THE SPIRITUAL INTEGRITY OF PURITAN COMMUNITY: YOUTHS, MORAL CHALLENGE, AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE

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By

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Introduction

> For My Dear Son Simon Bradstreet:
> "Parents perpetuate their lives in their posterity and their manners; in their imitation children do naturally rather follow the failings than the virtues of their predecessors, but I am persuaded better things of you. You once desired me to leave something for you in writing that you might look upon, when you should see me no more…"
> - Anne Bradstreet (March 20, 1664)[1]

Anne Bradstreet was among the first group of Puritan settlers who sailed from the Old World to New England on the *Arbella* in 1630. One can only imagine the physical hardships of the arduous voyage that lasted the course of three months, as well as the emotions of these premier settlers who were confronted with the prospect of beginning a new life thousands of miles away from their home country. Surely, the imminence of death occupied their thoughts and likely contributed a sense of urgency to the establishment of Christendom on their corner of North America. On the eve of their arrival, John Winthrop delivered his landmark sermon titled "A Model of Christian Charity," in which he outlined the covenantal terms of the Puritans' sojourn in New England. Within two years of living in New England, however, Anne suffered "a fit of sickness" that nearly took her life. This brush with death likely propelled Anne, at scarcely twenty years old, towards a lifelong habit of safeguarding her soul from the vanity of worldly things, a concern prevalent across much other Puritan writing. Although frequent illness did mark the lives of the majority of New England Puritans, the toilsome conditions of their environment did not deter them from living in what they believed to be God's grace. Upon her recovery, Anne reflected, "O whilst I live this grace me give, / I doing good may be."[2] The divine grace in Anne's life was evident in her subsequent roles as a mother and celebrated writer. These Puritan roles allowed her to embrace the responsibility of aiding her fellow

[1] Anne Bradstreet, *The Works of Anne Bradstreet* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 295.
[2] Bradstreet, *Works*, 241.

settlers in constructing a distinctly New England theology and ensure its continuation in their posterity.

The relationship between New England Puritans and their children is foreign to the household dynamics of the contemporary secular world. The Puritans are situated in a unique position in the history of religion because their dedication to ecclesiastical hierarchy enabled them to retain a largely distinctive understanding of the scriptures and they deployed this perspective in all facets of their lives. Since Puritans understood that "[e]very family ought to be as it were a little church, consecrated to Christ, and wholly influenced and governed by his rules," family education and order had to be the sole means of grace by which the Christian religion continued from generation to generation.[3] Accordingly, a historian can only study the history of religion for this very reason: that religion is perpetuated among the offspring of a given community. This thesis aims to discuss how the Puritans' dedication to instilling virtue, piety, and purity in their young people testified to their communal conviction that the ecclesiastical familial structure bears the foremost responsibility for the religious integrity of future generations.

This thesis revolves around three central questions: 1) Why was the chronicling of spiritual lives important for the integrity of Puritan society?; 2) How did the early New England Protestants understand their place in redemptive history on American soil?; and 3) How do we better understand the importance of spiritual integrity for Jonathan Edwards and his contemporaries' perspectives on the household and childrearing? The first section is grounded in interpreting the salvific purpose of Puritan print culture—specifically the influence of the Reformation on shaping the ways in which families documented their lives for the religion of their posterity. The second section seeks to answer the second and third questions by discussing the theological convictions of the first generation Puritans. It also examines the ways in which

[3] WJE 25:484.

covenant theology was perceived by later generations in their understanding of ecclesiastical community leadership.

In accordance with the epigraph above, in which Simon Bradstreet expressed his desire for his mother to leave something for him in writing beyond her death, Puritan print culture emphasized the spiritual life of a person from a former generation. In Puritan personal narratives, whose literary structures were framed by patriarchal values, authors recounted either their own spiritual lives or others'. Often explicitly didactic, spiritual narratives addressed the Puritan youth and sought to help them establish a sound moral framework, in turn shaping their consciences. The authors' purpose in targeting the conscience of the youths is important to note because for the Puritans, the degree to which the youth adopted their parents' moral values determined whether the moral integrity of the community at hand would continue into the succeeding generation. In the first section, I will argue that the emphasis on virtue in spiritual narratives contributed to the reproduction of Puritan values across generations. Because spiritual narratives addressed the youths, whom the Puritans understood as the succeeding generation, the frame of human nature expressed in these narratives and their deployment in childrearing encouraged the youths' minds and souls to adhere to the community's fundamental values. Here, Jonathan Edwards' personal narrative and Samuel Hopkins' firsthand accounts of Edwards' life and conduct are expounded as the principal stream of Puritan thought. I will discuss how Edwards' authority as a father and prominent pastor accounted for the widespread reception of Puritan virtue among households. I will then also use these sources to explain which values the contemporary generation considered necessary for the ideological makeup of their successors.

Clearly, Puritan print culture represented the foundations of the community's moral fortitude; however, later generations of Puritans—specifically those of Jonathan Edwards' generation in the early to mid-eighteenth century—faced shifting popular culture that reflected

different universalist and progressivist values. As the New World strayed—at least in New England—increasingly far from its Reformation roots, Massachusetts and the other colonies eventually became their own distinctive nation. The second section in this thesis will discuss the young folks' Bible case as a case study in which Edwards confronted secularism in his own community, in order to make a statement regarding the implications of Winthrop's vision of Puritan communal charity for human history. Turning towards Winthrop's famous assertion of New England as a "city on a hill" and his declaration of its responsibility to retain reverence among all nations, I will discuss Edwards' vision of morality and compare it to that of the later generations.

This thesis is indebted to those who have taught me to examine history from the individual voices and personal sentiments of those who lived extraordinary private lives in the midst of not-so-glamorous times. In particular, my primary advisor, Dr. Carol Neel, was forefront in transforming my understanding of cultural history. Throughout numerous courses and hours of conversation outside the classroom, Carol has modeled the academic and personal value of studying family history, explained to me the peculiarities of the Reformation, and challenged me to consider the perspective of the child. This thesis would not exist without her willingness to speak to me at a moment's notice on any theological or historical topic, as well as her scholarly direction toward many formational historiographical and primary sources. Truly, her insights into salvific history, the shape of time, and the human conscience will surpass the duration of writing this thesis and remain with me for a lifetime. Moreover, Carol's careful and meticulous editing over the course of too many drafts to count has solidified the phrasing, organization, and argumentation of this thesis.

Multiple others have contributed invaluably to this project, as well. Writing Center Specialist Roy Jo Sartin provided much structural feedback in polishing the presentation of the

central argument in the first part of this thesis and consolidating it into a coherent writing sample. Additionally, over the course of hundreds of texts, my friend and writing buddy Tianyi Bai was patient enough to check many paragraphs and discuss prepositions, clauses, and word choice. The students in the HY410-420 senior seminar sequence supported drafts of this thesis by engaging in thoughtful criticism and discourse about the applications of Puritan ideologies in contemporary America. My second advisor, Dr. John Riker, challenged me to consider psychoanalytic perspectives on Puritans. It was his class, PH360 Psychoanalysis and Philosophy, that first kindled my interest in the human mind and the ways in which personal relationships define a person's unique, intellectual understanding of his or her own time and place. John is a true scholar and his empathetic relationship to both his work and students testifies that academic scholarship is an extension of the human heart.

Among the greatest of indirect scholarly influencers to the development this project is historian George Marsden, whom I have not met. If I had not stumbled upon his biography of Jonathan Edwards in December 2019 for winter break reading, I would not have fallen in love with the Puritans, nor have realized that faith, evangelism, beautiful writing, storytelling, and even deep, personal convictions can converge in academia. Additionally, the pioneering work of the late Steven Ozment on family microhistory and sympathetic posture towards the past has caused me to realize that the most satisfying aspect of studying history is learning from the wisdom of the people of the past. Lastly, the editors and transcribers of The Works of Jonathan Edwards Online at Yale University, who have made the writings of Jonathan Edwards readily accessible to novice researchers, such as myself, have profoundly aided in the process of researching primary sources for this thesis.

Section 1

The integrity of the Puritan community that spanned from the middle of the early seventeenth century to the late eighteenth century was historically exceptional. Puritans were able to retain and reproduce a distinctive, robust moral worldview across several generations—an anomaly in comparison with their contemporary counterparts in post-Reformation Europe. In a world grappling with competing notions of objective truth, models of reality, theories of monarchical and state rule, and theological interpretations of Scripture, the Puritans held fast to Continental, Reformed Calvinism. They allowed this singular understanding of God, time, and human existence to dictate their means of living as a community. In order to accurately study them, the modern interpreter must place the Puritans in their particular time and place. Although this is true for any historical group, the recent resurgence of interest in the Puritans mistakenly interprets them as distinctly American, which in turn, may ascribe contemporary values onto a community whose ideologies were, in fact, far from today's. According to historian George Marsden, interpreting the Puritans as British citizens fresh out of the Anglican reform movement will allow the contemporary historian to consider how their community was dually shaped by the patriarchal theologies of the continental Reformation and their application of it to establishing their own unique community in a new world.[4] Therefore, from its founding until the death of Jonathan Edwards, Puritan society was significantly more British than Revolutionary American.[5]

As a community founded on the Reformed tradition, Puritans understood the household as a microcosm of society.[6] The hierarchical organization of Puritans' world, which consisted of both the church and household, was structured by the "rule of fathers." In accordance with

[4] George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 2.
[5] Marsden, *A Life*, 2-3.
[6] Marsden, *A Life*, 3.

Calvinist theology that permeated the British society from which the Puritans originated, they saw the church as the totality of society, a conviction that they were vigilant in deploying.[7] The headship of the pastor and father, respectively, mirrored one another in both authority and responsibility for shaping the moral conscience of the next generation, that is the youths. In turn, the moral virtue with which Puritan children were brought up made its way into church teaching so that the instruction in the church was like that of childrearing. In this section, I will be using Jonathan Edwards' writings as the principal stream of Puritan thought. I will discuss how his authority as a father and prominent pastor accounted for the widespread reception of his writings for childrearing methodologies among Puritan households to explain which virtues the contemporary generation considered necessary for the ideological makeup of their successors.

Why was it possible that an entire group of people were able to retain ideological continuity across multiple generations? I believe that the Puritans' adherence to maintaining ideological continuity across generations was possible for two reasons: 1) that the Puritans recognized the inherent human inclination towards stories and utilized the narration of past human lives to establish their moral worldview in the conscience of the youth, the succeeding generation, and 2) that the Puritans were fundamentally patriarchal, deploying the longstanding Christian understanding of the church as the family of God reflected in the paternal headship of the household and the church. The Puritan understanding of the connection between household and church headship rooted their sense of human development. Fundamentally, the Puritans held that no human person came into being in a cultural and social vacuum. They believed that knowing one's ancestral moral roots underlay the understanding of an individual's existence in the time and place at hand. Therefore, steeping a youth's intellectual development in the study of past intellectual and spiritual lives not only would frame the youths'

[7] Marsden, *A Life*, 3.

understanding of being but would also establish his or her comprehension of an epistemology supported by multiple generations' worth of tried and reliable experience of objective truth. Additionally, patriarchy was understood to be a moral virtue for the Puritans because the father was accountable to God for the conscience of the youth. Targeting the youth was especially important because they comprised of the totality of the succeeding generation. Correspondingly, the ways in which a mother and father instilled virtue and truth into their children mirrored the ways in which a pastor instructed and attended to his flock. For this reason, the Puritans likened the hierarchy of the home to the hierarchy of the church.

All in all, the reasons accounting for the remarkable integrity of Puritan community and moral continuity across multiple generations was undergirded by the parents' commitment to raising their children with an understanding of familial and ecclesiastical composition that brought their ancestors' moral history to the foreground of the contemporary intellectual landscape through the prevalence of spiritual biography in the print culture.

Spiritual Biography and the Construction of Communal Virtue

According to early American author James Everett Seaver, who wrote down the story of Mary Jemison, a Puritan girl captured by Natives, the study of past human lives maintains community integrity. Seaver argued for the necessity of learning from "the variegated pages of the history of human events" because biographical writing provided clear insight into human nature. [8] When it was studied communally, a spiritual biography had the potential to shape the community's understanding of "the extremes and excesses of the varied properties of the human heart."[9]

[8]James E. Seaver, "A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison," in *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives,* ed. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 122.
[9] Seaver, *Captivity Narratives*, 122.

Writing in 1824, Seaver explicates that the study of past lives reveals paradigmatic examples of moral objective. He states that by "trac[ing] the effects of mental operations to their proper sources; and by comparing our own composition with that of those who have excelled in virtue… we are enabled to select a plan of life that will… guide us through the world in paths of morality."[10] The careful assessment of past human lives "[is] profitable, for 'by others' faults wise men correct their own.'"[11] The story of his subject is a telling exemplar. His subject's narrative is a piece of oral history; Mary Jemison dictated her captivity narrative to Seaver. Seaver then retold it, ostensibly verbatim. He remarks that within Jemison's rich, descriptive language about her ordeals, he has purposely organized her narration to construct strict boundaries between "virtue and vice" and "chastity of expression and sentiment" for his reader to observe.[12] Seaver's biography offered its readers a means of evaluating the consequences and repercussions of a specific moral virtue over the course of a lifetime, subsequently allowing readers to build the foundation of their respective moral frameworks upon the examples of other persons' life experiences.

