the face of such disruptions, the autonomy provided by the congregational model of church polity frustrated efforts at maintaining consensus. The ideal of a unified community of believers proved difficult to preserve. Despite what their successors would later say, the first congregants of New England faced much in the way of dissent and dispute.

The introduction of the profession of grace, or conversion narrative, sometime in the early 1630s, marked a significant change in the practice of church admission. The narrative required applicants to be relatively convinced of their own conversion. Candidates had to be able to articulate the process through which they became converted to the body of their prospective congregation. Some ministers found this requirement problematic in that it might exclude regenerate prospects or dissuade them from applying for membership. Thomas Hooker, one of the great ministers of the early colony, was among those skeptical of the narrative. Despite the prescription for leniency in the judgment of a person's narrative, many of the congregations, "in their initial enthusiasm for the new test[,]...seem to have applied it...rigorously."\(^{253}\) Hooker's disagreement with the use of the public narrative and its

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\(^{251}\) Ibid., p. 157.

\(^{252}\) Ibid., pp. 154-156.

stringent application led him and his Newtown church “to found Connecticut.” Edmund S. Morgan, in Visible Saints, reports that one Englishman, Robert Stansby, wrote to Winthrop in early 1637 regarding Hooker’s departure.

"Hooker believed that the first signs of grace could be detected at an early stage in the morphology of conversion." A candidate need not wait to seek church membership until he was sure of his conversion. Once in Hartford, Hooker adopted the practice of examining each candidate for church membership privately, with the church’s elders. Hooker and company were not the only people to leave Massachusetts Bay. Other colonists removed to Connecticut for the same reason, including John Warham and several families from Dorchester.

The problem of departing congregations was augmented by increasing disagreements among the remaining churches and their congregants. Questions arose regarding the place of conversion narratives with respect to the other admission requirements—the statement of belief, the knowledge of the faith, and the morally upright behavior of the applicant. Ministers of neighboring churches appeared to hold different opinions, especially concerning the reliability of outward behavior as a sign of conversion. All agreed that the narrative should describe the “working of Christ within [the applicant].” However, if the prospect were unsure of his condition, was upright conduct a sign of regeneration? Thomas Shepard, minister of the Cambridge congregation, believed “that sanctification—the moral behavior of the individual—was the principal sign by which man and the churches could hope to recognize God’s elect.” He recognized that outward behavior was the only empirical evidence of the applicants’ inward reality. The narrative was the tool by which the gracious could demonstrate the authenticity of their appearance. Shepard encouraged uncertain prospects to examine their conduct for signs of regeneration. John Cotton, on the other hand, stressed salvation before morality. He “sought to move his communicants into a pitiless self-examination, a never-ending search for a second and true seal” of conversion. This confirmation was not to be found in outward...
behavior, but rather in an internal "Witnesse of the [Holy] Spirit." The fundamental difference between Cotton and Shepard was the value that each placed upon sanctification as a sign of regeneration.

This question was just one aspect of the problem of identifying the colony's saints with certainty. The issue of sanctification, however, ultimately led to one of New England's biggest debates: the Antinomian Controversy of the late 1630s. The notorious spearhead of the movement, Anne Hutchinson, arrived in Massachusetts Bay with her husband in 1634. Ms. Hutchinson had been a parishioner of Cotton's in England and had followed her teacher across the Atlantic. Subsequent to her arrival, Anne joined the Boston congregation and began meeting weekly with other congregants to discuss Cotton's teachings. In these meetings, Ms. Hutchinson emphasized her teacher's views regarding the individual's path to salvation and "carried Cotton's insistence on unmerited saving grace far beyond her master." She believed that one could not judge the state of a man's soul by the actions of his body. His works, she held, should not be counted among his qualifications for church membership. Instead, she believed that "the person of the Holy Ghost [dwelt] in the elect" and that "only the knowledge of the spirit within" could assure one of his or her election. Ms. Hutchinson amassed a following in Boston and the group "maintained that God enabled them to tell with absolute certainty whether a man had saving grace or not." They asserted that those who accepted evidence of moral behavior as an expression of holy motives existed under a Covenant of Works, as opposed to a Covenant of Grace. The former comprised those "deluded and damned [for] relying on good works instead of saving grace," while the latter contained the truly saved. Ms. Hutchinson, in her distinction between the two covenants "hinted to her admirers that all the ministers in Massachusetts, with the exception of her two old favorites, John Cotton and [her brother-in-law,] John Wheelwright, were under a covenant of works and therefore unfit to preach the gospel." Ms. Hutchinson's position and her apparent influence led to a colony wide controversy. However, as Darrett B. Rutman observes, the group was "but a mob scrambling after God, and like all mobs, quickly dispersed once their leaders were dealt with." New England ministers and magistrates thwarted the movement by the close of the 1630s. Whatever the results, Ms. Hutchinson and her followers brought the problems of church admission to a head in the colony. How

263 Rutman, Darrett B. Winthrop’s Boston., p. 118.
265 Ibid.
266 Morgan, Edmund S. The Puritan Dilemma., p. 140.
267 Ibid.
268 Rutman, Darrett B. Winthrop’s Boston., p. 121.
Another example of this extension involved not the question of how to distinguish one group of attendees from the rest, but rather of how to purify New England's entire ecclesiastical system. Among the early migrants and those who would later seek refuge in the colony, were individuals “who had renounced the Church of England and proposed to live and worship in unblemished purity in the New World.”\(^{268}\) The implications of this tendency presented the commonwealth with a twofold problem. In renouncing the Church of England, these separatists ran the risk of upsetting the very government that had sanctioned the colonial enterprise, putting New England in danger of external interference. Separatism posed an internal threat as well. Its continual search for purity “could lead to the ultimate absurdity of complete withdrawal into oneself, nobody being quite pure enough to join with.”\(^{269}\) The faithful colonists ran the risk of “splinter[ing] [it] into a hundred earnest little Utopias.”\(^{270}\) Perhaps the most divisive New England separatist was Roger Williams, a Cambridge graduate and teacher of the Salem congregation from 1633 to 1635. Williams arrived in Massachusetts Bay in 1631. Immediately, he offended John Winthrop and the First Church of Boston in his refusal of the church's offer of an interim position as teacher. In his declination, Williams informed the congregation that it had “failed to renounce the impurities of England” and was therefore impure itself.\(^{271}\) Over the next five years, Williams continued to espouse his separatist opinions and moved about the colony in an effort to escape impurity wherever he detected it. He suggested that “civil magistrates had no authority in any religious matter”\(^{272}\) and sought a colony-wide renunciation of the English churches, going so far as to suggest that “Massachusetts ought to send the patent back to the King, with a request that he modify it by omitting all clauses relating to the donation of land... [so as to avoid] the sin of accepting land from [a] public liar.”\(^{273}\) The implications of Williams' position increased upon his appointment as the minister of Salem in 1635. “As [a] minister[,]...he could now claim the acknowledged principle of congregational independence in his

