

THE EVOLUTION OF PURITANISM INTO THE MASS CULTURE
OF EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

A Dissertation

by

Dennis Earl Minor

Submitted to the Graduate College of
Texas A&M University in
partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 1973

Major Subject: English

THE EVOLUTION OF PURITANISM INTO THE MASS CULTURE
OF EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

A Dissertation

by

Dennis Earl Minor

Approved as to style and content by:

Harrison E. Nieeth
(Chairman of Committee)

Harrison E. Nieeth
(Head of Department)

James R. Gardner
(Member)

David R. Bowers
(Member)

Richard H. Bellinger
(Member)

Park C. Hunter Jr.
(Member)

December 1973

1150009

ABSTRACT

The Evolution of Puritanism into the Mass Culture
of Early Nineteenth-Century America.

(December 1973)

Dennis Earl Minor, B.A., Texas A&M University;

M.A., Texas A&M University

Directed by: Dr. Harrison E. Hierth

The confusion regarding the nature of Puritan theology and the subsequent influence of Puritanism on later American life is due to the efforts of the Puritans to follow the teaching of Calvin while also showing a need for good works and a need to give man some control over his ultimate destiny. The Puritans, following Calvin, believed God to be omnipotent and man to be depraved; it was then hard for them to deny predestination. But they also felt that good works were a part of the Christian life and that the very existence of churches and preaching demanded that man have some say in his fate. So the Puritans started with the idea of God's omnipotence and began to compromise predestination.

William Ames, the foremost theologian of the American Puritans, made predestination a two-part decree. Ames said that God had predestined man but that the

decree was not complete until each individual either accepted or rejected God's grace. Ames then made good works one of the major points of his theology.

Other theologians turned to the idea of the new covenant as a means of reconciling God's omnipotence with man's freedom to accept or reject grace. Under this theory God's power was in fact unlimited but God had agreed to limit it, agreeing to save those who believed. John Cotton preached the covenant of grace theology in early America. Samuel Willard in the second half of the seventeenth century gave this theology a very legalistic interpretation, emphasizing God's agreement to bind himself. In the eighteenth century Jonathan Edwards told his listeners that God was not legally bound to save any man but that he would withhold his all-powerful wrath for a time, allowing a sinner a limited time to seek grace.

Out of this discussion of Puritan theology some overall emphases emerged. Puritanism assumed an all-powerful God and that man fell through original sin. Man is therefore doomed in God's eyes, and might gain salvation either through God's arbitrary predestination or through God's agreeing to grant salvation on some condition. The Puritans in America believed that God

would grant grace in return for man's faith or belief. The fatalism of predestination was not taught without some qualification. The Puritans also believed that good works were a necessary expression of the religious life but were not alone sufficient for salvation. Education is also one of the emphases of Puritanism, arising from the necessity for the Puritan to be able to read the Bible, on which the Puritan theology was based.

The above emphases, apparent in Puritan theology, reached New England through Puritan preaching. After the decline of the Puritan theology in America these same emphases were first brought to non-Puritan times through two written works that were composed by Puritans, widely read during Puritan times, and widely read after Puritan times: The Day of Doom and the New England Primer. The Primer, used to teach children to read and to know their moral and religious duties, brought the emphases to several generations of children. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Primer was still in use, Noah Webster's Spelling Book became widely used in teaching children. It, and other spellers of the time, also taught the Puritan emphases. Between the Primer and the Spelling Book the Puritan emphases were taught to millions of children. Thus what began in

Puritan theology was made a part of their culture. There is, then, a Puritan heritage that became a part of the mass culture or heritage of the early nineteenth-century American.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all the members of my advisory committee for their helpful suggestions concerning the content and style of this dissertation. My particular thanks go to Dr. Harrison E. Hierth, my chairman, for his continued encouragement. I would also like to acknowledge the help of my wife, Shirley, who typed the rough and finished copies of this dissertation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Previous Studies of the Influence of Puritanism on American Literature	2
	Critical Views	5
II	THE THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND, 1536-1623	23
	Education in New England	23
	Predestination and the New Covenant in the Bible	26
	Calvin's View of the New Covenant and Predestination	31
	Ames's Interpretation of the New Covenant and Predestination	34
	Ames's Application of Religion to Life	43
	Summary of New Covenant Theology	53
III	PURITAN THEOLOGY IN AMERICA, 1636-1741	60
	The New Covenant and the New World	60
	Cotton's Emphasis on the New Covenant	64
	Willard's Legalistic Interpretation of the New Covenant	68
	Edwards Discards the Legalistic Covenant	73
	Predestination Versus Grace	78
	The Puritan View of Life	82