Seaver articulates in his preface that choosing Jemison's life was a strategic choice for fortifying the moral framework of his adolescent audience and maintaining ideological continuity across generations. As he asserts, Jemison demonstrated a remarkable and steadfast commitment to virtue in the face of physical and spiritual hardship. Seaver is clear that a virtuous life, such as Jemison's, will never be in vain. It was important for Seaver to analyze and assess the long-term effects of her life through firsthand encounters of those whom Jemison had influenced. Jemison was an elderly woman at the time of his writing, over seventy years of age; her moral influence and virtue spanned several decades and generations of individuals. He notes the way in which those who encountered Jemison's compassion "commemorate her

[10] Seaver, *Captivity Narratives*, 122.
[11] Seaver, *Captivity Narratives*, 122-123.
[12] Seaver, *Captivity Narratives*, 123.

benevolence towards them" and her goodwill attracted "a rich and respectable people" who contributed to building a settlement of "habits of industry and honesty."[13] He underscores the effects of her hospitality, friendship, and tenacity upon her entire community. Seaver's remarks on Jemison's character are interspersed with his own commentary regarding her speaking style, physical appearance, and emotional reactions to her ordeal—elements, in Seaver's judgment, important for his readers to take away from Jemison's life. Overall, not only was Jemison's virtue laudable in its integrity, but her virtue directly influenced the construction of an entire community that prided itself on its close mirroring of her character and lifestyle.

Most importantly, the genre of virtuous biographical literature, as demonstrated in Seaver's account of Jemison's experience, was addressed to children. Seaver asserts that his work would be "sought and read with avidity, especially by children, and [be] well calculated to excite their attention, and inform their understanding."[14] The foundation of an adult's worldview would be shaped by whatever ideologies had most captured his or her childhood interests. According, he and other Puritans held that the intellect of children was highly malleable. Seaver knew that his work must achieve a delicate balance between captivating his audience's interest in order to impress in their minds an unmistakable distinction between virtue and vice. He then defines this distinction of virtue by describing the breadth of Jemison's hospitality to the Natives, with whom she was culturally unfamiliar, and the Natives' subsequent commendation of her "happiest tempers and dispositions, and give her the name of never having done a censurable act to their knowledge."[15] Evidently for Seaver, virtue is both demonstrable and supported by the praises of those who observe it. A virtuous life is meant to be retold in order teach the youth how to live and thus, once again, reinforcing the necessity of exposing children to didactic biography. The example of Jemison's immediate influence upon

[13] Seaver, *Captivity Narratives*, 126.
[14] Seaver, *Captivity Narratives*, 123.
[15] Seaver, *Captivity Narratives*, 129.

the young people by whom she was surrounded is the foundation of community integrity. Thus, it is important for those who have already experienced much of life, like Jemison, to readily impart their wisdom onto the succeeding generation.

The Reformation's Emphasis on Personal Moral Responsibility

In order to properly place the Puritans in their ideological time and place, it is important to consider the historical relevance of the Puritans' practice in preserving the spiritual lives of one's ancestors in writing, such as Seaver's captivity narrative about Jemsion. Why was reading spiritual biography important for shaping the moral conscience of one's contemporaries? Seaver's work reflects the influence of Reformation thought upon the Puritans' deployment of biography as an instrument of teaching morality. In accordance with the Reformers' emphasis on Christian origins, knowing one's ancestral moral history was so crucial in maintaining a stable communal identity across time that the Puritan contemporary readership considered community identity integral to individual identity. In particular, Martin Luther's theology of worship, which he developed in contradiction to the Catholic performance- and works-based vision of righteousness, undergirds much of the essence of Puritan literary production.

In large part, the early modern society from which Luther wrote was performance-based, meaning that it valued the doing of an action above the motivation behind the action; religious devotion was akin to social spectacle. Most tellingly, the value of doing was reflected in the saints' performance of worship. Principally, Luther sought to erase forms of performative—he believed hypocritical—worship from the Christian life, including the "chastise[ment] [of] bodies, torment[ing] and mak[ing] [oneself] faint, ostentatious fasting, or scourging [oneself]."[16] Luther explained that true Christian worship consisted dually of an "outward and

[16] Martin Luther, "*Table Talk of Martin Luther*," trans. William Hazlitt (Orlando: Bridge-Logos, 2004), 407.

inward" devotion, and that the Christian "acknowledge[d] God's benefits and [was] thankful unto him."[17] The thankfulness that Luther mentions here originated with a Christian's ability to perceive the holiness "of the treasure of grace presented unto them[:] Christ and all His precious gifts, faith, the sacraments, [and] His Word" in the boundaries of one's own heart.[18] The wellspring of the Christian life was from the heart, so a Christian was compelled to take ownership of his or her own morality through carefully learning and understanding the ways of his or her heart. Luther's emphasis on the effects of a transformed heart upon a Christian's behavior enabled a shift among Reformed Protestants in their understanding of personal development. Luther's and his theological successors' understanding of the Christian heart came to underlie much of Puritan anthropology. The Puritans believed that a person developed in parallel with the integrity of the community at hand. Accordingly, the construction of a community began at the level of the individual by teaching one to take personal moral responsibility in salvation.

British Puritan John Bunyan's Influence on Their Subsequent Understanding of Conversion

Furthermore, British Puritan John Bunyan's sketch of the human heart and philosophy of Christian conversion testifies to the Puritans' ideological continuities with their European counterparts. Bunyan's theologies are likewise adopted by, and prevalent in, the Puritans' general understanding of personal development and salvation.

For Bunyan, the key aspect of salvation is a shift in the Christian's understanding of law, expressed simultaneously in the heart and conscience. Echoing Luther's theology, Bunyan explains that preceding the moment of conversion, people tend to orient their lives around a self-proclaimed standard of righteousness: they become a law unto themselves. However, this

[17] Luther, *Table Talk*, 410.
[18] Luther, *Table Talk*, 407.

self-righteousness is unattainable due to the condition of the fallen and unconverted heart. It cannot perceive the good of Christ's Law, which, for both Luther and Bunyan, means the entirety of the Mosaic law and Jesus' subsequent fulfillment of it. In accordance with Luther's theology, Bunyan explicates that because Christ's law is written on people's hearts, it is inevitable for those who are seeking righteousness to realize that their inability to conform to it is "heart-affrighting," and that they "could not bear, not so much as the remembrance of [their inability], upon [their] heart[s]."[19] That is, the guilt of failing to attain perfection weighs on a person's conscience. This godly grief compels one to seek righteousness beyond human abilities in the cross of Christ, or in other words, substitutionary atonement. This notion of seeking to find the One who can live a perfect life in the place of a fallen human being is reflected in the structure of Puritan conversion narratives.

Conversion narratives served to institute the landscape of Puritan intellectualism by explaining personal spiritual progress in temporal life and underscoring the role of individual responsibility in faith. Bunyan's description of the development of the human heart adopted the allegorical form of pilgrimage. This allegory resonates in the way in which the Puritans understood their earthly existence, evident in the writings of several notable figures such as Anne Bradstreet and David Brainerd, who often referred to their lives as a "pilgrimage" or to themselves as "pilgrims." Moreover, Bunyan's close study and insights on purity, suffering, piety, and virtue are reflected in the foundations of the Puritans' understanding of personal development and reappear often in their conversion narratives. His theology highlights several key moments in one's spiritual pilgrimage, the most important being the point at which the person converts to faith. Secondary to this, however, was the person's steadfast commitment to faith in the midst of hardship, defined as temptations of all kinds. Focusing upon the

[19]John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (South Crescent, London: Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, 1996), 111.

authenticity of one person's faith is important because it would then become the driving force of shaping the community's identity. Thus, in accordance with Luther's theology, the process of personal development that Bunyan proposed underscores the notion that it began in the heart and was primarily internal.

Bunyan's close analysis of the justification and sanctification process framed the way in which the Puritans understood the living of the Christian life both in the world and in eternity. Most notably, his allegory of the Christian heart in *The Pilgrim's Progress* reflects the scheme of Puritan spiritual narratives. It also explicates their purpose as both didactic and metaphysical for fortifying the moral integrity of his society. Like Luther, Bunyan emphasizes a faith-based understanding of biblical theology and condemned a works-based religion. Although *The Pilgrim's Progress* closely mirrors the journey literature that was popular among the print culture of his time, Bunyan's book is distinct because instead of chronicling a journey that culminates at death, Bunyan leaves the ending of his book open to interpretation. The Christian's pilgrimage does not end at the destination of the Celestial City but in fact, at the beginning of eternity. In the same way, Bunyan understood that the Christian life was two-fold. As pilgrims, Christians were not at home in the world and were hence, sojourners. The Christian life on earth was a pilgrimage and a spiritual progress towards eternity. However, because the Christian life was a progress, whatever vigilance a Christian took for guarding the purity of his heart during pilgrimage had repercussions for eternity.

To reconnect with Luther's theology, both Bunyan's allegory and Puritan conversion narratives stress the inadequacy of a works-based understanding of the Christian faith. One parallelism across these types of works is the condemnation of legalism, meaning that a works-based understanding of Christianity is inadequate for sanctification because religious works are

a burden to one's conscience.[20] Professing Christians who are pursuing sanctification on a basis of works are striving to achieve an unrealistic, and often times, false expectation of faith. In other words, actively rejecting the notion that religion needs to be performed and appraised by others is a matter of consciously realizing that genuine faith goes beyond mere outward action. Regarding the conscience, Bunyan states that "it taketh justification from the personal righteousness of Christ, and applies it to thy own. This faith maketh not Christ a justifier of thy person, but of thy actions; and of thy person for thy actions' sake, which is false. Therefore, this faith is deceitful, even such as will leave thee under wrath… for true justifying faith puts the soul flying for refuge to Christ's righteousness."[21]

At this point in which the person "flies for refuge" to the righteous cross of Christ, Bunyan reconciles the heart to the conscience. Since the act of obeying a law is an implicit value-judgment on a certain paradigm of good, the newfound understanding of Jesus' perfect fulfilment of the law reconciles the guilt in a person's conscience to the freedom perceived in the heart of no longer being forced to adhere to his or her own unattainable law.[22] Jesus' perfect fulfilment for the sake of all fallen humanity is enough to make the converted Christian "love a holy life, and long to do something for the honor and glory of the name of the Lord Jesus."[23] Similarly, in Puritan conversion narratives, the point of conversion reorients the converted Christian to suddenly value personal and divine holiness. Bunyan held that the human conscience is capable of knowing and identifying sin, thus hating it. His framework for conversion clearly emphasizes that such an awakening to "Christ [being] the justifier of thy person,"[24] calls for people to take responsibility for identifying the conviction of sin in their conscience.

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[20] Martin Luther, *Martin Luther's Preface to the Epistle of Romans*, trans. Lutheran Publishing House (Coromandel East, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1966), 4.
[21] Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 119.
[22] Luther, *Preface to Romans*, 2.
[23] Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 116.
[24] Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 119.

Overall, Bunyan's conviction regarding the process of Christian conversion is reflected in the ways in which the Puritans understood personal development in parallel with conversion to faith. As Bunyan elucidated, the process of conversion occurred predominantly in the heart and began with the attainment of moral consciousness at a young age. It then followed a very precise theological model that interpreted the effect of salvation upon one's life: 1) the period of adhering to one's own law; 2) profound grief in the conscience upon the realization that one is incapable of perfect obedience; 3) the realization that one's own attempts at righteousness are insufficient for salvation followed by a period of seeking a perfect substitution in one's place; and finally, 4) the point of conversion—a reoriented heart and conscience that loves both the law and Jesus' fulfilment of it in the place of humanity.[25] This understanding compelled the Puritans to use spiritual narrative in their childrearing methodologies in order to teach children moral virtue.

The Role of Allegory and Didacticism in Spiritual Narratives in Puritan Household Dynamics

Not only did Puritan conversion narratives closely follow Bunyan's framework of the Christian life—they were also intended to maintain the integrity of Puritan households, as it is evident in the way in which these accounts were expressly addressed to children. One such example is Anne Bradstreet's, written three years before her death in 1672, and addressed as a letter to her children. Her letter closely reflects the theology of personal development and conversion articulated by Bunyan. Bradstreet pens her narrative beginning with a cluster of premises which subsequently shape the understanding of reality that she intends to impart onto her children. Her set of objective truths included the notions that God was the only true God and that his word was infallible.[26] On a wider scale, however, Bradstreet's letter epitomizes

[25] Interpreted from my reading of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.
[26] Anne Bradstreet, *The Works of Anne Bradstreet* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 265.

how the Puritans' perceived youths as those who were responsible for carrying virtue onto the next generation. The condition of their moral conscience as adolescents would determine the future integrity of Puritan society.

