

greater length elsewhere. Early versions of these essays were read at a 1999 conference at Millersville University. According to two essayists apologetic about the datedness of their entry, expanded versions of these conference papers were prepared for the press during 2001. While the volume's copy-right reads 2005, the book was actually published on 30 April 2006.

David A. Weir. *Early New England: A Covenanted Society*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005. xviii + 354 pp. \$34.00. Review by JANET MOORE LINDMAN, ROWAN UNIVERSITY.

David Weir's *Early New England: A Covenanted Society* is a study of New England covenants, both political and religious, from Puritan settlement in 1620 to 1708. Weir has conducted an exhaustive search of all materials relating to the extant civil and ecclesiastical covenantal agreements created in every single New England colony during the seventeenth century. This includes communities founded by New Englanders elsewhere, such as Westchester County, New York, and Newark, New Jersey. The author has plumbed these voluminous sources to pose two questions: "were the early New England civil covenants primarily theocentric, christocentric or secular?" and how do covenants, "both church and civil, relate to the account of Puritan covenant theology articulated most famously by Perry Miller but revised extensively by his successors?" (2). Based on his broad assessment of these documents, Weir concludes that church and civil covenants in New England "reflected a counterpoint of unity and diversity" over the course of the seventeenth century (4). While civil covenants became standardized, religious covenants became progressively more varied. This occurred because of Anglicization and growing religious diversity in New England in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

The book includes an introduction and conclusion, six chapters, two appendices, and a bibliographical essay. A brief first chapter focuses on the European context to set the stage for the development of covenants within New England society by explaining the parish system in England and the emergence of Puritanism in the sixteenth century. Chapters two and three describe colonial charters and civil covenants of early New England. Chapters four and five discuss church covenants; the former covers churches of

the Standing Order, while the latter concentrates on dissenting congregations. The sixth chapter analyzes covenantal confessions in seventeenth-century New England. The two appendices are a listing of all seventeenth-century towns, churches, and Native American praying places in or related to New England from 1620 to 1708 (including a list of citations) and a typology of New England civil covenants arranged chronologically. The bibliographical essay delineates the bibliographies and finding aids available to locate published and unpublished town and church records by colony and denomination.

The author argues that six patterns emerge from his study of New England covenants. The first pattern demonstrates that crafting church covenants was a common practice among New Englanders, while creating civil covenants was not. As a result, settlers initially espoused a variety of visions for the civil order but a more uniform religious dominion. By the end of the seventeenth century, New England became anglicized due to the Restoration in 1660 and the Glorious Revolution in 1688-89. This led to the second pattern in which civil covenants "became more generic, secularized, and English as the century progressed" (226). Despite the growing popularity of contracts to establish legal and political relationships, New England remained deeply hierarchical and covenantal. Fourth, church covenants often underwent renewal, while civil covenants rarely did so. The fifth pattern concerns the separation of church and state in New England in which the religious and political realm maintained their own spheres of influence and responsibility. Lastly, Weir argues that the church and civil covenants provided New Englanders with a sense of themselves as part of "biblical and secular history as God's gracious dealings with his people through time" (229).

In the short span of secular time, religious life in New England changed significantly after the restoration of the Stuart monarchy. The Puritan consensus was shattered when the crown forced New Englanders to accept religious toleration. The appearance of Quakers, Baptists, and Anglicans ended the religious unity of New England and church covenants changed in response. Creating confessions of faith became a popular way for Standing Order congregations to differentiate themselves from the dissenters in their midst. At the same time, American Protestants came under the influence of English confessional statements, such as the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Savoy Declaration, and the London Baptist Confession. Because of this burgeoning religious diversity, the author concludes, "there was no semblance

of a New England mind by 1700 in the sphere of religious commitment” (231).

While New England became more English over the course of the seventeenth century, it also became more inclusive through the creation of covenantal confessions according to Weir. Based on an appraisal of one church confession, the “Manifesto” of the Brattle Street Congregational Church in Boston, the author asserts that a “new era” emerged in New England with the “explicit expansion of voting membership to females” in the church. New England moved away “from patriarchal foundation cohorts to a pattern of mixed cohorts of men and women”; the Manifesto is evidence of the “silent shift toward the greater and more active participation of women in the affairs of New England churches” (218). Increased activity by women in the Congregational Church, however, occurred in large degree because of the feminization of membership by the end of the seventeenth century. As female members became more prevalent than male members, a congregation’s survival depended on women’s involvement. This has been clearly demonstrated in the literature on the feminization of church membership by scholars such as Gerald Moran, Richard Shiels, Cedric Cowing, Amanda Porterfield, Stephen Grossbart, Barbara Lacey, Harry Stout and Catherine Brekus, and Carolyn Lawes—a literature not cited by the author. Female dominance in church membership does not necessarily translate into increased power or influence.

Weir’s knowledge and elaboration of covenantal theology and history of New England is deep and persuasive and this work provides a comprehensive overview of covenants in early New England. This publication will be a foundational resource for scholars and students interested in the history of covenants, both civil and ecclesiastical. The bibliographical essay in particular will serve as a useful reference guide on all available sources relating to political and religious covenants in New England colonies during the seventeenth century.

Virginia Mason Vaughan. *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 186 pp. + 10 illus. \$75.00. Review by NANCY M. BUNKER, MACON STATE COLLEGE.