Chapter	Page
IV PURITANISM FOR THE MASSES, 1662-1783 . . .	89
Puritanism in <u>The Day of Doom</u>	89
The New England Primer	96
Its Importance	96
The Primer and Education	98
Puritanism in the Primer	100
V PURITAN EMPHASES, 1783-1829	117
Nineteenth Century Education	117
History of the <u>Spelling Book</u>	129
Puritan Emphases in <u>The American</u> <u>Spelling Book</u>	133
The Use of Webster's <u>Spelling Book</u> . . .	138
Other Spellers	142
Conclusion	149
VI SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	156
BIBLIOGRAPHY	160
VITA	166

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
TABLE 1. BEGINNING SCHOOL CHILDREN, 1693-1820 . .	118
TABLE 2. FREE POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES IN 1787.	120

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In general terms, Puritanism is easy to discuss. Americans generally concede that it had a great effect on American life, thought, and literature; further, most people today would agree that, in some way, this imprint on America was the doing of those early divines who first settled New England. But if pressed to explain exactly how the beliefs of a few could materially affect later generations, few would know where to make a beginning because the path of Puritanism in America is not a clear one. It will be the purpose of this dissertation to make a beginning--to examine the evolution of Puritanism as it passed from the theory and preaching of early theologians into the minds of early nineteenth century Americans. Hopefully, such an examination will reveal some basic ethical values that might be used as a framework for the study of appropriate nineteenth century works of literature.

This dissertation follows the style of the PMLA.

Previous Studies of the Influence of Puritanism
on American Literature

Unfortunately, literary and intellectual histories of America generally confine themselves to the religious aspects of Puritanism, treating specifically only the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among the best of these approaches are Errand into the Wilderness,¹ by Perry Miller, Backgrounds of American Literary Thought,² by Rod W. Horton and Herbert W. Edwards, and The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England,³ by Samuel Eliot Morison. Some literary histories, such as those of Russel B. Nye⁴ and Martin S. Day,⁵ do go on, after discussing Puritanism, to list a "Puritan Spirit" or "Puritan Heritage," to point out possible influences on later times, but they do not discuss later interpretations of Puritanism or apply any interpretation to a body of later work.

A few writers have tried to pin down the specific influence of Puritanism on American literature in later, non-Puritan, times. In 1902 E. Sheffield Clapham wrote on "The Influence of Puritanism on American Literature," saying that its chief lingering influence has been Calvinism, which has left "a certain moral cleanness"⁶ but which also has "chilled the imagination."⁷ That same

year William Dean Howells, in an essay entitled "Puritanism in American Fiction," said also that Puritan theology had left its mark on New England: ". . . its penetrating individualism so deeply influenced the New England character that Puritanism survives almost in its early strength."⁸ Kenneth B. Murdock helps to clarify the apparent confusion of the terms "puritanism" and "Puritanism" in his essay "The Puritan Tradition in American Literature" by pointing out that "The Puritan tradition in literature can mean nothing else than a tradition inspired and fostered by Puritans";⁹ in other words, Puritanism refers to the theological system while puritanism denotes that system's later influence. Murdock goes on to note the importance of the study of this field: "If literary history is to be written as it should be, those who write it must look in literature for traces of the Puritan turn of mind which in other fields left so bold a mark."¹⁰ But Murdock names only two general influences: "one, the heritage of later Puritanism, which welds rules into systems, and the other, nearer to the non-conformist spirit of the first settlers on Massachusetts shores, which also makes moral values and Biblical precept supreme, but conceives of them not merely as grim idols cut in the stone of inherited reverence but as part of the expression of the enthusiasm and richness of

the spirit of man. This view dethroned kings and settled wildernesses, and must be implicit in a Puritan tradition worthy of the name."¹¹ The further study of Puritanism that Murdock called for in 1927 has certainly been done, in the literary and intellectual histories named earlier; one specific later study of Puritan influences is Lawrence Willson's "The Puritan Tradition in American Literature." In it Willson discusses the Puritan influence on American literary art, concluding that while "For the Puritan the content of art must forever be more important than the style of it,"¹² the Puritan did prefer "the happy ending"¹³ and that, ultimately, "Puritanism believes that discipline is as necessary to art as to life, and vital to both. It identifies esthetics and morality" ¹⁴