Bradstreet's role as a mother cast her as a guardian of virtue within her household and of the wider Puritan society.[27] Puritan mothers, such as Bradstreet, believed that motherhood was the foremost spiritual responsibility of their lives. Through childrearing, mothers shaped the consciences of their children by integrating virtue and faith in their instruction with the understanding that fortifying their children's consciences would secure the moral integrity of the next generation. The way in which mothers instructed their children in virtue, however, was by means of spiritual narrative. In particular, Bradstreet states that the methodology for her written counsel is recounting her conversion narrative beginning with her own childhood.[28] From the beginning of her letter, Bradstreet is clear that the motivation for writing, is affection for her children. She charges, "Make use of what I leave in love"[29] and intermingles her professed love with the intention to impart upon her children "some spiritual advantage."[30] In a pattern that seemingly follows Bunyan's model for spiritual narrative, Bradstreet begins with the moment at which she became aware of her conscience.[31] Bradstreet does not specify a time when she was *taught* conscience; on the contrary, she expresses that conscience is innate. She emphasizes that the ability to discern between right and wrong commences at a very young age—sometime between six and seven years of age.[32] This notion definitively echoes the Reformation theology of the law as written on human conscience. In her account, Bradstreet presents examples of her earliest memories of sinning, which include lying and disobedience.[33]

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[27]Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England 1650-1750* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 5.
[28] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 263.
[29] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 262.
[30] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 263.
[31] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 263.
[32] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 263.
[33] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 263.

She recounts experiencing godly guilt following her wrongdoing; efforts to reconcile her conscience by confessing her sin; and a period of ardently searching the Scriptures for atonement.[34]

For Bradstreet and among other mothers, this notion of imparting virtue onto the next generation was especially important because the Puritans considered false ideologies, that is, any worldview that countered Scripture, as the most pressing threat to the integrity of communal virtue. From her youth, Bradstreet states that she had prepared her mind to encounter any ideological attack by committing herself to believing in certain objective truths.[35] She emphasizes to her children the importance of retaining these truths throughout the course of one's life and presents a method for dismantling false ideologies through her own spiritual experience.[36] Therefore, as the succeeding generation, children must especially be well-armed against false ideologies. Accordingly, the central advice that Bradstreet imparts to her children is to be intellectually trained to discern the authentic ideologies from the inauthentic.

She references a variety of ways by which her children could lose their Puritan virtues of truth, including being influenced by the rampant atheist and Catholic ideologies of the early modern period.[37] In turn, such influences would lead them to doubt the veracity of the Scriptures and hence, the next generation would lose Puritan virtue. Although atheism and Catholicism permeated much of the early modern world and were not new warnings to the Puritan youths, what is significant about Bradstreet's advice is the means by which she counsels her children to combat such ideological threats. Bradstreet instructs her children to essentially doubt their doubts and presents a framework for reasoning through external ideological attacks. She emphasizes commitment to absolute truth and knowing how to articulate why something

[34] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 266-267.
[35] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 265.
[36] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 264-265.
[37] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 265.

is true by means of natural philosophy.[38] Bradstreet argues for God's existence from nature and appeals to reason, stating, "My reason would soon tell me by the wondrous works that I see, the vast frame of the heaven and the earth, the order of all things, night and day, summer and winter, [and] the preserving and directing of all to its proper end. The consideration of these things would with amazement certainly resolve me that there is an Eternal Being."[39] As she grew up and encountered ideologies that seemed to threaten her worldview, she ensured that she knew how to reason through them and prove their irrationality by establishing a systematic technique for explaining the basis on which her objective truths rested: God's existence.[40] Thus, Bradstreet's tried and true examples of combating her own doubt in her spiritual narrative would serve to fortify the intellectual faith of her children and the moral virtue of her household.

Bradstreet's counsel that was intermingled with accounts of her physical ailments demonstrates the way in which Puritan mothers taught their children to frame their understanding of human life through biblical ideologies. When Bradstreet penned her letter, she was suffering from illness, which was not new to her.[41] In fact, chronic illnesses afflicted her throughout her life and her ailments are a frequent theme in her writings. It is important to note, however, that these references to her physical health are the only non-spiritual components in Bradstreet's narrative, suggesting that tangible events or experiences are secondary to a person's pilgrimage on earth. She is rarely explicit about the specific circumstances or events surrounding her physical state. Rather, Bradstreet recounts her ailment sin terms of its effects upon her cognitive understanding of God and utilizes them didactically to teach her children how to contemplate eternity in the midst of temporal life. She states, "[My sickness] hath been no small support to me in times of darkness… that yet I have had abundance of sweetness and refreshment after affliction and more circumspection in my walking (of the

[38] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 265.
[39] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 265-266.
[40] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 265-266.
[41] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 264.

Christian life) after I have been afflicted."[42] Although Bradstreet mentions that she "[has] not found constant joy in [her] pilgrimage," it is clear that the spiritual effects of her illnesses have taught her to look beyond her life on earth. That is, she looks toward to the resurrection, in which she will be able to perceive the full "light of [the Lord's] countenance" and the "manifestation of [His] love."[43] Underscoring Bradstreet's strategic deployment of her ailments is the lesson that all earthly matters have a spiritual component. Nothing on earth is experienced in vain; rather, a child must be prepared to approach all experiences in his or her life with the awareness that temporal life segues into eternity.

Bradstreet's simultaneous warning and instruction to her children demonstrates an important means by which Puritans understood the connection between logical reasoning and personal development. Because the conscience, heart, and mind are intrinsically linked—per Bunyan's framework for the Christian life—the vigilance that children must exercise in maintaining virtue when false ideologies prevail is a critical learned skill toward personal development. Puritan parents helped their children establish a worldview based upon a foundation of what they took to be objective truths and taught them to articulate why the biblical worldview imparted to them was reasonable.

The Significance of the Youth as the Intended Audience of Conversion Narratives

In many respects, the ideologies and paradigms which Bradstreet expresses are a microcosm of the ways in which the Puritans understood communal integrity. In the same way that Bradstreet's identity as a mother predicated that she was the keeper of her household's virtue,[44] Pastor Jonathan Edwards' headship over the Northampton church body likewise rendered him the keeper of virtue for his congregation, much like a father. Because he was a

[42] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 264-265.
[43] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 265.
[44] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 9, 14.

prominent preacher and writer, it is reasonable to say that Edwards' understanding of the human person fully encapsulates and explicates the Puritan worldview. Edwards' own conversion narrative that was published by Samuel Hopkins and intended to be read by the Northampton youth had a purpose much like that of Bradstreet's: to fortify the moral virtue of his congregational children. Hopkins deployed Edwards' narrative as an example of ascertaining between youthfulness and maturity by observing the empirical effect that conversion had upon the thoughts of the mind and the desires of the heart. Discerning youthfulness from maturity was important to Hopkins' audience because communal virtuous integrity was only possible when the community had progressed beyond adolescent simplicity. Broadly speaking, his account of Edwards' spiritual transit enunciates how the Puritans reconciled individual temporal life on earth with the imminent reality of eternity.

Written seven years after Edwards' death in 1758, Hopkins' biography of Edwards takes Edwards' life as a paradigmatic example for Puritan youth to emulate. Hopkins is clear to point out that his biography is not merely a commemoration of Edwards' life; it is a didactic instrument for instructing Protestant youth in true religion. Knowing that his readers might consider his biography of Edwards more like a eulogy than biography, Hopkins clarifies that a close study of Edwards' life was necessary in order to retain the integrity of the Congregational church beyond Edwards' death and the moral continuity across subsequent Protestant generations. Studying Edwards' ideologies was "an [act] of kindness to the living" and "designed for the reader's good."[45] Familiarizing oneself with both Edwards' "life and practice" and "[h]is pure and undefiled religion in distinction from all counterfeits, [would] exhibit a

[45] Samuel Hopkins, *The Life and Character of the Late Reverend, Learned, and Pious Mr. Jonathan Edwards, President of the College of New-Jersey Together with Extracts from His Private Writings & Diary. And Also Seventeen Select Sermons on Various Important Subjects,* 2nd ed. (Northampton: S. & E. Butler, 1804), v. This is the second edition of Hopkin's biography. The first edition was published in 1765 by S. Kneeland in Boston, MA.

picture which will intend to strengthen [and] comfort" all readers by providing "a matter of instruction and conviction."[46]

Although Hopkins includes details from his subject's life, the main focus of his biography is a compilation of Edwards' writings because he believed that Edwards' ideas were integral for framing Puritan virtue among the succeeding generation. Puritan society cast Edwards' philosophical contributions to their print culture as an important cornerstone of communal morality. Accordingly, Hopkins emphasizes that Edwards' unembellished writings are some of the greatest defenses for Christian theology which can be applicable to any generation. Hopkins emphasizes the rigor of Edwards' mind as the most important element in his life for readers to study, stating that Edwards had "remarkable strength of mind, clearness of thought, and depth of perception[,] above most others to vindicate the great doctrines of Christianity."[47] Hopkins consequently also understood Edwards' death as the end of a particular era of Puritan intellectualism. He feared that the subsequent generations would not remain Christian if their minds were not saturated with Edwards' ideologies. Hopkins' purpose for publishing Edwards' conversion narrative was similar to Bradstreet's letter to her children, written with the hope that his readers—the next generation of Puritans—would embrace their ancestors' worldview. Edwards' writing offered its readers an example of intellectual prowess to aspire to.[48] Hopkins follows Bradstreet's and Edwards' views that a person must organize for oneself a set of uncompromisable truths in adolescence, proceeding to warn his readers that "[i]n this world, so full of darkness and delusion, it is of great importance, that all should be able to distinguish between true religion and that which is false."[49] Hopkins' explicit distinction between true and false religion underscores the notion that in order to make sense of human

[46] Hopkins, *Life and Character*, v-vi.
[47] Hopkins, *Life and Character*, iii.
[48] Hopkins, *Life and Character*, iii.
[49] Hopkins, *Life and Character*, v.

existence, a person must make it his or her sole aim in life to know how to discern counterfeit ideologies from the truth.

Hopkins' choice to incorporate Edwards' conversion narrative that is posited between excerpts from Edwards' private writings and "a history of his life" was a strategic move. Hopkins intended to preserve the integrity of Puritan society, that is, the church, by pushing Edwards' writings to the forefront of the landscape of Puritan intellectualism. He frequently dialogues with his reader and highlights certain components of Edwards' written works to which his readers should pay special attention. Speaking directly to the reader, Hopkins states that a close study of Edwards' "internal exercises, expressed in his own words" will inevitably aid a person in living "a holy and useful life."[50] Although Edwards' conversion narrative is principally about his own transformation, it implies that conversion for anybody results in a similar transformation of the entire person, which Edwards defines as encompassing the heart, mind, and soul—with a particular emphasis on the mind. Edwards calls this connection the "affections" and proposes that experiencing the affections as a result of Christian conversion causes a person to not only understand the world in light of eternity, but also causes the person to experience what he calls divine joy—an affection that transcends mere emotion and that abides in a person's soul regardless of external circumstance or situation. Edwards' understanding of divine joy begins with a conscious acknowledgement of God's existence as an objective truth. Thus, Hopkins' biography and intentional inclusion of Edwards' conversion narrative reflected the Puritan notion that, in order to understand the existence of a community, it is crucial to know the individual lives of those who lived before them.

Like Bradstreet, Edwards recalls that upon being assailed by doubts of God's goodness, he sought to dismantle his doubts by appealing to what he understood God had given to mankind as a revelation of himself: creation and Scripture. Edwards starts with 1 Timothy 1:17,

[50] Hopkins, *Life and Character*, v.

which lists God's attributes—in particular, his kingship, immortality, invisibility, wisdom, and glory.[51] From that point forward, Edwards notes how "my mind was greatly engaged, to spend my time in reading and meditating on Christ[,] and the lovely way of salvation, by free grace in him."[52] Edwards emphasizes that understanding God's character is the first step to understand salvation through grace. He focuses on a foundational understanding of God's sovereignty. Because God's goodness abides regardless of external human circumstances, Edwards understands that the doctrine of true religion—now distinguishing religious duties from his newfound appreciation for God's character—is based in a sort of delight that connects both his cognitive understanding of God's character and the inclinations of his own heart. Recalling his former legalistic manner of doing religion and contrasting it with the joy of his conversion, Edwards states that "the delights [of true religion] were of a more inward, pure, soul-animating and refreshing nature. Those former delights never reached the heart; and did not arise from any sight of the divine excellency of the things of God."[53] Moreover, Edwards comments that once he has understood the sovereign goodness of true religion, the way in which he saw and perceived the world was completely transformed. He lists the core attributes of God's character in relation to his understanding of natural philosophy, stating, "God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in everything… I often used to sit and view the moon, for a long time… to behold the sweet glory of God in these things."[54] This cognitive sequence that Edwards outlines clearly indicates the broader Puritan belief that the inclinations and trajectories of a person's thought processes ultimately shaped the state of one's soul and mind.