\(^{268}\) Morgan, Edmund S. The Puritan Dilemma., p. 73.
\(^{269}\) Ibid., p. 99.
\(^{270}\) Ibid., p. 75.
\(^{271}\) Ibid., p. 117.
\(^{272}\) Ibid., p. 118.
\(^{273}\) Ibid., p. 123.
defense. Williams used the primitive church polity to justify a dangerous position. As such, his separatism threatened not only the colony as a whole, but also its primal organization of ecclesiastical institutions.

The establishment of the conversion narrative, the Antinomian controversy, and the problem of separatism, gave rise to increasing criticism among the colony's English brethren. The New England congregations, in their institution of the narrative, were accused of robbing "many parish-churches of their best members." They were charged with providing "no course for the gaining, & calling in, of ignorant, & erroneous, & scandalous persons...and so exclude[ing] them] from the wholesome remedy of church-discipline." The practice was regarded as "the seeds of division & hindrance of edification in every family" by admitting one member of a family and not another. The colony's religious radicalism and separatism were pointed to as signs of the problematic nature of a congregational church polity. Robert Baylie, a Scottish writer and divine, observed the result of New England's independency in his lengthy discourse on the "Errours of the Time." "[I]n the day of their Country's most grievous calamities; being alone there, without the disturbances of any enemy either within or without, what were the fruits of their Church-way?... It did bring forth the foulest Heresies that ever yet were heard of in any Protestant Church."

Such harsh criticism, coupled with New England's increasing division, led to the call for the Cambridge Synod in 1646. The meeting was intended to resolve the "differences of opinion & practice" that existed from "one church [to] another" in the colony. The chief of these were the problems of admission to church membership and access to baptism. Like the Reforming Synod of the second generation, the Cambridge Synod of the first indicates the seriousness with which the colony's leaders took their current position. They had faced the separatism of Roger Williams in the mid 1630s and by the mid 1640s, the commonwealth was still recovering from the Antinomian Controversy. This disharmony in New England's ecclesiastical institutions had led the congregants and their English brethren to question the effectiveness of the Bay's congregational church polity. In 1645, an additional challenge to magisterial authority would prompt the calling of the Synod.

William Vassall, an assistant of the original Massachusetts Bay Company, had become a vocal advocate for religious toleration in New England in the 1640s. He wanted the Bay Colony "to allow and maintain full and

274 Ibid., p. 125.
276 Ibid.
277 Ibid.
Vassall proposed such toleration to the Plymouth Court in October of 1645 and to the General Court the following May. When his petitions were rejected by both, he and his supporters returned to England, where they attempted to present the matter to Parliament. Their petition requested that "both....civil and church estate, might be taken away, and that [New England] might be wholly governed by the laws of England." The resulting threat of parliamentary interference necessitated a response to the charges.

The leaders of New England...feared that their system was to be attacked by the English authorities in its political and ecclesiastical features; and they felt, therefore, that instead of effecting any changes, the result of which would be impossible to foresee, they must strengthen the foundations of existing institutions and prepare to meet opposition.

Reinforcing the colony's institutions meant resolving any discrepancies among their practices. The most obvious of these was the problem of church admissions and, consequently, that of access to baptism. Debates over the requirements for full church membership had sparked the majority of the commonwealth's ecclesiastical disputes.

Differences existed throughout the colony concerning the eligibility of prospective congregants. "[M]any p[er]sons living in [the] country who [had] bene members of [the] congregations in England...[had not been] found fit to be received at [the] Lords table" in New England. The congregations had also developed a variety of standards concerning the baptism of children whose parents had received the sacrament in their youth, yet had remained unconverted as adults.

In most churches the ministers do baptize onely such children whose nearest parents, one or both of them, are seeled memb[ers], in full comunion w ith one or other of these churches[. T]here be some who do baptize [the] children if [the] grandfather or grandmother be such members, though the immediate parents be not.

The resolution of these issues in the agreement "upon one forme of gov[er]ment & discipline" was the original purpose of the call for the Cambridge Synod. However, after the defeat of Vassall and his strongest support, Dr. Robert Child, the Synod chose to pass by the original discrepancies because "they were questions regarding which there was much diversity of view." Instead, the ministers, who finally met in 1648, addressed "the broader function of the Synod, that of giving a constitution to the churches." The Cambridge Platform is an articulation of

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281 Ibid.
282 Ibid., pp. 165-166.
284 Ibid.
286 Ibid., p. 182.
the Bay Colony’s church polity “as it lay in the minds of the first generation...after nearly twenty years of practical experience.” It speaks to the nature of church, state, and visible saints in relation to one another and to God. It describes Massachusetts Bay as it may once have been, and to some extent still was. However, such an articulation of the model by which the churches received their authority would not have been necessary if that authority had not been questioned. It would not have been necessary if the first generation had actually been as unified as the second believed.