But even the later studies of Puritanism have tended to confine themselves to the theological side of the question, and tend to define it as a religious system that had passed away by the mid-eighteenth century. Most agree, as do the studies above, that Puritanism left a moral legacy for American thought. These two views of Puritanism--as a system and a moral influence--are well summarized by Russell Blankenship in American Literature as an Expression of the National Mind: "As a religion it

means that extreme type of Calvinism preached in the churches of New England from 1620 to the opening of the nineteenth century. . . . However, it is as a moral code growing out of early Calvinism that Puritanism has had its most enduring influence in American life."¹⁵ Blankenship goes further than most studies in trying to point out Puritan influences in specific areas when he notes that "During the first part of the nineteenth century the outlook of New England Puritanism became predominantly social,"¹⁶ concerning itself with social reform movements such as anti-slavery and temperance. This is as far as the study of the definite influences of Puritanism on nineteenth century literature has been carried.

Critical Views

Perhaps there have been no specific studies of Puritan influences on suitable areas of American literature because of the difficulty in arriving at a usable conception of Puritanism as it had evolved into puritanism by the early nineteenth century. Part of this difficulty arises from the differing critical views of the Puritans and of their legacy, puritanism. An early view of the Puritans saw them as black-frocked, steely-eyed religious fanatics all too ready to kill Indians or

burn witches; puritanism then becomes a code to kill joy, to stamp out individualism, and to instill unthinking obedience to authority. Puritans and their code, in this view, seem a necessity for their time, but we are glad that the time has passed. Nathaniel Hawthorne well summed up this older view of the Puritans when he said, "Let us thank God for having given us such ancestors; and let each successive generation thank him not less fervently for being one step further from them in the march of ages."¹⁷

But this simple view, however understandable it makes the Puritans, is of little critical use; in fact, "Puritan and Puritanism are tyrannous words which rule the more absolutely because they connote so little that can be defined."¹⁸ However, for the study of literature, these terms must be defined or at least limited, for, with an understanding of them "we may evoke from the best thumbed of our books flashes of significance hitherto unseen."¹⁹

Critics do agree that Puritanism has left its mark on America. Joseph Gaer and Ben Siegel note that "Puritan ideals, although greatly modified, still contribute to those fundamental ideas, practices, and goals the rest of the world regard as peculiarly American."²⁰

Samuel Eliot Morison sees puritanism as a fine wine to which changing times make additions and subtractions. "Thus the change is gradual, and the mother-wine of 1656 still gives bouquet and flavor to what is drawn in 1956."²¹ But there are different opinions as to the type of grapes that went into this mother-wine; the aging process itself has received insufficient attention for a solid exposition of what puritanism had become by the early nineteenth century.

The most common critical view of the mother wine, Puritanism, is that it is synonymous with, or very close to, Calvinism. In this view the Puritans adhered to the theology of Calvin and left a legacy that viewed the world in light of the five points of Calvinism. These five points set up a logical relationship between God and man which emphasizes God's perfection and power and man's imperfection and helplessness. First of all, man is totally sinful and unable to save himself; next, he is subject to God's unconditional election, whereby God, at the beginning of time, predestined some to salvation, some to reprobation; since only some are destined to be saved, it follows that there is only limited atonement through Christ, limited to those elected for salvation; also, since God is all-powerful, those chosen for election are unable to refuse God's grace; and, last of all,

those elected by God and given his grace will be able to do His will and live uprightly to the end, since anything less would mean that man had the power to cast off or refute God's will.²²

Following the Calvinistic interpretation of Puritanism, Darrett B. Rutman sums up the Puritan doctrine preached in England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries:

An absolute God freely and graciously elects those he will save (election); but he also calls those he elects (vocation); and those he calls feel faith in Christ building within them, their sins are remitted, and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them (justification); justification emboldens and hardens them in their battles with the sin of the world and their own flesh (sanctification); and so hardened they live a life that merits, although it does not earn, salvation (glorification).²³