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[51] *Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 16 Letters and Personal Writings*, Ed. George S. Claghorn (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998), 792.
[52] WJE 16:793.
[53] WJE 16:794-795.
[54] WJE 16:794.

Pivotal to Edwards' conversion is his intellectual shift in comprehending religion from a works-based model to a faith-based model, which, once again, echoes the Reformation theology of worship. Prior to his conversion, Edwards is clear that his mind had not been "awakened" to a faith-based consciousness of Christianity. He recounts examples from his youth, saying, "[I was] concerned about the things of religion, and my soul's salvation; and was abundant in duties."[55] Edwards' usage of the term "duties" here is synonymous to Luther's understanding of a worship that was oriented around religious works. Edwards states that prior to his conversion, he (in his youth) "used to pray five times a day in secret, and [used] to spend much time in religious talk with other boys."[56] During these times of prayer and religious discourse, Edwards notes that he was nonetheless affected. Here, the usage of the term "affected," which—in the context of Edwards' narrative—is synonymous to pleasure. It is important to note, however, that the particular pleasure which Edwards experienced was not lasting. It quickly wore off after engaging in what he believed was religion and "[he] returned like a dog to his vomit" to his sin.[57] Regardless, the fact that Edwards did experience pleasure in his religious practice, suggests that religion was a positive thing for the conscience.

Notably, Edwards identifies the mind and the affections as two inseparable entities within a person's being. On one hand, a person's perception of the world in which he or she inhabits, occurs in the mind and is accomplished "by discern[ing] and view[ing] and judg[ing] things."[58] Not only, Hopkins argues, is Edwards' commitment to religious truth remarkable, but the way in which Edwards guarded the purity of his heart through study of Scripture was a model for the entirety of Puritan society to emulate. It is not enough for a person to merely understand the world, but a person must know how engage with the objective facts of existence

[55] WJE 16:790.
[56] WJE 16:790.
[57] WJE 16:791; Prov. 26:11.
[58] Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections in Three Parts*, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 96.

with which he or she is faced. On the other hand, the soul functions to mediate what Edwards calls "the inclinations," which are expressed as "liking or disliking, [being] pleased or displeased, approving or rejecting."[59] In describing these operations of the soul, Edwards utilizes the terms "heart" and "will" interchangeably, meaning that when either he or Puritans spoke of these terms, they were referring to a person's intellectual life and understanding of the world. Taken together, the soul and the mind drive a person's experience of reality and facilitated *being* in the world.

Being, per se, required knowing truth. Evident from Luther's explication of the law, the human conscience already inherently testifies to knowing the Christian truth. Moreover, divine joy, which Edwards holds as the means for existence, begins with an intellectual perception of good, as it connects the mind and soul. During his youth, it is clear that Edwards knew that goodness and religion were inseparable; however, his mind did not yet make the conscious connection between temporary and abiding pleasure—which he later calls divine joy, or the affections. The crucial difference for this disconnection was the notion that any delight from religion was fulfilled in and through himself. Edwards calls this pleasure a "self-righteous pleasure" and notes that in contrast to self-righteousness, the moment in which he first experienced joy beyond himself was upon contemplating eternity.[60] Edwards' pleasure—or willful inclinations—experienced as a result of religious ritual and contrasted with his displeasure in sin, suggests that his conscience, much like Bradstreet's, attests to the knowledge of good and evil at a young age. However, as is evident in his conviction that religion is good, Edwards clearly committed to an absolute definition of good at a young age. His foundational understanding that good is an objective entity subsequently framed his later comprehension for the meaning of his personal existence in the scope of human history. His sensation of pleasure

[59] Edwards, *Affections*, 96.
[60] WJE 16:791.

indicated to him that he was doing *something* right, but the fact that he was unable to sustain his pleasure beyond religious duties suggested to his conscience that the way in which he understood religion in his mind did not align with a heartfelt understanding of good.

As is evident in Edwards' narrative, only when a person understands humanity's two eternal destinations—heaven or hell—does one realize that self-righteousness, meaning, being a law unto oneself, was not of any worth in the grand scheme of eternity. It has no effect whatsoever on personal salvation. Just as Bradstreet outlined a methodology for her children to reconcile doubt and the disconnect between a cognitive knowledge of objective good and the emotional impressions of the heart, Edwards follows a distinct process to settle his conviction of religious good with his fleeting moments of pleasure, for which the Puritan youth must emulate. Beginning with the doctrine of God's sovereignty, Edwards realizes that how he has stewarded the state of his soul during life on earth has repercussions beyond his temporal life on earth. His deep conviction of sin as wrong, reflected in the sensation of displeasure, led him to seek a source of abiding pleasure or joy, which would sustain him regardless of his fallen human nature. This understanding led him to 1) a new realization of his own life in relation to eternity and 2) the notion that there existed a sovereign Being beyond himself that remained good, regardless of what he did during his temporal life.

Writers such as Edwards, Bradstreet, and Bunyan believed that it was paramount to establish a methodology for reasoning through doubt. They believed that by contemplating eternity, a person was then able to conceive of reality beyond life on earth, which in turn, would implant a worldview that was not regulated by temporality, such as Edwards' fleeting pleasures. Learning and deploying this cognitive understanding of eternity was especially important for the integrity of the Puritan community because, as this section has explored, conversion narratives were written with the target audience of the youth. In particular, contemplating eternity at the individual level enforced a foundational understanding of God's goodness as a

source of abiding, divine joy. Taking this individual understanding as a didactic example for the youth thus ensured a communal moral foundation of the same ideologies.

Spiritual narratives and Edwards' posture on conversion in the Great Awakening bridged the theologies of Reformation Europe and the New World. As reflected in Puritan spiritual literature and childrearing, America Protestants in the Puritan tradition understood that they existed at a crucial junction in human history. They were part of something considerably more significant than the socio-politics of the Early Modern period: they were part of redemptive history, of bringing the kingdom of heaven to the ends of the earth. Most significantly, the Puritans understood that the moral integrity of their community paved the way for the future of an evangelical America.

As Seaver had demonstrated in his biography of Jemison in 1824, the Puritans' value of studying their ancestors' virtue endured well beyond their ideological disappearance during the Revolutionary era. Because Jemison narrated her story nearly fifty years after the founding of America and amidst widespread decline of the faith, Seaver almost regretfully notes that she is a stranger to Christian doctrine. He calls attention to the way in which she instead holds to the Seneca tribe's universalist beliefs: "a future state, in which the good will be happy[;] that the acquisition of happiness depends on human volition[;] and that the consequent good deeds of the happy recipient of blessedness."[61] Nevertheless, these universalist notions still applaud virtue and demonstrate that even into early the nineteenth century, some American communities still constructed their group identity from the assessment and knowledge of past virtuous lives. Similarly, Marsden notes that echoes of Puritan virtue "constructed a heroic heritage that endowed [New Englanders of the later nineteenth century] with moral fortitude."[62]

[61] Seaver, *Captivity Narratives*, 129.
[62] Marsden, *A Life*, 500.

This remnant of Puritan virtue foreshadows the legacy of moral virtue that the Puritans would impress upon the country's evangelistic future. All in all, the most enduring facet of the Puritan age was their commitment to an absolute notion of morality and means of understanding their historical existence in conjunction with the future of human history.

Section 2

Despite the fact that the Calvinistic vision of patriarchal headship undergirded Puritan society, there were nonetheless instances of disobedience. In the young folks' Bible case, Puritan youths flouted their society's established system of theological governance by deriving more pleasure from sensual imagery than in God. Puritan youths termed this collection of images the "young folks' Bible," thus even blaspheming the sanctity of Scripture. While some might understand the young folks' Bible case as a mere instance of adolescent disobedience or changing sexual norms, it actually reveals underlying problems in the Puritans' understanding of how they were to live out biblical mandates in their daily lives. In this section, I will address how the New England Puritans understood their place in redemptive history on specifically American soil. Beginning with the young folks' Bible case, I will demonstrate the ways in which the youths of later generations of Puritans shifted away from the fundamentals of covenant theology upon which the first generation of American Puritans were founded. Turning towards Winthrop's famous assertion of New England as a "city on a hill" and his declaration of its responsibility to retain reverence among all nations, I will discuss Edwards' vision of morality and compare it to that of the later generations.

The Puritans' sojourn in New England was indeed a mission to restore Christendom to Reformed tradition. Historian Perry Miller suggests considering the settlement of first-generation Puritans as a metaphorical errand and notes that this errand was intentional.[63] It was not an accident that Puritans left Britain for another "world," and neither were they searching for asylum. Rather, their migration was a conscious act of will that drove the first-generation Puritans toward establishing a reformed community that became distinctly American.[64] The initial Puritans in New England aimed to fulfill the Great Commission by bringing the Christian religion to the ends of the earth.[65] In one sense, the New World was a geographical frontier for the Great Commission because, from the perspective of the settlers, it was an uncharted wilderness. In a more important sense, however, this wilderness was a theological frontier of a field of souls ripe for harvest.

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[63] Perry Miller, *Errand Into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 11.
Miller's work bears immense historiographical importance for the study of early American religious history. Often called the pioneer of American Studies, Miller has brought the Puritan imaginary to the forefront of Americanist scholarship. He has also filled a gaping hole in American religious historiography by describing the ideological development of a country founded upon Calvinist theology into Universalism. For subsequent historians who walk in his footsteps, Miller provides a comprehensive ideological map of America's voyage into radical individualism and secularism.
[64] Miller, *Errand,* 4.
[65] Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15.

But why did they undertake this willful act of leaving their home country to initiate a new church and society rather than working to reform their own place? The answer is that they were driven by a heavenly reward for obeying the biblical command to make disciples of all nations and to become model of Christian charity to the nations of the earth. The reward for North American souls being brought into the storehouse of salvation would not be apparent during the earthly lives of the harvesters. It would be attained after death. Puritans were seized with the conviction that establishing an ecclesiastical society which condemned sin and maintained that Scripture was the ultimate authority for all people would motivate the watching eyes of the world to pursue true religion. However, in the same way that Israelites in the Old Testament were warned against a myriad of bodily, agricultural, and wartime captivity curses if they were to forsake the law, the Puritans understood that they themselves were to suffer these curses if they forsook scriptural standards. Among later generations, Puritans accordingly cited the environmental hardships of their wilderness frontier—and most distressingly, disobedient children—as the result of failing in their errand.[66]

In Puritan households, one generation was understood to be responsible for the religious conscience of the next. This inter-generational responsibility recalls the covenant theology upon which the first generation of Puritans characterized themselves as a "city on a hill" for the "eyes of all people."[67] In brief, "covenant theology" here refers to the understanding that a covenant is a binding oath between God and a human community. It is affirmed in mutual understanding that the given society would function as an ecclesiastical polity, not unlike the covenants of ancient Israel. Hence, as a spiritual model for the world to emulate, each generation must live in accordance with the fundamental theology of the Puritan community so that they are able to fulfill their calling to settle in New England. Later in this section, it will

[66] Miller, *Errand*, 6.
[67] John Winthrop, *A Model of Christian Charity* (1630), 8.

become evident that the way in which first generation framed themselves as Israelites will conflict with the identity of later generations that were moving towards becoming distinctly American.

Considering whether the Puritans failed or succeeded is not the intent of this section. It instead describes how Puritans turned towards the foundational tenants of covenant theology and how these ideologies were upheld across generations of parents. It also suggests that the Puritan organization of human relationships in ecclesiastical structures is not bound by time. Households were the core of Puritan society and subsequent generations took the covenant made with God on the *Arbella* as foundational, as John Winthrop's famous sermon titled a *Model of Christian Charity* illustrates. The New England Puritans would model this ideal Christian community for the rest of the world. Winthrop elucidates the imperative that the "city on a hill" must not neglect any portion of the covenant; otherwise, the Puritans will inevitably fall short of their errand. He emphasizes the necessity of the family tie and how the community, as one ecclesiastical body, would care for the souls of succeeding generations. He also connects the rhythm of work and sabbath, and love and affection with familial governance. Therefore, the spiritual identity of the New England Puritans as seventeenth-century Israelites rested upon their agreement to hold one another accountable to the lofty piety expressed by Winthrop. This understanding of social organization and responsibility was exemplified in Winthrop's successors' manner of rebuke regarding ecclesiastical structures, such as the household of the church.