The Cambridge Platform describes the process of gathering congregations as the joining together of members in covenant with one another and with God. The relationship of these autonomous congregants to their elected leaders is the dominant theme of the Platform. The text stresses submission and unity as essential to the congregational system. “A church being free...[does] chuse [others] to be over them in the Lord, then do they becom subject, & most willingly submit to their ministry in the Lord, whom they have so chosen.” The authority of the magistrates in ecclesiastical matters is affirmed. “[I]t is the duty of the Magistrate, to take care of matters of religion, & to improve his civil authority for the observing of the duties commanded.” With respect to “such acts, as are commanded & forbidden in the word... [The magistrates,] of right[,] ought to putt forth [their] authority.” The Platform designates unity as the result of the proper exercise of and submission to civil and ecclesiastical authority. The “powr of Government in the Elders, doth not any wise prejudice the powr of priviledg in the brotherhood; as neither the powr of the priviledg in the brethren, doth prejudice the power of government in the Elders; but they may sweetly agree together.” The centrality of the relationship between the congregants and their civil and ecclesiastical leaders suggests that circumstances in New England, such as the colony’s encounters with Ann Hutchinson, Roger Williams, and William Vassall, had necessitated the resulting specificity.

The division of the Bay Colony’s churches prompted the Platform’s descriptions of ecclesiastical discipline and the proper method of removing from a congregation. Those with a desire to leave their church are instructed by the Platform to obtain “letters of recommendation and dismissal” from the congregation. In order to get these letters, they are told to apply to the church and to discuss their reasons for removal with its members. If these

285 Ibid., p. 185.
287 Ibid., p. 236.
288 Ibid.
289 Ibid., p. 220.
290 Ibid., p. 224.
reasons are deemed "unsafe [or] sinful," the request [can] be denied. Acceptable reasons for removal are set forth in the Platform as the inability of a man to continue "without partake[n]g in sinn," personal or general persecution, and "real, & not only pretended, want of competent subsistence." Congregations who wish to discipline a member are also given specific instructions. The Platform asserts that the severity of punishment rendered is to be based upon the severity of the offense. A private transgression warrants admonishment, while a heinous public offense can be grounds for excommunication. In these latter cases, correspondence between upstanding members and ex-communicants is prohibited by the Platform. "While the offender remains excommunicate, the Church is to refrain from all member-like communion with him in spirituall things, & also from all familiar comunio[n] with him in civil things...& are therefore to forbear to eat & dri[n]ke with him, that he may be ashamd." The ex-congregant is to be shunned by church members. However, excommunication is not described as depriving a man of his civil rights. The Platform wholeheartedly affirms the power of civil magistrates in matters of religion; however, the recognition is not reciprocated. The omission of any civil consequences resulting from excommunication is demonstrative of the growing limitation of church power in the colony. Another sign of the churches' waning influence occurs in the Platforms affirmation of magisterial authority. "[H]e of right ought to putt forth his authority, though oft-times he doth it not." This recognition of the magistrates' flagging involvement in New England's religious affairs suggests the growing disjunction between New England's civil and ecclesiastical institutions. Not only were punishments in the colony's churches all but ignored in civil realm, but magistrates had lapsed in their direct involvement in congregational discipline.

The Cambridge Platform addresses many of the problems that plagued the colony during its first generation, including the relationship of church members and their leaders and the question of magisterial authority in matters of religion. It describes the proper way to leave a congregation and the appropriate manner to discipline church members. The Platform's clarification of these issues suggests their prevalence in first generation New England. The Platform's lengthy description of congregational church polity was most certainly a response to English criticism. It may also have been an attempt to provide a model to the newly empowered English Independents. Whatever its larger function, the Platform's descriptions of authority, obedience, and discipline indicate that things were not as unified in the early colony as their successors would later claim.

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293 Ibid., p. 225.
294 Ibid.
295 Ibid., p. 228.
296 Ibid., p. 236.
Image versus Reality

The disjunction between the reality of New England's early divisions and the second generation's celebrations of her unity appear to support interpretations of the image of the colony's First Fathers as an innovation of the migrants' successors. While the idealization New England's founders is indeed a creation of the second generation, it was not completely disjoined from the people it celebrates. Both the first and second generations of New England Puritans said specific things regarding the early period of the Bay Colony. The jeremiads of the 1660s and 70s celebrate the migrants for who they were, for their migration to New England, and for their organization of civil and ecclesiastical systems in the colony. The founders themselves left explicit statements concerning who they were, their reasons for leaving England, and their hopes for the Bay Colony's civic and religious systems. Their town records indicate the extent to which their ideals achieved colonial implementation and suggest that early covenantal systems soon faced internal division and external criticism. In comparing the statements of the second generation with those of the first, it would appear that the image of New England's First Fathers was, in some ways, an accurate description. The discrepancies that do arise between representation and reality can be accounted for by the changing global and colonial circumstances in the second half of the seventeenth century. Unity was stressed in the face of mounting division.

In “A Model of Christian Charity,” John Winthrop begins the “application of [h]is discourse” with a description of the migrants who undertook the colonial enterprise.\(^{297}\) He begins:

1. For the persons, wee are a Company professing ourselves fellow members of Christ, In which respect... wee ought to account ourselves knit together by this bond of love, and live in the exercise of it.\(^{298}\)

Winthrop's continues his description with his hopes for mutual cooperation and affection among the people. Should they realize the model he describes, the future colonists are assured of finding God's favor.

\(^{298}\) Ibid., p. 90.
\(^{299}\) Ibid., p. 92.
The second generation jeremiads present a nearly identical picture of the first, with one important shift: Winthrop’s hopes have become realities from which the migrants’ successors have declined. Of the founders, Samuel Danforth cries:

O how your Faith grew exceedingly...! O how your Love and Charity towards each other abounded! O what comfort of Love! What bowels and mercies! What affectionate care was there of one another! What a holy sympathy in Crosses and Comforts, weeping with those that wept, and rejoicing with those that rejoiced. 306

Thomas Shepard, Jr. observes that the colonists’ achievement of Winthrop’s ideal produced the desired result. “A notable spirit of self-denial, love, courage, zeal for the interest of Christ in the publick, was at first breathing among this people and was crowned from heaven with glorious success by the God of our mercy.” 301 Increase Mather seconds this assertion. “The first Generation which was in this Land, had much of the power of Godliness...the power of Religion.” 302 First and second generation descriptions of the early colonists parallel one another, with the important transformation of early hope into legendary achievement.