Edmund S. Morgan, in discussing these same points, emphasizes the first: "The Puritans, like all Protestants, especially of the Calvinist variety, believed in predestination; God, they maintained, had determined in advance who was to be saved and who was to be damned."²⁴ Frank Hugh Foster, writing at the turn of the century, also equated Puritanism with Calvinism when he said that "Old Calvinism, shaped by the prevailing acceptance of the Westminster Confession, continued to be the dominant and well-nigh unchallenged system in the New England churches

even after Arminianism had begun to make serious inroads at the beginning of the eighteenth century."²⁵ Russell Blankenship, in discussing the "Creed of Puritanism," narrows the five points of Calvinism to what he felt were the most important three: election, or predestination, bondage of the will (the idea that man's destiny is not in his control), and the perseverance of the saints.²⁶ Walter Blair, Theodore Hornberger, and Randall Stewart, who emphasize the doctrine of predestination, also see Calvinism as "the dominant theology of the entire colonial period."²⁷ Kenneth Murdock, while adding a cautionary note, agrees. He notes that "Not all Puritans were Calvinists, and certainly not all Calvinists were Puritans. None the less it may be said without too many reservations that the essentials of Calvinistic doctrine so far as they could affect literature are involved in the Puritan tradition."²⁸ And Darrel Abel, while saying that "Puritanism was not a particular sect or creed," goes on to tie it closely to Calvinism when he lists as the basic tenets of Puritanism an emphasis on God's sovereignty and the authority of the Bible, the universal depravity of man, man's predestination, and the limited election and salvation of some.²⁹

Other critics take a more descriptive, less dogmatic, view of the Puritans and puritanism, views that do not

deny Calvinistic influences but do consider other contributing factors. One such general view is given by Perry Miller and Thomas Johnson: "Puritanism may perhaps best be described as that point of view, that philosophy of life, that code of values, which was carried to New England by the first settlers in the early seventeenth century."³⁰ Martin Day seems to agree essentially with this descriptive point of view when he lists seven elements of the "Puritan Heritage" as "1. rigid sense of morality; 2. emphasis upon material success; 3. self-reliance; 4. feeling for democracy; 5. enthusiasm for education; 6. fervor for social reform; 7. conflict of conscience arising from an awareness that material success is not adequate as a major goal in life."³¹

This code of values or point of view toward life, while certainly not based on Calvinism, is still oriented towards religion. Russel Nye, in listing a Puritan legacy, also ties his points very closely to a religious background. Nye says that puritanism first of all tells man that he and his life on earth are permanently flawed. Secondly, puritanism states that man and his world can be made better. Third, puritanism, because of its base in seventeenth-century Calvinism, demanded self-discipline and self-denial. Fourth, puritanism stressed the individual since he faced God alone. Fifth, the conversion

experience made the Puritan feel set apart--assured that he could be saved. Last of all, puritanism put life on an ethical bias, teaching the importance of a "rigid obedience to moral standards . . . that men were personally accountable for the consequences of their actions."³² Leslie Fiedler and Arthur Zeiger also view puritanism as a way of life based on religion:

Certainly, the ABC of the New England Primer is the ABC of all Americans, whatever the date of their provenience or the place of their Old World origin; and the verse attached to the first letter of the alphabet has never ceased to haunt us: "In Adam's Fall / We sinned all." Yet the Puritan heritage is not all gloom: it contains the promise of Grace and Salvation as well as the reminder of Original Sin.³³

So, in discussing the Puritan influence on later times, there is general critical agreement that these influences grew out of the religious life of colonial New England; but whether this religious life was based on Calvinism is less clear, since some of the influences attributed to Puritanism are incompatible with Calvinistic doctrines. The primary stumbling block is the belief in predestination, which, when logically applied, removes the hope of the individual to better himself in God's eyes, negates the individual conscience (since election does not depend on man's deeds or misdeeds), and precludes ideas of social reform (since God fore-ordained all that has happened, a poor social state is an

act of God--His punishment).

For this study, then, the theology of Puritanism must be clarified, at least as to its main development during Puritan times. This clarification can be made through a study of the theological background of the Puritans, followed by an evolutionary look at key Puritan issues as handled by leading Protestant ministers of the first hundred years of American life.