Covenant theology as interpreted by the New England Puritans sheds light upon their understanding of the history of redemption, specifically, their place in God's plan to reconcile fallen humanity to himself. Miller argues that for first-generation Puritans, the term "covenant"

carried not only theological significance but legal connotations, as well.[68] The metanarrative of redemption throughout Scripture in the Reformed view describes the progressive development of the temple. It is inherently associated with God's various covenants with mankind, beginning with Noah until the proclamation of the "new covenant" established at the cross of Christ. Each covenant marks a stage in humanity's reconciliation to God. The new covenant holds that through faith in Christ as the mediator, the believer is saved by grace. Although the first Puritans had affirmed that covenant theology was necessary in understanding how conversion was aroused in the nonbelieving world, as Miller holds, the interpretations of Old World preacher John Preston (d. 1628) on the legal aspect of scriptural covenant framed how the Puritans eventually understood redemptive history on North American soil. Preston purported that a covenant referred to a binding oath, not unlike one made in court in front of a panel of witnesses.[69] New England Puritans applied Preston's legal understanding of the covenant to explain their purpose in the New World and its relevance to the unfolding of redemptive history. As partakers in God's second covenant, they were commanded to bring others into it, as well. Their inheritance of Preston's legalistic interpretation of the covenant undergirded later generations' emphasis on the individuals' commitment to sound morality.

Although an understanding of covenant theology in legal terms colors Winthrop's vision for organizing and establishing systems of authority, the same influences shaped the Puritans' sense that ecclesiastical and paternal authority are alike based in love. Winthrop charges the settlers to "seek out a place of cohabitation," meaning, their physical location in their frontier, as well as "consortship under a due form of government."[70] This government would not be the form of government akin to that of Britain, in which fallen human beings ruled over other fallen people. On the contrary, the system of authority in the New World

[68] Miller, *Errand*, 60-61.
[69] Miller, *Errand*, 60.
[70] Winthrop, *Christian Charity*, 8.

intended to combine "both civil and ecclesiastical" visions. The church, which Winthrop repeatedly compares to Christ's body, is the means for regulating the community. Because Christ, as the head, has "knit together [the church] in love," ecclesiastical leadership reflects the divine love demonstrated in the covenant of grace.[71] Winthrop draws attention to the Puritans' errand by reminding them that their sojourn in New England was untaken of "mutual consent" between them and God.[72] On the part of the Puritans, the covenantal agreement makes them bearers of true religion in the wilderness frontier. Although their world would still be undeniably hierarchically ordered—as all societies were and still are—"civil policy" would not the final verdict for how they would order their community. Instead, "conscience doth bind us."[73] Winthrop's appeal to conscience gestures toward the transformation of the heart under the covenant of grace and the Puritans' God-ordained responsibility to instill biblical morality into all realms of their new world. Thus, Winthrop's decision to compare the Puritans' errand to a legal covenant suggests their understanding of necessary authoritative order in the New World.

Winthrop's emphasis on conscience as the bond of a community united under Christ's headship requires understanding of how the Puritans understood the covenant of grace to awaken and compel one to act in good conscience. In later generations, the conscience would be inherently tied to sound morality. Moreover, a good conscience would be plain in both behavior and in the heart. It would arise from a profound affection for God's providence. Understanding the operation of divine will opens a person's heart to a novel, sympathetic love for all peoples, even one's enemies.[74] For Winthrop, this kind of love is termed "charity," and the widespread deployment of charity is the mark of a community that has successfully become a "city on a hill." Charity is most evident in the family tie, which Winthrop uses throughout his

[71] Winthrop, *Christian Charity*, 5.
[72] Winthrop, *Christian Charity*, 8.
[73] Winthrop, *Christian Charity*, 8.
[74] Winthrop, *Christian Charity*, 2.

sermon as an extended metaphor for unity in the ecclesiastical body and as a practical example of charity. God created man in his own image and Christ bears God's image; therefore, by trusting in Christ, the believer is immediately reconciled to God. In the believer, God beholds Christ, the second Adam and his beloved son.[75] In the same way, a family model explains how covenant of grace awakens and compels a soul to affection for all members of the body. Winthrop explains, "So a mother loves her child, because she thoroughly conceives a resemblance of herself in it, [and] thus it is between the members of Christ." By seeing the resemblance of Christ in another person, one is compelled to "therefore love him as he loves himself."[76]

The established figures of authority in Puritan society, namely the pastors and fathers, reflected Christ's headship and charity in Puritan efforts to impress conscience upon the youth. Because of their moral formation, the community would flourish in "the practice of mercy constant."[77] Referencing the Mosaic Law as the Law of Nature and the new covenant as the Law of Grace, Winthrop instructs the first generation of Puritans in the means of disciplining the human heart. He maintains that the rhythms of Christian charity facilitate the conversion and sanctification process of the heart. Echoing Pauline theology, Winthrop holds that the Law of Nature is a foundational morality or conscience that exists in all people, whether regenerate or unregenerate. However, if an unregenerate person—presumably a child—is consistently instructed in the "duty of mercy" outlined in the Law of Grace, such as "do[ing] good to all" in the "extraordinary liberality" of renouncing worldly comforts in the discernment of "differ[ent] seasons and occasions," the child, when converted, would then adhere to the charities in the Law of Grace with an affectionate heart.[78] Regarding the necessity of instructing the unregenerate heart in ways of Christian charity, Miller comments that this "federal theory"

[75] Winthrop, *Christian Charity*, 6.
[76] Winthrop, *Christian Charity*, 6.
[77] Winthrop, *Christian Charity*, 6.
[78] Winthrop, *Christian Charity*, 2.

and "logical device" is deployed in an abundance of Puritan sermons.[79] Puritans understood that good behavior did not necessarily reflect the state of one's heart; however, the effort that a person deploys in in obeying the covenant of grace aligns his or her inherent moral inclinations with eventual election to salvation.

Signs that Puritans had Lost their Zeal for the Errand, as Represented in their Households

Winthrop envisioned that the reproduction of sound morals across generations would determine whether true religion would prevail in the Puritans' errand. Regarding the trajectory of redemptive history and the Puritans' responsibility in perpetuating it, each generation must be vigilant in observing various signs that indicated a deteriorating commitment to religion. Perhaps in declaring that New England would be as a "city on a hill" with the "eyes of all people on us," the Puritans were remembering the solemn words of Judges 2:10, in which "there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel." Among the second and third generations of New England Puritans, however, Miller notes marks of increasing indifference towards covenant theology, some of which he distinguishes as the violation of the Sabbath and the decay of family governance.[80] These vices were plainly addressed in Winthrop's sermon on the *Arbella*, rendering the later generation of Puritans' behavior inexcusable because they were aware of the consequences, yet chose to disobey. After all, the Puritans were spiritual Israelites themselves, who were given a "special commission" by God to bring Christendom to the ends of the earth.[81] Because the first generation had willfully entered into the covenant through a "bond of love," God was "[all] the more jealous of [their] love and obedience."[82] The conclusion of Winthrop's sermon rings with redemptive language that harkens back to biblical descriptions in both the Old and New

[79] Miller, *Errand*, 82-83.
[80] Miller, *Errand,* 8.
[81] Winthrop, *Christian Charity*, 8.
[82] Winthrop, *Christian Charity*, 8.

Testaments where God had promised to dwell among his chosen people, once more underscoring the Puritans' understanding of their place in redemptive history as Israelites.

Yet the covenantal agreement did not terminate with the first generation. The covenant extended to their descendants, or their posterity, as Winthrop terms it. Utilizing Christian generosity as an extended illustration to explain how charity works for the good of a neighbor's welfare, Winthrop charges the Puritans to demonstrate the same level of concern for the souls of their children. Speaking directly to fathers, whom he understood as the heads of households, Winthrop states that "he is worse than an infidel who through his own sloth and voluptuousness shall neglect to provide for his family."[83] Because fathers modeled piety and charity, they demonstrated to their children that following true religion was the most agreeable way to live. Neglecting the family was considered an abomination among Puritans because this choice would result in both a loss of affection for religion and an increasing complacency with the "common corruptions of this evil world."[84]

A Pastor and Father: Jonathan Edwards' Didactic Role in Puritan Community

The Puritans' construction of society as an extended household was most evident in the ways that a pastor exercised his headship over his immediate family, his congregation, and the entire surrounding community. Historian Steven Ozment asserts that the basic responsibilities of headship included protecting the household from any external threat to its order and most importantly, to rule over the children.[85] Edwards, who held paternal headship over his household and pastoral headship over his church, understood the members of his congregation as his spiritual children. Edwards expected his household and the wider Puritan Northampton

[83] Winthrop, *Christian Charity*, 3.
[84] Winthrop, *Christian Charity*, 8.
[85] Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 50.

community to adhere to his ruling, that is, his fundamentally Augustinian visions of aesthetics and purity.

This notion of connecting church headship and familial leadership is evident in the description provided by Puritan biographer Samuel Hopkins of the ways in which Edwards cared for both his family and his flock. Edwards' concern and sense of responsibility for the church congregation mirrored that of his own children. Hopkins shows how Edwards prioritized the establishment of true religion in his children's intellect and the collective intellectual purity of Puritan youth by observing and recording his conduct towards both his family and the townsfolk. Hopkins notes that Edwards was "careful and thorough in the government of his children" and "took special care to begin his government of them in season," meaning that in accordance with his children's age, maturity, and intellect, he "took much pain to instruct [and catechize] them in the principles of religion."[86] He sought to keep them from the ways of the world, which included "frolicking" and succumbing to the "corruption," "frivolity," and "stupidity,"[87] meaning, the adoption of secular ideologies. Hopkins also records how Edwards would frequent the private religious meetings of the Puritan youth and would preach to them. He would welcome the children and youth into his own home and catechize them in the same way that he would catechize his own children, challenging the Puritan youths to answer his questions thoroughly so that their answers demonstrated a "particular knowledge of some historical part of the Scripture." Edwards' manner of catechizing the youth would "lead" and "oblige" them "to study the Bible."[88] He became an "able guide" of the youth because he had "so much concern with souls under spiritual troubles,"[89] that is, souls assaulted by ideologies of false religion. Ultimately, "almost all parts

[86] Hopkins, *Life and Character*, 47.
[87] Hopkins, *Life and Character*, 47-48.
[88] Hopkins, *Life and Character*, 54.
[89] Hopkins, *Life and Character*, 55.

of New-England look[ed] to [Edwards] for direction and assistance."[90] Evidently, Edwards, in his role as a pastor, was considered by New England as also the father of Puritan community.

Nevertheless, despite these contemporaries' seemingly unequivocal notion that the foundations of Puritan society were constructed upon the Calvinist vision of patriarchal headship, youths still disobeyed. According to the logic that households must reflect church governance in order that the society remain intact, any instance of disobedience that defied ecclesiastical authority would result in the fragmentation of Puritan community. One telling example is an instance of sexual fornication that occurred in 1744. In what is now known as "the bad book case" or the "young folks' Bible case," a group of young men from Edwards' Northampton congregation aged twenty-one to twenty-nine years of age—but, in actuality, who were really "acting [much more] like fourteen-year-old boys"[91]—were found passing around images of female physiology, popular medicine, and midwifery, and utilizing these images to taunt young women and girls. One of the perpetrators, Timothy Root, referred to the collection of images as the "young folks' Bible"[92]— outright blasphemy in the perspective of a society that held Scripture as its highest authority.[93] The young folks' Bible case ultimately resulted in Edwards' dismissal from his pastorate, separating the pastor from his flock, and upending Puritan headship. As it will be clear in Edwards' handling of the incident, the consequences of church discipline that dually effect the pastor and the wandering hearts of the congregation highlight the complexities of applying high theology to affections interwoven in human relationships.

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[90] Hopkins, *Life and Character*, 56.
[91] Marsden, *A Life*, 300.
[92] Thomas H Johnson, "Jonathan Edwards and the 'Young Folks' Bible,'" *The New England Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (January 1932): pp. 37-54, https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/359489, 44-45.
Apart from Jonathan Edwards' own voice, Johnson's article is the most comprehensive compilation of primary sources from the young folks' Bible case, including church members' testimonies, Edwards' notes on presiding the hearing, and lists of names of those involved.
[93] Marsden, *A Life*, 298.

Implications of the Young Folks' Bible Case in Respect to Household Theology

The most important facet of the young folks' Bible case was the manner by which Edwards deployed his pastoral responsibility in order to maintain the integrity of the church body. His action was akin to the system of virtuous household governance prescribed by Anne Bradstreet. Edwards addressed the matter communally because sexual immortality had the potential to corrupt the purity of the youth's minds, thus fragmenting the moral community of succeeding generations of Puritans who would not value the conscience as God-given and precious. Principally, Edwards' handling of young folks' Bible case demonstrated his philosophy that the affections of a person's soul are explicit in a person's observable behavior.[94] If the affections of a person's soul were misguided by worldly impurities, such as what befell the young men involved in the incident, then the person was not only barred from attaining greater heights of holiness, but the integrity of the community was threatened as well. And in the case of the young folks' Bible, mounting distress from his congregation resulted in the greatest fracture of Puritan society: Edwards' dismissal from his pastorate, meaning, the separation of the pastor from his flock and the father from his children.