The similarities between first generation accounts and second generation celebrations continue in the descriptions of both concerning the colonists’ reasons for migration. Fathers and sons describe the migrants’ religious interest, their care for the spiritual estates of their children, and their desire to propagate the gospel to the colony’s native population. John Winthrop gives the fullest account of these concerns in his arguments for the colony and in “A Model of Christian Charity.” In the “Model,” Winthrop notes that the goal of the colonial enterprise “is to improve our lives to doe more service to the Lord...and [to] worke out our Salvacion under the power and purity of his holy Ordinances.” 303 This end is repeatedly celebrated by second generation ministers as the supreme achievement of their fathers. In An Earnest Exhortation, Increase Mather boasts, “Religion is our interest and that which our Fathers came into this Land for.” 304 Thomas Shepard echoes Mather’s observation in Eye-Salve. The “main design of Gods people’s adventuring in to this wilderness was for...freedom to follow the Lord fully in all his Ordinances and appointments...with what purity the Lord would give them light for.” 305 The migrants’ other considerations, these concerning their children and the propagation of religion find the same continuity of expression between the two generations. In his “General Observations,” Winthrop notes, “Most children are

306 Danforth, Samuel. Errand Into the Wilderness., p. 11.
301 Shepard, Thomas Jr. Eye-Salve., p. 31.
304 Mather, Increase. An Earnest Exhortation., p. 5.
305 Shepard, Thomas Jr. Eye-Salve., p. 37.
perverted, corrupted, and utterly over powered by the multitude of evill examples" in England. Increase Mather describes this concern in his celebration of the founders' removal from the country. "It was in a special manner with respect to posterity, that our Fathers came into this Land, that so their Children might not see evil examples, and be endangered of being corrupted thereby." Winthrop cites the desire to "raise a bulwarke against the kingdom of Antichrist" in "those parts of the world" as his first observation in favor of migration. Increase reiterates this concern as a first generation motive for removal. "Our Fathers came hither to this end, that they might Propagate the Gospel, and be instrumental to set up the Kingdome of the Lord Jesus among the Heathen." Both Mather and Winthrop recognize God's hand in the Puritan migration. God had called the colonists to New England. Before leaving, Winthrop argued, "When God intendes a man to a work he setts a Byas on his heart so as tho' he be tumbled this way and that way yet his Bias still drawes him to that side, and there he restes at last." Increase confirms Winthrop's analysis of God's work in the migration. "God hath culled out a people...which he hath also had a great favour towards, and hath brought them by a mighty hand, and an out-stretched arm, over a greater then the Red Sea, and here hath he planted them."

Despite the explicit similarities between the first generations' arguments for migration and the second generation's celebration of their motives, there is one striking difference between the accounts. The first generation's reasons for leaving center on their desire to escape England's corrupt institutions, while the second generation sermons celebrate the fathers' triumphant departure. Every one of Richard Mather's arguments for New England is negative. They all begin with the phrase "To remove from..." and end with a description of the prospective colony that inverts the objectionable English conditions. While the jeremiads make note of the migrants' desire to escape, the presentation of its execution has a strikingly positive tone. "Our Fathers have been Davids, that is to say, eminent Reformers. Let me speak freely...there was never a Generation that did so perfectly shake off the dust of Babylon, both as to Ecclesiastical and civil Constitution, as the first Generation of Christians, that came into this Land for the Gospels sake." Like Winthrop's hopes for the Bay Colony, the first generation's

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307 Mather, Increase. An Earnest Exhortation., p. 17.
309 Mather, Increase. An Earnest Exhortation., p. 17.
311 Mather, Increase. The Day of Trouble is Near., p. 27.
312 As recorded in Increase Mather's The Life and Death...of Richard Mather.
313 Mather, Increase. The Life and Death...of Richard Mather., pp. 12-19.
314 Mather, Increase. The Danger of Apostacy., p. 56.
escape is recast by the second as a triumphant accomplishment. The founders’ motives for migration are transformed from a negative objective into a positive renunciation.

New England’s civil, ecclesiastical, and domestic commonwealths are celebrated by the second generation as institutions founded upon a religious interest. Historical studies of the colony’s early town records show that these celebrations are fairly descriptive of the first generations’ initial organization. The colonists made church membership the prerequisite for colonial citizenship in the 1630s. Civil covenants served to regulate admission into bay towns. Conversion narratives were instituted in the interest of sacramental purity. Family discipline maintained the stability of the Bay Colony. Samuel Danforth celebrates the role of the Puritan family in *A Brief Recognition of New-England’s Errand Into the Wilderness.*

What holy Endeavors were there in those dayes to propagate Religion to your Children and Posterity, training them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, keeping them under the awe of government, restraining their enormities and extravagancies, charging them to know the God of their fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart and willing minde.  

In *The Danger of Apostacy,* Increase Mather celebrates the institution of the conversion narrative. “We know what our Fathers taught concerning that matter...that there ought to be an holding forth Faith and Repentance before admission to the Lords Table.”  

This “holding forth” was to be an account of the candidates’ “Experience of a work of regeneration upon their Souls.” In *An Earnest Exhortation,* Mather describes the restrictions of civil participation in the early colony.

As to our Civil Polity, our Profession hath been, that they that are Rulers should be men that fear God, and that they that choose them should be such also, and that the Laws of the Common wealth should be regulated by the Word of God, that so the Lord Jesus may reign here.”

The primary difference between the town studies and the jeremiads are their perspectives. The former describe the process of organization as one in which the above institutions are early implementations of lofty ideals. The forms are not the period at the end of the sentence. They are just the beginning of the story. In the jeremiads, the foundation of New England’s civil, ecclesiastical, and domestic commonwealths upon a religious concern is the climax of the colonial enterprise. It is not only the period at the end of the sentence, but a resounding exclamation point.