But the examination of these two areas of Puritanism, although it will enable one to isolate a Puritan ethos or outlook on certain key issues of life, is not of itself sufficient to reliably posit that this outlook existed at the beginning of the nineteenth century on a large scale. We must remember that "in the 'great migration' the Puritan element, in the sense of New England church-membership, amounted to only about four thousand persons out of about sixty-five thousand."³⁴ Further, "It is estimated that at the best of times only twenty per cent of the early settlers were members of any church."³⁵ So one cannot limit himself "to the study of the writings of the articulate few, on the assumption that the public professions of the ministers and magistrates constitute a true mirror of the New England mind."³⁶

But neither can the theology and preaching of the time be ignored, for the Puritan church, in spite of its size, had great impact. In colonial times "Puritanism exerted in the life of the colonies . . . an influence out of all proportion to the actual church membership it could claim, a fact which attests clearly to the great moral force that it generated."³⁷ And, according to Winthrop Hudson, in his history of religion in America, the impact of the Puritan church left more than a moral legacy; it directly influenced the religious teachings of the Congregational, Presbyterian, Baptist, Anglican, Quaker, and Lutheran churches in America.³⁸ When one considers the total moral force generated from all these sources it is evident that the theology of Puritanism cannot be ignored.

What is needed, then, in order to define Puritan influences on later times, is a balanced approach, one which will explore the theology of the Puritans at least to the extent of discovering how Calvinistic it was, but which will use other, non-theological writings to determine what widespread effect this theology had on the mass of people. For it is the common man who has been the real keeper of puritanism; instead of studying the leaders of the time, the intellectual historian

must seek instead to understand the rank and file, their motivations, aspirations, and achievements. For in the last analysis which is more vital, an ideological "Puritanism" divorced from reality which has received so much attention over the years, or the reality which has received so little attention but which was in essence laying down the basis for two-and-a-half centuries of American history ahead?³⁹

This dissertation will attempt to discern the Puritan legacy for the early nineteenth-century rank and file. First, the theology of Puritanism will be examined to determine its key religious issues or emphases as they evolved during the active lifetime of Puritanism. This dissertation will then turn from theology, as Darrett B. Rutman suggests in the quotation given immediately above, to works that were connected to active Puritanism but also were widely read by men of differing religions who might have little idea of Puritan theology. After Puritanism ceased to be a distinct theology, its emphases were carried on in education and passed down as a part of America's mass culture.

Culture may be defined as "a particular state or stage of advancement in civilization";⁴⁰ in this dissertation the stage or state will be early nineteenth-century America. Culture is also "the characteristic features of such a stage or state,"⁴¹ specifically "the intellectual content of civilization."⁴² Culture

"is learned, it is not a manifestation, in particular content, of man's genetic constitution."⁴³ It contains transmitted values--"a heritage or social tradition";⁴⁴ and, since it applies to a particular civilization, it is shared: it is "a kind of mental common denominator, a shared store of complex understandings achieved between mind and mind."⁴⁵ We can then say that the mass culture of early nineteenth-century America is composed of many learned and shared ideas, transmitted to many individuals.

Education is an integral part of culture; in a narrower sense culture may also be defined as "improvement or refinement by education and training."⁴⁶ Since culture is taught, rather than being a natural attribute of man, "we require schools to supervise this process of learning, to see that the 'heritage' is in fact handed on from generation to generation."⁴⁷ We can then say that the mass culture of early nineteenth-century America was comprised of ideas that were passed down through an educational process as part of a heritage; this heritage was then learned and shared by reaching a plurality of Americans.

Obviously, then, the culture of early nineteenth-century America could potentially involve each person

then living. However, since culture is concerned with a mass of people and with shared ideas, this dissertation will consider material that can be documented as having reached a mass of people, was in fact designed to educate them, and is still available for examination. Those unable to read and write were certainly a part of nineteenth-century America, but what impact the mass culture of the time had on them is open to speculation: "What the a verbal man of the past thought about anything is probably lost forever to historical research" ⁴⁸ Since he could not read, there is a good chance of his being unaware of many shared ideas; since he could not write, he left no record of the ideas that he did have. In this dissertation, then, mass culture will be considered "a social tradition which is at once transmitted, learned and shared" ⁴⁹ -- the learned and shared ideas of the plurality of Americans able to read. This dissertation does not claim that Puritanism is the mass culture of nineteenth-century America or that only through schools is mass culture transmitted. But it will show that schools did transmit Puritanism down to the early nineteenth century and that their doing so made Puritanism a part of the learned and shared ideas of early nineteenth-century America.