Edwards did not confine the interpretation of the incident to solely the group of young men but made the problem of their impure conscience a public, generalized matter. He compiled a list of twenty-two names that included the culprits and witnesses, making no distinction among the individuals. He proceeded to read this list from the pulpit and then called the entire congregation (virtually the entire town) to bear witness to the individual testimonies.[95] The unity of the church and community explains the reason for the Puritans' unwavering adherence to specific childrearing methodologies, as well as the parents' weighty emphases on building a worldview immersed in biblical morality. Edwards' position as the

[94] Edwards, *Affections*, 99-102.
[95] Johnson, *Young Folks' Bible*, 42-43.

pastor-head over his congregation cast him as the father of both his church and Northampton. He believed that it was his role as their spiritual father to help the youths preserve the clarity of their consciences by holding them to the highest standards of purity and holiness. And because members of the church body predominantly consisted of all those living in the town, the members of the congregation were Edwards' immediate "children" who needed to be trained in Puritan values.[96] In the same manner that a father is responsible for his children's behavior and leads his entire family in household edification, Edwards was thus compelled to respond to the young folks' Bible case in church and in the streets and homes of the municipality.

As the town "father," Edwards' headship necessitated that he discern when to control the youths' behavior and how to restrain them when necessary.[97] To refrain from alerting the entire town to the impure inclinations of the youths' souls would render Edwards as a negligent parent. As historian Steven Ozment states, "An uninformed and negligent parent or teacher was a deadly menace to the child's rational, moral, and Christian development."[98] This summation is compelling and accurate with respect to Edwards' vision of church discipline. Parents who were lax and who had neglected to control their child's desire for materialism (in this instance, the materiality of human bodies), threatened the intellect and spiritual state of the subsequent generation.[99] Ultimately, a parents' discipline pointed forward to the day in which a child would be able to control "his own moral and intellectual destiny."[100] Correspondingly, Edwards asserts, "there is no question whatsoever, that is of greater importance to mankind, and that it more concerns every individual person to be well resolved in, than this[:] What is the nature of true religion?"[101] The young folks' Bible case revealed that the youths had not

[96] Marsden, *A Life*, 296.
[97] Ozment, *Fathers*, 134.
[98] Ozment, *Fathers*, 135-136.
[99] Ozment, *Fathers*, 135.
[100] Ozment, *Fathers*, 137.
[101] Edwards, *Affections*, 84.

learned proper discipline and self-control, and that the root of the problem lay among their immediate, biological parents.

Following these points, the most devastating aspect of the young men's behavior was the fact that they were engaging in fornication. Furthermore, they were deriving pleasure from it, meaning that they had rejected biblical mandates.[102] Because the compilation of sexual images were the young men's chosen means of experiencing pleasure, Edwards speculated that these young men would be reluctant and even opposed to the notion of seeking a higher form of enjoyment. As it was evident from his conversion narrative, the entirety of Edwards' understanding of Christian faith was based on his conviction that pleasure in the scriptures and the works of God superseded anything that could be the world could offer. The aesthetics of a person's enjoyment of the divine—as perceived and encountered in the mind—would have no appeal for a person convinced that pornographic images were the highest form of pleasure in life. These youths, in Edwards' perspective, would be numb to "God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love [that] seemed to appear in everything; in the sun, moon and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water, and all nature."[103] If they continued in their ways of sexual immorality, they would become insensitive to the divine pleasures of true religion and over time, jeopardize the entire succeeding generation's salvation.

All these convictions would become evident at the final judgment, for which Edwards would be called to account. Thus, Edwards was ultimately concerned for the eternal destiny of these youths. Since Edwards held that the town youths were beings made in the *imago Dei*, he understood that he must treat them with dignity.[104] For him, respecting the youths meant urging them to bear an accurate representation of God's character with a conscience unencumbered by sin. Yet even before the young folks' Bible case, Edwards noticed that false religion was

[102] Marsden, *A Life*, 294.
[103] WJE 16:794.
[104] Ozment, *Fathers*, 134.

perpetually "crouching at the door" of Puritan society. He concluded that if the threat of rampant false religion was not addressed immediately, the community's moral worldview faced extinction.[105] That is, Edwards believed that if he did not address the youths' fornication, he, as a spiritual leader, would be accountable to God at the judgment for the deterioration of his church. The young folks' Bible case was simply the result of unaddressed "wolves in sheep's clothing" and a repercussion of the community's choice to neglect properly testing the nature of a true Christian conversion.[106]

Connections Between Sound Moral Parenting and the Fundamentals of Covenant Theology on which New England was Founded

Placing the blame on the youths' parents raises the question why two different generations must be brought into moral conversation in order to address a behavior that initially seems to be transgressive among only one of these generations. As it will be evident in the recent scholarly discourse surrounding the ways in which Edwards handled the young folks' Bible case, a divide on the covenantal understanding of morality separated the values of later Puritans from Winthrop's founding theology. According to Miller, one reason that might explain the theological drift was the Puritans' disappointment with the mundanities of establishing their "city on a hill."[107] The responsibilities of raising families, building households, and forming churches might have caused the Puritans to think that because there appeared no immediate and extraordinary fruit in their harvest field, the "eyes of the world" had shifted away from New England. Consequently, adherence to the foundational New England covenant was now obsolete. The values which had identified the first settlers were no longer present among their descendants. For this reason, Miller suggests, the identity of later

[105] Marsden, *A Life*, 304.
[106] Matt 7:15.
[107] Miller, *Errand*, 14-15.

generations had become distinctly American rather than Israelite. Hence, Edwards, who resolutely aligned his convictions with Augustinian and Calvinistic thought, retained a theological vision foreign to second- and third-generation Puritans. His manner of recounting the work of the Spirit among the Northamptonites and his application of ostensibly archaic theology to address Sabbath-breaking, household governance, and eventually, fornication in the young folks' Bible case, may then be evidence of his rootedness in an expired perspective.

Like Winthrop, Edwards utilizes the extended household model of society to analyze the effects of religion upon the youths and their spiritual state. He notices that during times of "dullness in religion," family governance "did too much fail in the town."[108] As their spiritual father, Edwards thus held responsibility for the youths' response and reception to spiritual truths, as well as the ways that they would live out these convictions in everyday life. He maintained that religion allowed a person to live in "the bond of love" to God by capturing the attention of the regenerate heart to ponder matters of purity, goodness, and obedience vices. It would guard a person from succumbing to "corruptions," specifically, Sabbath-breaking. Interestingly, the vice of Sabbath violation and its connection to the deterioration of family governance echoes the ordinances outlined in the Ten Commandments. Edwards' choice to underscore this widespread vice recalls the spiritual identity of the first-generation Puritans as spiritual Israelites. From "Sabbath [service] to Sabbath [service]," an earthly picture of God's judgment and mercy is displayed in the meeting of the church body. With every biblically saturated sermon preached, the "conscience of sinners" is "enlightened and awakened." The pastor's fidelity to "setting before [his flock] the great evil and danger of sin" prepares the congregation to face eternity in final deliverance from "the guilt and power of sin."[109]

[108] WJE 4:115, 146.
[109] WJE 25:466.

Because the Sabbath holds theological weight for contemplating God's authority over all creation, disregarding it meant that the Puritans had lost reverence for providence. As Winthrop had underscored, discerning every matter under heaven within a framework of providence was crucial for Christian charity to abound in a community. Retaining the habit of observing the Sabbath was important because the eternal destiny of the souls of the Northamptonites were at stake. For a "long time," Edwards states, the Northampton youths made "Sabbath-day nights and lecture days to be especially times of diversion and company-keeping."[110] Neglecting the Sabbath, therefore, perpetuated the notion that one did not need to be continually attentive to providence for life to continue as it had previously in New England—piety did not need to be of first importance. The result of this action would be abhorrent behavior among the youths. Accordingly, the youths' moral failure in the young folks' Bible case thus elicited Edwards' severe response because he had seen how quickly these youths had embraced Scripture and true religion, yet readily exchanged it for fornication. As Miller has remarked, Sabbath-breaking was understood as evidence that later generation Puritans had lost zeal for their errand. Recalling the ways in which covenant theology framed the ecclesiastical structure of Northampton governance, those charged with paternal headship clearly needed to address matters of immoral behavior and conscience. The Sabbath service reciprocally guarded the conscience of both the pastor and his flock. If moral failure occurred communally, Edwards must address it as such, in order that congregational members learn from one another.

In his 1735 letter to Benjamin Colman prior to the young folks' Bible case, Edwards expresses a keen awareness of the providence to which Winthrop had alluded decades previously. Winthrop had envisioned a possibility for an outpouring of providential grace that had not yet come. Conversely, Edwards, in his time, responded to what he believed was a

[110] WJE 4:99.

definitive act of providence in the spiritual awakening of Northampton. Those whom Edwards cites in his analysis of the "very extraordinary dispensation of providence" include the "rich and poor," the "wise and unwise," and people from all age groups.[111] His choice in listing the demographics and social estate of those who have been affected is intentional because his words recall the beginning of Winthrop's *A Model of Christian Charity* sermon. There, Winthrop had declared that God, in his providence, "disposed" these varying stations on mankind so that by leveraging private possessions, talents, or social standing, all people would then be able to experience and model Christian charity to one another. Having recollected Winthrop's structural assessment of mankind, Edwards then underscores the remarkable reception of religion among the various young people and children in Northampton. For Edwards, the youths' decision to pursue true religion was a far cry from assessment of the state of their souls prior to the awakening under his pastorate, in which he had observed Sabbath-breaking and licentiousness. Even so, underlying the letter is a sense that although the youths were emotionally sensitive to their fallen states and were overcome by the grace of salvation, they were not attentive to their respective consciences, nor did they express a lasting sense of brokenheartedness over original sin. It is probable that the lack of grounding the affections in conscience influenced the moral failure in the young folks' Bible case.

At the time that Edwards wrote to Colman,[112] the town of Northampton had been established for eighty-two years, meaning that approximately two or three generations had lived and died there.[113] To some extent, the parents had passed down religion to their children. Edwards describes the two hundred Northampton families "dwell[ing] more compactly together than any town of such a bigness in these parts of the country." He uses this observation of their compact arrangement to support his point that "both [the town's] corruption and

[111] WJE 4:157.
[112] Edwards' 1735 letter to Colman is nearly verbatim of *A Faithful Narrative* (1737), and I will reference these two texts interchangeably to assess the same situations.
[113] WJE 4:114, 145.

reformation have been from time to time the more swiftly propagated," indicating that any instance of moral failure or spiritual success would quickly work its way throughout the hearts of all Northamptonites.[114] In the same way that the youths could be greatly affected by matters of religion, however, so too could they readily exchange it for an engagement of the lower affections. One repercussion of diminishing family governance was "unusual flexibleness and yielding to advice," indicating an increasing tendency among the youths to compromise piety for the wanton customs of the world.[115]

The Minister's Responsibility to Address and Rebuke Youths' Licentious Behavior

Evidently, as the pastor and father of the town, Edwards understood that he was personally accountable to God for the spiritual welfare of his church. This responsibility of headship necessitated that he hold the other heads of families to similar standards of piety. Edwards references moments when he had urged fathers to "govern their families" by highlighting the "unsuitableness and inconvenience of the practice [of Sabbath-breaking]."[116] These instances are clarified in his farewell sermon given on June 22, 1750, shortly after he was voted out of his pastorate by the Northampton congregation following his handling of the young folks' Bible case. Focusing upon Edwards' poignant farewell and its moral context sheds light upon the shifting identity of Puritans who were becoming distinctly American. Here, Edwards emphasizes the notion that congregational worship and preaching kept the peoples' souls continually affected by religion. Moreover, this sermon indicates his resolute commitment to the early Puritan ideals as outlined by John Winthrop. Edwards' commentary on the ideological drifts present in the generation at hand simultaneously demonstrates a sensitivity to contemporary culture that some twentieth- and twenty-first- century scholars have

[114] WJE 4:114.
[115] WJE 4:115, 147.
[116] WJE 4:99-100.

dismissed in their analyses of Edwards, so inviting discussion of the extent to which the later generations wandered from Winthrop's founding thesis and its implications for the pastor's role in redemptive history.