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316 Mather, Increase. *The Danger of Apostacy,* p. 84.
317 Ibid.
While emphasis and perspective may vary between the first generation accounts and the second generation celebrations, there is one overwhelming difference between the two that transforms the successors' reports into outright idealizations. The jeremiads' description of the fathers' unshakable unity finds little support in the records of the first generation. From nearly the beginning, the founders faced diversity, dissent, and division. From the increasing, uncontrolled immigration of newcomers to the Antinomian Controversy, Separatism and the charges of William Vassal, the story of New England's colony is one of rapid growth and repeated negotiation. The numerous divisions within the colony's ecclesiastical systems resulted in the Cambridge Synod of 1648. The Cambridge Platform was an explication of the colony's church polity not only for the benefit of Independent England, but also for the colonists themselves. The text emphasizes the aspects of the system that had been called into question by early controversies. To characterize New England as a unified body of believers is not only to stretch the truth, but to abandon it completely.

O how excellent was it, as those of the first generation yet remaining know.... [T]he Lord gave his servants in Church and Common wealth for the main body of them an uniting spirit, so a spirit of Communion for the carrying on with one mind, with one lip, and with one shoulder the Kingdom of Christ, and the work of their generation.... Union of Reformers was their beauty and their strength.  

The idealization of New England’s first generation by its second is chiefly a celebration of the former’s grossly exaggerated unity. A prime example of this exaggeration is located in the discrepancy between second generation descriptions of early land distribution practices and the records of these distributions as described in relevant town studies. Increase Mather boasts of the colonists’ willingness to sacrifice large holdings in favor of a relatively equitable distribution of smaller plots. “That they might keep themselves together, [our Fathers] were satisfied with one Acre for each person, as his propriety, and after that with twenty acres for a family[. H]ow have Men since coveted after the earth.” The reality of the migrants’ land allotment system is a far cry from Mather’s celebration. Plots were not equally divided among the newcomers. On the contrary, the size of a man’s plot was based upon his wealth, social status, and service to the community. While the size of his family was also taken into account, it was these first three requirements that dominated the judgment. Not only that, but Boston’s most affluent colonists received ten times the amount of property described by Mather in An Earnest Exhortation. In Boston, these “gentry,” some thirty families were allotted about half of the available lands by 1637, with an average allotment of

319 Shepard, Thomas JR. Eve-Salve., p. 27.
320 Mather, Increase. An Earnest Exhortation., p. 9.
slightly less than 200 acres per family. The exaggeration of New England's early system of land distribution is just one of the many examples of the second generation's attempt to portray their predecessors as a unified community.

The second generation's emphasis upon the unity of the first makes sense in light of the colonial and global events in the last half of the seventeenth century. The devastation of the King Philips War had destroyed the relative security of the colony, which had so attracted its first migrants. The fires, crop blights, illnesses and shipwrecks did much to intensify the commonwealth's feelings of vulnerability. The failure of England's short-lived independency and the restoration of an English monarch provided an external challenge to the already insecure colony. Discord rocked New England's congregations, threatening to destroy them from within. The Half-Way Covenant polarized members in nearly every New England church and the division of Boston's First Church further confirmed the commonwealth's dangerous position. The Reforming Synod of 1679 and its resulting prescriptions indicate the seriousness with which the second generation approached these unfortunate developments. In the midst of such apparent devastation, emerged the notion of New England's golden age. The second generation appropriated the story of the first in an effort to negotiate its way through disaster and controversy. The image of New England as a unified community, one that had been founded upon religious concern, gave the colonists a connection to that identity. It gave them a New England that seemed unattainable and highly desirable in the light of the colony's present struggles. By creating the image, the second generation sidestepped the necessity of creating the reality. The model already existed. All that was required was the return to "first works."

Historical Debate

The second generation's idealization of New England's First Fathers has fascinated popular culture and troubled historians for generations. The pious founders of the Bay Colony have found their place in literature, political speeches, and historical analyses. Scholars agree that this image was first articulated by the second generation of New England colonists. Nowhere else does it come to expression before its appearance in the jeremiad sermons of the 1660s and 70s. While the location of its origin is a fairly straightforward undertaking, historians have debated its significance. Yes, it comes to expression for the first time in the jeremiads of the second

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Perry Miller was the first to seek a resolution to these questions. In his essay, Miller tries to explain the creation of the image in terms of the psychology of those who produced it. Of the jeremiads, Miller writes,

All of these show by their title pages alone—and, as those who have looked into them know, infinitely more by their contents—a deep disquietude. They are troubled utterances, worried, fearful. Something has gone wrong.... They say, unanimously, that New England was sent on an errand, and that it has failed. Miller’s interpretation of this failed errand dominates his reading of the jeremiads. He argues that the second generation created the image of the First Fathers and their founding errand in an attempt to revaluate the errand itself. The ambiguity of the term, errand, is presented in support of this hypothesis. Miller maintains that the word can mean either “a short journey on which an inferior is sent...for his superior” or “the actual business on which the actor goes, the purpose itself, the conscious intention in his mind.” Miller argues that the migration was an errand in both senses. The colonists went to establish a “due forme of Government both civill and ecclesiasticall.” In this respect, “the Massachusetts Bay Company came on an errand in the second and later sense of the word: that is, so to speak, on its own business. What it set out to do was the sufficient reason for its setting out.” Miller also maintains that the colonists possessed an “aim behind [this] aim,” namely “to vindicate the most rigorous ideal of the Reformation, so that ultimately all Europe would imitate New England.” The problematic nature of this assertion has been addressed elsewhere. For our current purposes, it is the failure of the errand in this missionary sense that, in Miller’s reading, characterizes the second generation’s image of the First Fathers. “When we look upon the enterprise from this point of view, the psychology of the second and third generations becomes more comprehensible.” The founders of New England had undertaken an errand for the sake of the world. The mission required the world’s attention and, in the 1640s, “the colonies, so to speak, lost their audience.” Changes in England’s political landscape and the failure of its revolution rendered the “New England model...unserviceable.”