Chapter II will examine the roots of the key issues of Puritanism--predestination and the new covenant-- in the Bible and in the theology of John Calvin. Then the theology of the most important Puritan theorist, William Ames, will be discussed as to those same issues. Ames's application of religion to life will also be discussed as a means of pinning down a beginning view of Puritanism as a philosophy of life. Chapter III will look at the new covenant and predestination as they were preached in America by three Puritans and one non-Puritan, John Wesley, whose sermon "Free Grace" effectively summarizes the logical outcome of the covenant theology. Chapter IV will be devoted to an examination of the New England Primer and The Day of Doom, two very popular works written during Puritan times whose popularity did not cease until well into the nineteenth century. These works will show that the theological view that came out of the new covenant and the application of Puritanism to life that Ames wrote on did exist in these widely read works and was accepted in non-Puritan times. Chapter V will discuss Noah Webster's American Spelling Book and several other texts to show that these same ideas were incorporated in a widely used book written after the Puritan period, thus demonstrating that by the early

nineteenth century Puritanism had become a system of ethics or philosophy of life. Chapter VI will be a summary and conclusion.

NOTES

- 1 Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1964.
- 2 New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967.
- 3 New York: New York Univ. Press, 1965.
- 4 American Literary History, 1607-1830 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970).
- 5 History of American Literature from the Beginning to 1910 (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday And Co., Inc., 1970).
- 6 E. Sheffield Clapham, "The Influence of Puritanism on American Literature," Living Age, 4 Oct. 1902, p. 46.
- 7 Clapham, p. 46.
- 8 William Dean Howells, Literature and Life (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1902), p. 281.
- 9 Kenneth B. Murdock, "The Puritan Tradition in American Literature," in The Reinterpretation of American Literature, ed. Norman Foerster (1928; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1959), p. 86.
- 10 Murdock, p. 87.
- 11 Murdock, p. 101.
- 12 Lawrence Willson, "The Puritan Tradition in American Literature," Arizona Quarterly, 13, No. 1 (Spring 1957), 37.
- 13 Willson, p. 39.
- 14 Willson, p. 40.
- 15 Russell Blankenship, American Literature as an Expression of the National Mind (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1931), pp. 52-53.
- 16 Blankenship, p. 53.

- 17 Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Main Street," The Complete Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1883), III, 460. Moses Coit Tyler quotes this remark in his A History of American Literature 1607-1765 (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1949), p. 95.
- 18 Murdock, p. 109.
- 19 Murdock, p. 113.
- 20 The Puritan Heritage: America's Roots in the Bible (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 13.
- 21 The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England, 3rd ed. (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1965), p. 6.
- 22 Rod W. Horton and Herbert W. Edwards, Backgrounds of American Literary Thought, 2nd ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), pp. 20-21; also Frank S. Mead, Handbook of Denominations in the United States, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), p. 176.
- 23 American Puritanism: Faith and Practice (New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1970), p. 15.
- 24 Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1963), p. 67.
- 25 "The History of the Original Puritan Theology of New England, 1620-1720," American Journal of Theology, 1, No. 3 (July 1897), 703.
- 26 Blankenship, pp. 52-53.
- 27 American Literature: A Brief History (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1964), p. 11.
- 28 Murdock, p. 93.
- 29 American Literature: Vol. I, Colonial and Early National Writing (Woodbury, N. Y.: Barron's Educational Series, 1963), p. 33.
- 30 Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, eds., The Puritans (New York: American Book Co., 1938), p. 1.
- 31 History of American Literature from the Beginning to 1910 (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Co., Inc.,

1970), p. 20.

32 American Literary History: 1607-1830 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), pp. 13-14.

33 Leslie A. Fiedler and Arthur Zeiger, eds., Brave New World: American Literature from 1600 to 1840 (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1968), p. 379.

34 James Truslow Adams, "Economic Interests and Political Conflict," in Puritanism in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts, ed. David D. Hall (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 34.

35 Horton and Edwards, p. 41.

36 Darrett B. Rutman, "Local Freedom and Puritan Control," in Puritanism in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts, ed. David D. Hall (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 108.