Edwards' commentary on the place of true religion in a community whose values were undergoing rapid change reveal how he deployed his understanding of Christian conscience to address a problematic situation while maintaining fidelity to his convictions. Edwards was keenly aware that his resistance to the goads of his contemporaries' social norms was futile—at least, in the short term. Nonetheless, his perspective on eternity, judgment, and forgiveness demonstrates that the burden of vindicating his conscience was infinitely more important than allowing his spiritual children to compromise true religion for worldly frivolities. Regardless of the steep consequences for blending ostensibly obsolete religious ideals in a world that had departed from them, Edwards' uncompromising posture toward right and wrong underscores the enduring notion that at any moment in which a person chooses to identify sin in a fallen world, there will be consequences. Edwards' manner in handling the young folks' Bible case and the integrity demonstrated in his farewell sermon raise comprehensive implications for cultural receptions of theology in human history, namely how eternal values meet secular conditions. Ultimately, Edwards understood that the "light, momentary affliction"[117] of losing his pastorate was propelling both him and his congregation towards a glorious eternal destiny of reconciliation in front of the Judge of all human history.

In his farewell sermon following the young folks' Bible case, Edwards demonstrates a firm conviction that the pastor's burden and responsibility to exalt biblical truths would not change regardless of ideological drifts in contemporary culture. As the pastor, he is obliged to "approve himself to his own conscience." Yet he also perceives that human nature is fickle, especially of those towards whom he desired to have a clear conscience. Due to the many false

[117] 2 Cor. 4:17.

ideological temptations in the world, the affections of the heart could—and would—swiftly change if the conscience were not firmly grounded on biblical truths. He states that he and his congregation "live in a world of change, where nothing is certain or stable."[118] The implications of such circumstances "[would] threaten the spiritual and eternal ruin of [the] people, in the present and future generations."[119] Because temptations to compromise true religion for "corrupt opinions, deceit, and delusion" lurk constantly, Edwards charges himself with the task of guarding the conscience of the entire church body, including himself.[120] Utilizing the imagery of the constant revolutions of the sun to describe how "strange things" come to pass in "surprising alterations," Edwards observes that "those who seem to be the most united [are] in a little time [the] most disunited."[121] Taken in the context of his firm stance on abiding Christian purity in the young folks' Bible case, this statement retains force as a transhistorical paradigm.

Although the church would inevitably face varying degrees of disunity in a fallen world, as Edwards believed, the enlightenment of every conscience at the judgment day would restore all congregational division. In the *Application* portion of his sermon, Edwards recounts his history of faithfulness to his spiritual children over the course of innumerable Sabbath days. In doing so, he defends his individual conscience. According to Edwards, the church had "held fast deceit" under his preaching.[122] By supporting behavior that was culturally acceptable yet contrary to true religion, the Northampton community had abandoned the doctrine of God. When the pastor and church members gathered in a vast assembly to witness the "great and terrible majesty of God," ideological unity would prevail because contemporary culture would have passed away.[123] Each member would then be in agreement over the futility of pursuing

[118] WJE 25:263.
[119] WJE 25:486.
[120] WJE 25:466.
[121] WJE 25:465.
[122] WJE 25:467.
[123] WJE 25:467.

earthly frivolities. The state of their enlightened consciences would erase all "unhappy debate and controversy" and "the evidence of the truth shall appear beyond all dispute."[124] Now the connection between Sabbath-breaking and moral failure becomes clear. When Edwards and his congregation eventually stood together in front of the Judge, he as pastor, would be rewarded for prioritizing "Christ's own doctrine" above "any regard to [his] own temporal interest."[125] His own clear and well-defended conscience would assist his congregation's reception of his fatherly and pastoral warning regarding the final judgment. Therefore, the integrity of Edwards' conscience depended not on his congregation's earthly approval, but on the conviction that God would make all things right at the end of time.

At the same time, Edwards might have also considered his stern response to the young folks' Bible case as a strategic move to preserve Christendom in his corner of the world. He believed that his pastoral duty to instruct his congregation in the ways of Christian conscience was a mission given to him by God. Recalling Winthrop's charge to live in such a manner so that the "eyes of all people" would remain fixed on New England, Edwards stresses that continued disobedience would indicate to the world that the glory of God had departed from New England. He utilizes the language of the Puritan errand to explain his appointed task as a "servant and messenger" to awaken the souls of unregenerate sinners to the doctrines of God's word. At the end of his earthly "errand," he would return "to [his] master to give an account of what [he] had done."[126] In his perspective, the moral failure of the young folks' Bible case would indicate—in the words of Winthrop—that the hearts of the New England Puritans had "turn[ed] away" and were "seduced [by] pleasure and profits."[127] Declaring that "the world

[124] WJE 25:467.
[125] WJE 25:477.
[126] WJE 25:470.
[127] Winthrop, *Christian Charity*, 9.

shall know" of Northampton's licentiousness, Edwards then leaves his congregation as unrepentant sinners who have strayed from God's mercies.[128]

In the same vein, Edwards argues that the pastor's task in retaining a clear conscience for judgment's sake is directly connected with maintaining unity among the members of a congregation. Throughout Edwards' sermon, his sense of responsibility to his flock, intermingled with profound concern for the state of their souls, becomes apparent in the ways in which he understands his divinely appointed headship over them. This reciprocal relationship raises several other matters regarding the particularities of church discipline. Especially in a society that had been founded on a covenantal understanding of ecclesiastical structure of authority, the pastor's obligation to address moral failure in the church becomes a problem with respect to God. Echoing Reformation thought, he repeatedly referred to himself as the spiritual father and tenderly named his flock as his children. Like a father, Edwards knew that taking a severe stance on sin was necessary for long-term benefit of his children. Apart from "open[ing] and apply[ing] the rules of God's word," the spiritual father was also obliged to help them discern the state of their souls.[129] Edwards resolutely maintained that his efforts to expose his flock to the "great evil and danger of sin" would not return void at the day of judgment when "the eyes of [the human] conscience will be fully enlightened."[130] In a brief exposition of his fallen children's souls, he acknowledges that without the guidance of a minister to "enlighten them concerning the state of their souls," they would be susceptible to mistake a regenerate heart for hypocrisy.[131] That is, the congregation could readily mistake the deception of "a safe and happy state" for God's approval. In actuality, this "careless, heedless

[128] WJE 25:477.
[129] WJE 25:468.
[130] WJE 25:467.
[131] WJE 25:467.

heart" would one day be ultimately exposed of its neglect towards "any conviction of the truth."[132]

One might wonder why the conscience was, in Edwards' view, of particular significance for the disobedient church body. His answer is that in order to conserve a community founded on Christian charity, its members must cultivate a collective conscience guided by biblical truths. As Edwards had already warned his congregation to be mindful of the ever-approaching judgment day, each person would eventually be accountable in front of God for his or her commitment to true religion. Recalling the miraculous awakening in Northampton just preceding the youths' moral failure, he noted that it might seem impossible that a community overcome with "a sense of the divine perfections" would engage in, and approve of, fornication. In turn, they "[w]ould approve of him at the day of judgment."[133] Then, at the culmination of redemptive history, the Judge "would approve and reward [the pastor's] faithfulness."[134] Thus, the integrity of the pastor's conscience and the congregation's approval of him rested upon how they had rightly handled and obeyed Scripture together.

However, Edwards did not want to leave his congregation to their own licentiousness. Instead, he wished to urge them to continue applying themselves diligently to God's Word. If the town remained bound by Christian charity, then unity in the body would be achieved, according to covenantal theology. At the judgment day, when the entire church would stand in front of Christ's tribunal and its collective conscience enlightened to spiritual truths, all would be reconciled in true religion. Edwards' emphatic expression of pastoral care for the state of their souls, regardless of their social estates, emphasizes his integrity of character and conscience, as well as his perspective on worldly circumstances in light of eternal realities. Instead of fighting to retain his pastorate, he urges his congregation to appoint another minister

[132] WJE 25: 469.
[133] WJE 4:105.
[134] WJE 25:462.

in his place who is equally committed to the Word of God. Edwards claims that without such a "spiritual guide," licentious behavior and attitudes would continue in Northampton. In light of this conviction, the relationship between the pastor and the congregation had repercussions that would become apparent on the day of judgment. Edwards stresses that persons of all ages and stations must continue in faithfulness after his departure. His decision to address the myriad of groups in his congregation hearkens back to Winthrop's founding vision for the natural social hierarchies in the ecclesiastical community of New England. Like Winthrop, Edwards understood that these social differences among the members of his congregation were meant for God to "show forth the glory of his wisdom in the variety and difference of the creatures."[135]

Even so, Edwards' does not chastise his congregation without expressing sorrowful affection and despair concerning their unwillingness to repent. In fact, he conveys deep tenderness for the "children of the congregation"—perhaps even those who were offenders in the young folks' Bible case.[136] Edwards' first piece of counsel, imparted to his congregation in his absence, is to maintain family order at all costs.[137] He reminds them that ecclesiastical governance among the heads of households is of "great importance [to] the future welfare and prosperity of this church and congregation."[138] If "every Christian family [remained] as it were a little church," that is, upholding the covenantal agreement of ecclesiastical governance, the town would remain in God's grace.[139] These remarks echo Winthrop's founding thesis, linking the paternal authority of Edwards' contemporaries to the responsibilities bestowed upon the first generation. Winthrop had asserted that obeying the "articles of our Covenant with [God]" would ensure his blessing on future generations and New England soil.[140] All in all, Edwards' expression of his desire for his precious flock is that they would exercise diligence in holding

[135] Winthrop, *Christian Charity*, 1.
[136] WJE 25:483.
[137] WJE 25:484.
[138] WJE 25:484.
[139] WJE 25:484.
[140] Winthrop, *Christian Charity*, 9.

one another accountable to the doctrinal principle of "guard[ing] the religion and morals of the family," as Winthrop had withheld.[141]

Scholarly Interpretations Addressing the Circumstantial Peculiarities of Moral Failure in Northampton

The moral failure among the youths which had immediately succeeded the great awakening of souls that Edwards had so marvelously described in his 1735 letter only a few years prior has proved perplexing to historians. Referencing the tenets of covenant theology, Edwards had reported to Colman that the youths were much affected by "the glorious way of salvation" and "the wonderful free and sovereign grace of God."[142] How then was it possible that New England, which was intended to be a model of Christian charity for the entire world, had deteriorated into immorality? How could the town have forgotten its calling to ensure true religion propagated onto its posterity? Although Edwards blamed the collapse of family governance and had alluded to numerous occasions when he had implored the heads of households to instruct their children in Sabbath-keeping and ecclesiastical leadership, some scholars argue that a larger and more enduring problem undergirded the breakdown of morality in New England.[143] In fact, these critics categorize the young folks' Bible case as a matter useful for framing the theory of history. They reckon that Edwards' resolute commitment to living out Old and New Testament covenant theology led him to fail to realize that his contemporaries had rejected the Calvinistic ordering of a hierarchal world. Scholars frame the alterations of the Puritan worldview as representative of a social development that had become too progressive for the New Englanders' ancestral convictions, in this case, Augustinian and Calvinistic visions of purity.

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[141] WJE 25:486.
[142] WJE 4:118.
[143] WJE 25:484, 485.

The notion of the effectual pithing of Puritan visions is clear in both Marsden's and Miller's readings of Edwards. They situate him as a man who struggled to fit into his time and place, holding Edwards accountable for pouring old wine into new wineskins, and harkening back to the Gospel imagery that describes the application of Old Testament theology in a New Testament world. These scholars held that Edwards' Calvinist convictions were inappropriate for a time and place that was progressing from the Puritan conviction of human depravity. Accordingly, in the town of Northampton, in the infant stages of embracing revolutionary ideals that celebrated the individual's right to liberties, Edwards' contrasting stance on natural depravity, the integrity of the conscience, ecclesiastical governance, and lofty piety warranted the timely, social outrage that stripped him of his pastorate.[144] A congregation so zealous to overthrow their minister was considered revolutionary among the minority New Light adherents in Edwards' New England.[145]

Marsden, whose biography compellingly portrays Edwards' complicated personality in light of his significant contribution to American intellectual history, effectively critiques Puritan historiography (and hagiography) that have previously represented Edwards as a saint. At the same time, he counters the opinions of his contemporaries that blame Edwards for purportedly oppressive Puritan culture. Miller, who primarily emphasizes Edwards' intellect, casts him as a necessary element in the development of a world that was becoming distinctly American in its ideologies. He proposes that Edwards' struggle to live in a place outside of his theological identity and failure to revitalize Calvinism actually propelled subsequent generations towards increasingly progressive ideologies of universal divinity and the dismissal of inherent depravity, such as Unitarianism. However, he sidelines Edwards' complex affections towards those over whom he exercised a God-given headship. Nonetheless, Marsden

[144] Marsden, *A Life*, 349-350.
[145] Marsden, *A Life*, 359.

and Miller alike posit him as a man who valiantly fought to maintain a Calvinistic framework of the world. They agree that Edwards was a legacy of important contributions of religious thought by lauding his extensive discourse with the philosophers and theologians of his age who suggested Biblical errancy, universalist thought, and inherent human goodness.