New England did not lie, did not falter; it made good everything Winthrop demanded—wonderfully good—and then found that its lesson was rejected by those choice spirits for whom the exertion had been

323 Miller, Perry. “Errand Into the Wilderness.,” p. 3
324 Ibid., p. 3.
325 Ibid., p. 5.
326 Ibid., p. 5. 
327 Ibid., p. 5.
328 See above, pp. 29-32.
329 Perry Miller. “Errand Into the Wilderness.,” p. 5.
330 Ibid., p. 12.
331 Ibid., p. 13.
made.... There is nothing but tragedy in the realization that one was in the main path of events, and now is sidetracked and disregarded.\textsuperscript{322}

The failure of New England’s errand for Reformed Christianity left the second generation to reinvigorate the errand “with meaning by themselves and out of themselves.”\textsuperscript{333} This they did in the jeremiads, through the creation of the myth of the golden age. “Whatever [the jeremiads] may signify in the realm of theology, in that of psychology they are purgations of the soul.”\textsuperscript{334} In lamenting their declension from the image of their fathers, the second-generation ministers were attempting to resolve their “greatest difficulty...the problem of [their] identity.”\textsuperscript{335} They rightly recognized, according to Miller, that they were not the men their fathers were. Their “castigations of the people,” however, revived a continuity with their predecessors that had been lost at the failure of the missionary errand.\textsuperscript{336}

Miller notes:

\begin{quote}
If you read [the jeremiads] all through, the total effect, curiously enough, is not at all depressing: you come to the paradoxical realization that they do not bespeak a despairing frame of mind. There is something of a ritualistic incantation about them.... [T]hey do no discourage but actually encourage the community to persist in its heinous conduct.... Hence I suggest that under the guise of this mounting wail of sinfulness, this incessant and never successful cry for repentance, the Puritans launched themselves upon the process of Americanization.
\end{quote}

The second generation, by idealizing the example of their predecessors, created a means by which to continue. They could progress, despite the loss of their missionary errand, through rhetorically preserving their continuity with New England’s founding generation.

Sacvan Bercovitch, a scholar of literature who has accepted and developed Miller’s concept of the founding errand, reassesses his predecessor’s analysis in \textit{The American Jeremiad} and \textit{The Puritan Origins of the American Self}. Whereas Miller argues that the question of the society’s meaning is the persistent theme of the jeremiads, Bercovitch asserts that the question “was never ‘Who are we?’ but, almost in deliberate evasion of that question, the old prophetic refrain: ‘When is our errand fulfilled? How long, O Lord, how long?’”\textsuperscript{338} Bercovitch maintains that the jeremiads, rather than lamenting the failure of the fathers’ errand, “attest to an unswerving faith in [it].”\textsuperscript{339} The central theme of the sermons is not anxiety and declension, but rather an “unshakeable optimism.”\textsuperscript{340}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., p. 15.
\item Ibid., p. 9.
\item Ibid., p. 15.
\item Ibid., p. 6.
\item Ibid., pp. 8-9.
\item Ibid., Sacvan. \textit{The American Jeremiad}, p. 11.
\item Ibid., p. 6.
\item Ibid., p. 7.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
asserts that the jeremiads bear "witness to the coherence of the founders' dream, and particularly to the force of the rhetoric marshaled to protect it." Bercovitch reads the jeremiads in light of Miller's concept of the founding errand. He asserts that the migration was an enterprise undertaken solely for the sake of the Reformation. He attempts to demonstrate the second generation's rhetorical affirmation of their fathers' original errand. Bercovitch argues that the sons applied biblical imagery to their descriptions of New England and its founders in an effort "to impose a sacred telos upon secular events." The ministers used a sacred rhetoric to confirm New England's position in the progression of biblical history and to affirm its ultimate millennial role. The sermons assert that the fathers had come to New England on an errand for Christianity, one that, when complete, would usher in the millennium. "To celebrate the founding fathers was ipso facto to predict the millennium, as Ezekiel had, and, like John the Baptist, to be 'eminently serviceable in the mighty Changes'.

Bercovitch asserts that the second-generation ministers inherited their hermeneutics and the form of their sermons from their predecessors. "The New England jeremiad was plainly the product not of the second- and third-generation colonists, but of the first emigrants." The founders had affirmed the colony's millennial role in their definition of the errand as a world-saving mission and their association of that mission with the colonial landscape.

The non-separating emigrant... could hardly see himself merely as a pilgrim seeking salvation, or as an exile awaiting return... He had to justify himself by justifying America... He had discovered his personal identity as Puritan by recourse to christology; now he overcame the problem of his American identity by recourse to soteriology: by imposing upon the communal effort the prophetic type... of the Messiah's advancing millennial army.

The second generation had inherited this so-called justification of America from their fathers. Bercovitch observes that this inheritance, coupled with the challenges presented by changing global and local conditions in the 1660s and 70s, eventuated in the idealized image of the colony's founders. "With every setback, the assertion of American selfhood rose to a higher pitch. It is no accident that the myth of the fathers developed with the failure of the [English] Protectorate, or that apocalypticism reached its height first with King Philip's war and then with the Andros regime." Circumstances resulted in the second generation's amplification of their fathers' expression of New England's grand, millennial design. This vision of the colony, according to Bercovitch, was "most

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341 Ibid., pp. 60-61.
343 Ibid., p. 69.
346 Ibid.
dramatically" expressed "through the legend of New England's golden age." The image of the First Fathers and their founding errand was the ultimate expression of the colonists' "eschatological application of providence to [their] colonial venture." In this analysis, Bercovitch responds to what he perceives to be Miller's emphasis upon the "dark side of the jeremiad," i.e. the ferocity with which the second generation ministers asserted their declension and the threat of divine retribution. "From the start the Puritan Jeremiahs had drawn inspiration from insecurity; by the 1670s, crisis had become their source of strength. They fastened upon it, gloried in it, even invented it if necessary. They took courage from backsliding, converted threat into vindication, made affliction the seal of their progress." The prominence of declension in the second-generation jeremiads is not, according to Bercovitch, a sincere lamentation, but rather "a means of social control" and a source of hope. "Their punishments confirmed their promise." Bercovitch agrees with Miller that the idealization of New England's founders was an effort on the part of the second generation to maintain continuity with their predecessors. However, unlike Miller, Bercovitch does not recognize the rhetoric as a product of the men who brought the oratory to its fullest expression. The form and the sacred imagery were inherited from the very men that they would later be used to celebrate. The continuity that these rhetorical devices were employed to affirm had never disintegrated; it had only been challenged by changing circumstances and events.

Perry Miller was the major figure of twentieth-century American scholarship concerned with the analysis of New England Puritans as a subject worthy of study. Miller's interpretation of the second-generation jeremiads created what revisionist scholar, Theodore Dwight Bozeman, has termed a "watershed in the scholarship." For decades, his successors have accepted and attempted to develop his characterization of New England's founding errand as a world mission. Sacvan Bercovitch is representative of the first generation of scholars to operate in Miller's wake. In To Live Ancient Lives, Bozeman addresses and reinterprets the treatment of Miller's analysis in an effort to challenge the developing tradition of American scholarship.

When we look at what others have made of [Miller's Errand]...it is a story of how a minimally developed proposal, without substantial additional research, has been hardened into fact and then inflated well out of proportion to the original statement. Of the many existing scholarly discussions of the reputed...errand, the great majority that cite sources rely exclusively upon the argument of Miller's 'Errand....' Miller's careful

Bozeman challenges the rapid acceptance of Miller's ideas. He argues that the rhetoric of biblical history does not represent, as Bercovitch maintains, the confirmation of a world-saving mission. He denies that the notion of such a mission existed among the Bay Colony's founders. Bozeman attempts to reinterpret the second generation's rhetoric in light of his analysis. He begins with a description of the early migrants and their errand.

Their state of mind corresponds to the Errand as defined in Miller's first sense; it is distinctly inhospitable to the crusading exemplarism usually associated with an Errand into the Wilderness. Least of all does it provide the originating instance of claims to an American national mission on behalf of the world. Such claims were to loom large in later history, but to find their progenitor in a Massachusetts City upon a Hill is to mistake the purpose of the 1630s.

According to Bozeman, the first colonists did not migrate to New England on an errand for Reformed Christianity, but rather to recover the original forms of primitive Christianity. They sought a refuge from England's political and economic conditions in which they could institute the proper observance of Christian ordinances. "Emigration meant freedom to come to terms with long-lost originals. The impulse was revival, directed to restoration and [the] fulfilling enjoyment of forms ordained in the primal age" of the faith. This reinterpretation of the New England errand is the central theme of Bozeman's analysis. He wants to demonstrate that migration "meant, not a world-redeeming mission, but the... a radical reformation of English Protestant Christianity by the measure of the first and true." The migrants were on a sort of "restorationist campaign," during which their main objective was to achieve a "secure recovery of origins." Bozeman reads the second-generation jeremiads and their creation of New England Puritanism's golden age in light of this interpretation. He views the sons' idealization of their fathers as a celebration of their predecessors' "retrieval of perfect things." The jeremiads testify to the fact that the founders got what they came for. "[The] sermons and tracts reveal an unabated passion for the biblically once-given and perfect and for the restitutive feats of the first generation." Bozeman argues that the purpose of this celebration was "covenantal maintenance." Faced with the "mentality of the newer generation and the 'strangely altered'
state of things in church and society," the second generation turned to the celebration of their predecessors. The earlier New England would be described in the sons’ orations as Protestantism’s finest hour—emphatically not by virtue of a millennial Errand, but because it so fully and exultantly had regained primitive pattern as to assume in its own right a primordial status. For the clergy of the second generation the undimmed prestige of the first had suggested a fresh tactic in covenantal maintenance. It worked, according to Bozeman, because “unlike Old Testament or apostolic times, New England’s first time as presented in the jeremiads was not disjoined absolutely from the present age.” The sermons describe “a state of affairs with which the clergy and their anticipated audiences could feel an immediate continuity.”

There was no clear chronological division, no great crisis, separating primitive from present time. In many ways the power of first days still was felt...for New England’s connection with its golden age was frayed, not broken. In this sense, the aim was to preserve and reinvigorate a continuity.

Bozeman maintains that New England’s connection to its first generation was “challenged by the slow emergence of a commercial and liberal civilization that assigned no honor to the fixed and simple.” Taking note of Miller’s emphasis upon the jeremiads’ overwhelming anxiety, Bozeman asserts that the “general relaxation of earlier standards, by worldliness, immorality, and contention[,]...weakened connections between primitivist outlook and social experience.” The lamentations of backsliding in the second-generation jeremiads recognize this growing disjunction between the founders’ accomplishments and their successors’ worldliness. In short, the second generation needed the idealized image of their fathers’ New England. Their continuity with the founding generation was challenged by the development of increasingly complicated colonial and international circumstances. With respect to his own analysis, Bozeman reconsiders Miller’s reading of the characteristic anxiety of the jeremiads.

Since the ministers did not understand their society’s originative task as a world-saving Errand, the extra dimension of grief Miller perceived in the jeremiads cannot have been a response to the loss of an English audience for the City upon a Hill... It is hard to imagine an apter illustration of what Miller called ‘a fall from a mighty designation’ than that shift of sentiment and practice through the mid-century years, perceived by the ministers as desertion of a true ‘beginning.”

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361 Ibid.
362 Ibid., p. 320.
363 Ibid., p. 318.
364 Ibid., p. 329.
365 Ibid.
366 Ibid., pp. 329-330.
367 Ibid., p. 336.
368 Ibid.
369 Ibid., pp. 335-336.
In the final analysis, Bozeman agrees with Miller’s interpretation of the rhetorical aim of the second-generation jeremiads. Stripped from its association with a Puritan world-mission, Bozeman finds the language to represent an effort at covenantal maintenance, or the preservation of the colony’s connection to its founders. “Thus, even more than he knew, Miller was right.” While the jeremiads “were not dominated by a future horizon[,]...[t]hey were preoccupied with loss and recovery, with remembrance and imitation. They revealed no conscious wish to accommodate change.” They portray a real grief at the colony’s loss of its perfect beginnings. Although Bozeman reinterprets the nature of the colony’s founding enterprise, he agrees with Miller’s analysis of its significance to the second generation Jeremiahs.