Miller's and Marsden's respective analyses have held that Edwards was a Protestant firmly committed to Reformed ideals and simultaneously a pastor influenced by New England concepts of ecclesiastical headship. Evidently, he faced difficulty in reconciling these two theological identities. Because his theology was in accordance with Winthrop's, it would have seemed logical for Edwards to ascribe the identity of ancient Israel to the town of Northampton. However, Edwards was actually making the complicated attempt to bridge a divide between two radically different theological eras. The ideological reality of mid-eighteenth-century Northampton was profoundly removed from the New England of the early seventeenth century that had embraced Winthrop's founding thesis. Edwards thus faced the dilemma whether he should prioritize reforming Christendom in North America over the reestablishment of the New Testament church in Northampton. Yet he was equally committed to both tasks, and often tried to undertake both simultaneously. But as it has been evident in this thesis, the premodern clashing visions of human nature defined the central problem in Edwards' pastoral ministry: to seek reconciliation between Reformed Christianity and a contemporary world adopting an increasingly humanist worldview.[146] Marsden points out that these aspirations practically called for the nearly impossible labor of calling for his generation to revert to the Puritan village of the 1640s.[147] Therefore, Edwards' zeal to bring Christendom to the end of the earth—although biblical—created the subsequent problem of applying orthodox theology to a culture that was becoming distinctly American in its increasing indifference towards doctrinal religion.

[146] Marsden, *A Life*, 213.
[147] Marsden, *A Life*, 350.

If Edwards could speak onto the contemporary interpretations of the clash of ideologies surrounding the young folks' Bible case, he might express regret over the fact that he had not addressed the situation earlier. The inclination of the Northampton youths towards licentiousness was not peculiar to eighteenth-century New England—it was a dangerous tendency that lurked in every human soul. Edwards deploys the imagery of ordinary background noise to illustrate the subtle temptation of abandoning the doctrine of the Word of God. Just "as the whistling of the wind, or the roaring of the water, or lowing of cattle, or barking of dogs" can be heard but tuned out, so too could preaching of salubrious doctrine be disregarded by those who consider God's Word as nonessential.[148] In light of this notion, Edwards comments that "our minds are very retentive and tenacious of that which is evil, but very apt to lose what is good." Accordingly, Edwards perceives, "there are many such hearers of the word of God in our assemblies."[149] Furthermore, he states that "our hearts are prone and bent to evil, and there is an opposition in them against what is good."[150] Because Edwards believed that the faculties of the human embraced the heart, soul, mind, and will, he observes that if one part was neglected, the remainder of the person would go to ruin. Since both the mind and heart are naturally inclined towards temporal, earthly, and transient things, some degree of laborious action must be undertaken in order to retain affection towards religion. For Edwards, this responsibility to the kingdom was to deploy church discipline.

In order to rationalize and explain the heart's resistance to Scripture, the minister needed to reemphasize the tenets of ecclesiastical governance outlined in first-generation covenantal theology. Once more, Edwards demonstrates his paternal concern for the children of his congregation by "beseech[ing] heads of families for the future, to exert themselves to restrain their children from such things." He pronounces that "parents might be ashamed to

[148] WJE 19:40.
[149] WJE 19:41.
[150] WJE 19:49.

own that they have so little authority over their families."[151] This phrase offers a unique glimpse into his private emotions regarding this instance of moral failure. Perhaps in taking a severe stance against the behavior, Edwards was reconciling his pastoral responsibility and his own sense of shame that he had been unable to put an end to the youths' behavior as soon as it had begun.

This section has focused on the complexities of applying rigorous Christian morals to human relationships in the way that Jonathan Edwards did with his congregation. As has been evident, Edwards perceived present matters in light of eternal destiny. He firmly believed that he was specifically appointed by Providence to live in his era. However, Edwards' struggle to reconcile how and why such an instance of moral failure could immediately proceed from a great revival of souls was grounded in his anthropology. By aiming to highlight the conviction and sentiment undergirding his handling of what might be understood by twenty-first century critics as a nonsensical situation in Northhampton, this section has suggested that that interpretation of contemporary circumstances in a providential lens was not, in the eighteenth century, removed from everyday human lives. For a man such as Edwards, layers of Reformed Protestant, Calvinist, and Augustinian thought defined him a person of earnest affection. His life shows that commitment to sound Biblical theology cannot be reduced to religious informalities that manifest themselves cultural Christianity, moralism, or godless spiritualism. For Edwards, and potentially for us and our contemporaries as well, the intersection of theology and human relationships exemplified in the young folks' Bible case had sweeping implications for redemptive history. The continual test of human conscience throughout all of time and the progression of redemptive history towards the Judgment Day, calls for people from all

[151] WJE 19:35.

generations to model serious affection and encounter situations that test fundamentals of Biblical morality.

Conclusion

In contemporary discourse on the history of childhood, a heavy emphasis is often placed on the Puritans because their community centered family relations. Yet because of Puritans' emphasis on familial hierarchy, scholars of family history reproach them for neglecting their children emotionally.[152] These critics believe that because Puritans only taught their children religious morals and the avoidance of sin, they undervalued human sentiment. Similarly, twenty-first century lay readers might regard Edwards' perspective on fallen human nature, church disciple, the conscience, and redemptive history as obsolete, hence characterizing Puritan ideologies as irrelevant to the contemporary world. On the contrary, as this thesis has demonstrated, close examination of the "little church" actually reveals that sentiment and ardent moral convictions were inseparable. For the seventeenth- or eighteenth-century person who exercised any amount of authority in Puritan society, the act of instilling of these values in the next generation was understood to be an act of love. That is, applying the ideologies of Protestant Christianity to household structures was a demonstration of resounding sentiment and genuine care for another person. Such a manner of household governance was rooted in an uncompromising framework of right and wrong, yet this moral frame also undergirded affect in its expression. The highly affectionate language explicit in Puritan print culture demonstrates these New Englanders' profound value for deep thought and rejection of superficialities in childrearing. The Puritans' meticulous effort to preserve their convictions in writing also demonstrates their concern for the generations who would succeed them. In their perspective,

[152] Historian Steven Mintz has written extensively about the history of childhood in his book, *Huck's Raft* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004). In this immense work, Mintz examines the historiography of Puritan childhood; however, he arrives at a rather dour conclusion regarding the presence of sentiment in the New England households. Nevertheless, his work offers a comprehensive examination of the child across American history and frequently engages in historiographically significant topics including the invention of the child and adolescents, the disappearance of childhood, and the perspective of the parent in a world that continues to ascribe to the myth of progress.

nothing was more important than ensuring the reproduction of true religion beyond their own time and place.

Throughout this thesis, my intervention has been to challenge the historiographical claim that the New England Puritans lacked affection. The dynamics of the Puritan household did not divorce sentiment from religious morality, as Western contemporaries might believe. On the contrary, doctrines of true religion undergirded these New Englanders' fondness for the members of the *ecclesia*. My intent has been to demonstrate that the theological and moral perspectives of these Puritans complemented their understanding of human affection. Moreover, these Puritans' convictions were not exclusive to their place and time. The ways in which Puritans chose to live out their convictions have repercussions for the contemporary world and offer a framework for the modern person to understand the tenants of basic human affection across human history.

At this point, my discussion of Puritan values might beg comparison of the past to the present, and the interrogation of which pattern is better. Evidently, this thesis does not support a progressive view of history, nor does it desire to claim that one generation is superior to another. As my discussion of conversion narratives, household governance, moral failure, and church discipline has shown, each generation can potentially be eulogized, but also possesses its own shortcomings. Every generation must clash with its ideological ancestors. Additionally, it must adequately address how to reconcile its ideological roots with ever-changing cultural dynamics. Yet if a generation understands itself in respect to redemptive history, as the New England Puritans certainly did, that generation is also faced with the challenge to define its own point on both earthly and heavenly conceptions of time. The generation has its proper place on the horizontal axis of earthly time, as well as on the vertical axis of its relationship to God. As transpired in the young folks' Bible case, the efforts of a generation's parents to create a better world might be rejected. All in all, Puritans aligned with first-generation principles had

a distinct goal for family education, but their vision fell short in light of emergent revolutionary ideologies.

Jonathan Edwards' conduct in addressing this incident demonstrates the predicament of bringing different generational visions of historical theory into mutual discourse. Clearly, the lives of seventeenth-century Puritans could not be directly folded onto the Northamptonites of the mid-eighteenth century. Neither can the modern world become the communities of the past. This awareness is evident in John Winthrop's founding thesis, which urged the earthly community to mirror heavenly realities in its social structures. Winthrop's vision of a "city on a hill" influenced both Puritan families and the church to adopt an ecclesiastical model of governance. For a majority of first-generation New England settlers who embraced Winthrop's understanding of covenant theology, any other conception of community organization would have been unimaginable. First-generation Puritans expected that their commitment to preserving their biblical convictions, insights, and earthly lessons in writing would ensure the continuation of the faith generation after generation. They imagined that their children would perpetuate the growth of Christian doctrine until the faith of their children's children reached the ends of the earth. They believed that the Bible was the final word in any and all human affairs. To oppose it would be to rebel against the God of the universe. Puritan urgency to adhere to covenant theology was a matter of eternal life or damnation for all peoples.

But our contemporary discourse around American exceptionalism and identity occasionally ostracizes the people of the past whose visions of a better future have contributed to the moral framework of the modern day. Ironically, this pragmatic moral framework could be read as an amoral framing of contemporary perspectives. What might the attitude of modern persons imply for those who genuinely believe that reviving the lessons of the past are important for the construction of the contemporary world, as well as the future? A fully secular reading of the young folks' Bible case might interpret the rebellion among later generations of

Puritans as an act of defiance against a past that was morally burdensome. Modern readers might even laud the later generations' movement away from Puritan morality towards revolutionary ideologies. Nevertheless, the young folks' Bible case sheds light upon the complexities of cultural forces throughout human history that have the potential to manifest in any time or place.

For historians of early America, an interesting means to further this discussion would be to address the question of American identity. Clearly, the New England Puritans were one of many cultural, theological, and ethnic groups in early America. Although later Protestants would predominantly agree that the Puritan community correctly understood salvific history, notions of right and wrong, and the intersections between the family and the church, other schools of thought might argue that modern American identity was constructed upon revolutionary ideologies. In fact, they might posit that the New England Puritans actually detracted from the development of a distinctly American identity. If one places the Protestant conviction that modern America has actually strayed from its foundational theological identity alongside a secular narrative that American identity was actually founded upon an anthropocentric stream of thought, this would surely provoke an interesting discussion about conceptions of American exceptionalism.

All in all, human history is comprised of personal relationships and the innumerable ways in which people understand themselves in their own time and place. Although Puritans' choice to invest in the home and the church may appear minor in comparison to the actions of the political giants or military heroes whose life stories often frame dominant narratives, these Puritans understood that in the salvific scheme of history, the ecclesial structure of the "little church" is at the center of the human experience. An examination of the private lives of these families reveals how and why a generation has chosen to live profoundly different lives than what the triumphalist trajectory that the progressive view of history promotes. As one astute

author has noted, "[There is] much genuine happiness [to] be had in a plain little house, where the daily bread is earned, and some privations give sweetness to the few pleasures."[153] When the contemporary scholar stops to listen to the voices to men and women whose commitments to virtue profoundly changed their lives and those of their surrounding communities, one can only wonder about the particularities of the wisdom deployed in their private lives inside the home. The Puritans were a people of intense affection and studying their households and churches has much to offer for the sentiments of the modern world.

[153] Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women; Little Men; Jo's Boys*, ed. by Elaine Showalter (New York, NY: Penguin Putnam, Inc., 2005), 213.

Further Reading

Daniell, David. *William Tyndale: A Biography*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994.

Beautifully written and compelling biography of William Tyndale's life and love of Scripture. Effectively situates the reader in Tyndale's time and place. Frames the development of the English language through Tyndale's translation, theology, and reception. Extremely well-researched and offers an extensive explication of Tyndale's theology and works, as well as Tyndale's discourse with Thomas More. Presents a deep appreciation for language and tells the story of the English Bible that became the foundation of Puritan society came to be.

Ozment, Steven. *Ancestors: The Loving Family in Old Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Family historiography representative of Ozment's stylistic approach to history. Running theme that the past is not "other" and that the affections of the early modern family are very near to the contemporary person. Comprehensive overview of other scholars of the family, including Aries, Stone, etc.

Ozment, Steven. *Magdalena and Balthasar: An Intimate Portrait of Life in 16th-Century Europe Revealed in the Letters of a Nuremberg Husband & Wife*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986.

Compilation of letters between the wife and husband. Interprets their relationship in a companionship model, as business partners, as lovers, as parents. Rightly situates their time and place in Lutheran Germany with research on the economic, theological, and industrial landscape. Thoughtful in explaining why Ozment chose to study this couple's microhistory and application to emerging modern viewpoints in history.

Ozment, Steven E. *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Historiography of the paternal headship model in early modern Germany. Many primary sources and individual stories included. Sections on childrearing, mothering, household father books, moral lessons taught to children. Sympathetic to family affection within a moralistic framework.

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