In his endorsement of Miller’s position concerning the aim of the second generation’s rhetoric, Bozeman challenges Sacvan Bercovitch’s reading of both his predecessor and the jeremiads themselves. Bercovitch argues that the second generation inherited its application of divine providence to New England from the colony’s founders. He asserts that the employment of this rhetoric in the later jeremiads is merely the fullest expression of an assertion of selfhood that had developed in the first generation. The second made use of the oratory, not to lament their declension, but rather to confirm their position. The language was a source of hope. While Bozeman and Bercovitch appear to share similar positions concerning the jeremiads’ rhetorical attempts to preserve continuity, Bozeman aligns himself with Miller’s reading of the endeavor. Bozeman’s main problem with Bercovitch’s analysis is his assumptions regarding the Puritan errand as a world mission and his contention that “the jeremiads attest to an unswerving faith in [this] errand.” He notes that Bercovitch’s “generalization” regarding the sermons’ optimism “does not hold for” some New England Jeremiahs. “Torrey, Stoughton, Eleazar Mather, Shepard, Jr., [and] Willard...accepted the finally conditional character of the covenant and stopped well short of a guarantee of ultimate mercy.” Bozeman also disagrees with Bercovitch’s emphasis upon the colony’s millennial role. Challenging his predecessors’ reading of Samuel Danforth’s _Errand Into the Wilderness_, Bozeman asserts:

I am unable to see how the text can bear these references [to an “errand...to bring history...to an end” and to a description of Massachusetts as “a herald sent to prepare the world for the millennium”]. They rest upon a much-exaggerated estimate both of the millennial component and of “figural progression” as a key to Puritan thought.... All of this takes us far afield from Danforth’s clear and frequently stated conception of the Errand.

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370 Ibid., p. 342.
371 Ibid.
372 Ibid., p. 333.
373 Ibid., p. 337, n 47.
374 Ibid.
375 Ibid., p. 338, n 50.
In addition to questioning Bercovitch’s reading of the jeremiads and his exaggeration of their content, Bozeman also disregards his connection of the second generation’s rhetoric to their fathers’ hermeneutic tradition. The image was not a heightened expression of first generation oratory. It was plainly the creation of second-generation ministers. “[I]n the years to come, and openly after 1660, New Englanders dissatisfied with the present state of church and society would create an image of earliest New England radiant with qualities of the primitive.” While Bozeman shares Bercovitch’s recognition that the “second-generation [ministers] had little conceptually or structurally new to offer” the jeremiad, he disagrees with his predecessor concerning the importance of what the ministers did contribute to the form. The creation of the notion of “golden state of New England” is, according to Bozeman, “the one feature appearing after 1660 that is without counterpart in the Puritan past and that represents a genuine and striking innovation.” The formation of the image was “an event in postprimordial time!” It “was an act of true beginning. This development was of some magnitude in Puritan history.” Bozeman’s emphasis upon the idealization of New England’s founders as a creation of their successors directly contrasts Bercovitch’s situation of the image in the progression of the colony’s rhetoric. While Bozeman does not articulate this contrast himself, it proves absolutely essential to the analysis at hand. There is a middle way between the two.

In his discussion concerning the recent trends of American scholarship, David D. Hall emphasizes the importance of recognizing “a larger truth” concerning New England’s founding faith. “Puritanism[,] religion…practiced[,]…is always and everywhere caught up in negotiations.” The idealization of New England’s first generation by its second is undoubtedly one such negotiation. Bozeman’s emphasis upon the notion as an innovation of the second generation is relatively descriptive of its development in the jeremiads of the 1660s and 70s. Although the image was not the capstone of a long rhetorical tradition, as Bercovitch maintains, it also wasn’t an arbitrary creation. The second generation of New England Puritans required the image they created. Bozeman, Bercovitch, and Miller agree that the image functioned primarily to maintain continuity between the colony’s second generation and its first. Bozeman and Bercovitch recognize the importance of local and global conditions in the creation of the image. The middle way sought in this analysis is one in which the basis of the current discussion is

376 Ibid., p. 306.
377 Ibid., p. 309.
378 Ibid., p. 310.
379 Ibid., p. 319.
380 Ibid., pp. 319-320.
shifted. Nearly every historian who has sought to define the significance of the image's creation has attempted to situate its emergence in a larger analysis of the original Puritan errand. While the founding of New England is indeed important to the discussion, it does not warrant such centrality. Of greater importance are the colonial and global conditions of the second half of the seventeenth century. Those who created the idea of New England's "golden age" did so for a reason. They did not begin with a desire to describe their fathers' original purpose. But rather, that purpose was employed to the larger end of explaining the insecurity of the period. The second generation had to define the errand of the first in order to lament their declension from it as a means of explaining catastrophe to themselves. Here, Bercovitch's analysis of the hopeful side of the image comes into play. The authors of the image needed to explain local disaster and the changing landscape of English politics. This they did through the connection of secular events to the imminence of God's wrath. Their insecurity was the result of their declension. The model of the colony's fathers was not only a description of New England's former glory, but also a source of hope. For in idealizing their predecessors, the second generation liberated themselves from having to create the reality of a unified community. Yes, they had declined; but they did not have to start their recovery from scratch. The model already existed and, as Bozeman notes, it was one to which the audience was still connected. All that was required was a return to the practice of their fathers. The second generation's effort to maintain their connection with the first was an exercise in creating continuity. They celebrated their fathers for who they were, for their reasons for migrating, and for their colonial accomplishments. This celebration produced the desired continuity, even if only rhetorically. The descriptions of the sons are fairly accurate. In some cases, they are almost identical to first generation accounts. The innovation is in the exaggeration of the Bay Colony's original unity. It is the emphasis upon this quality that transforms the second generation accounts into blatant idealizations. These celebrations resulted in the creation of the myth of New England's golden age. The identification of the image's root in the exaggeration of original unity necessitates the shift in the current discussion. To emphasize the Puritan errand as the overriding concern, is, in effect, to buy the image. One must consider the idealization of New England's first generation in light of the historical circumstances in which it was created. Then and only then will the image be properly understood.
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Studies