37 Horton and Edwards, p. 42.

38 Religion in America (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), pp. 8-9.

39 Rutman, p. 118.

40 Webster's New International Dictionary, 2nd ed. (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1961).

41 Webster's New International Dictionary.

42 The Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933).

43 Lawrence Stenhouse, Culture and Education (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1967), p. 2.

44 Stenhouse, p. 2.

45 Stenhouse, p. 53.

46 The Oxford English Dictionary.

47 Stenhouse, p. 15.

48 Ruth Miller Elson, Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. vii.

49 Stenhouse, p. 2.

CHAPTER II

THE THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND, 1536-1623

Education in New England

The lives and thoughts of the people who settled the New World were bound up in theology. Foremost among their possessions were Bibles. New England estates often had only one book--the Bible--and men who owned no other book might have six copies of it.¹ In Northern and Southern colonies, it was a common possession.²

In the New England colonies, the Bible had great doctrinal importance. "In it resided the source of all laws, the only firm knowledge of good and evil, to be read in the light of its pure reason and in the ecstasy of grace which it imparted. . . . those who opposed the Established church saw the Bible as the only revealed word of God, containing the complete, final, and absolute code for all matters spiritual and civil."³ In the Southern colonies the Bible was not used to establish churches, as those colonies had no doctrinal dispute with England's established religious beliefs; but it was used as a guide to right conduct in this world and to salvation in the next.⁴

New Englanders, then, particularly had a great need for education, that they might be able to read the Bible and read those who explained or systematized the teachings of it. The faith of the people "depended on an enlightened ministry and laity able to read and interpret the Bible."⁵ The early New England settlers were as a group quite literate, and school laws were soon passed to insure the education of the following generations. The Massachusetts school law of 1647 required each township of fifty householders to appoint and pay someone to teach the town children to read and write, so that they might obtain "knowledge of ye Scriptures."⁶ The Connecticut school law of 1650 required parents to teach "their children and apprentices so much learning as may enable them perfectly to read the English tongue . . . that all masters of families, do, once a week, at least catechise their children and servants, in the grounds and principles of religion"⁷

This emphasis on education resulted in an extremely literate New England population. An examination of signatures on legal documents has revealed that 90 to 95 percent of the residents of Massachusetts and Connecticut between 1640 and 1700 could sign their names.⁸ This figure as a literacy rate may seem too high, but a study

based on documents may "compensate for itself when applied to a period in which writing was considered a rather sophisticated subject to be learned after graduation from the hornbook, the primer, and some acquaintance with the Bible as a text."⁹ In other words, only a limited amount of the population would have occasion to sign documents; but it is also probable that "very many, perhaps a major part, of the colonists, not only in New England but in the Middle Colonies and Virginia, who were unable to write their names could read the King James Bible and other simple English texts."¹⁰

The material that this public read was primarily of an educational-religious nature. The most popular religious work was the Bible; following in popularity were a Book of Psalms, "one of the treatises by Calvin or some other favored divine," and a catechism.¹¹ The Massachusetts school laws were obeyed in due time "through the wide distribution of The New England Primer, the first in America's great trinity of schoolbooks that includes Webster's Speller and McGuffey's Readers. Probably first compiled in 1683, the Primer ranked next to the Bible in popular distribution."¹²

This chapter, then, will look into the Bible, the writings of Calvin, and the writing of another "favored

divine," William Ames, works read by the Puritans themselves, as a means of clarifying the basic issues of Puritan theology in America.

Predestination and the New Covenant in the Bible

Part of the confusion regarding the degree of Calvinism to be found in Puritanism stems from the fact that the greatest source of Protestant thought--the Bible--was used for support by Calvinists and non-Calvinists alike. Thus, a theologian, be he John Calvin, William Ames, or John Cotton, could give his own cast to Protestant thought, assured that as long as he based his interpretations on the Bible, he had almost irrefutable proof that he was correct in his thinking. And so arises the difficulty in pinning down basic Puritan theology, since its key historical issues, the ideas of predestination and the new covenant, are both Biblically based. These ideas, which became antithetical in practice, are largely responsible for the puritanism of the nineteenth century and for the confusion regarding that puritanism's composition.

A basis for predestination can be found in several passages in the Bible, most of them ambiguous as to its

exact application. Ephesians i.4 says that God "chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him."¹³ II Timothy ii.19 is a little less clear: "But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and 'Let every one who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.'" The ninth chapter of Romans brings out the idea most clearly. Verse 15 notes that God says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." From that, verse 16 concludes that salvation then "depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy." And verse 18 follows logically from 16: "So then he has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills." These quotes, taken alone, seem to give a fairly sound basis for a doctrine of predestination; however, the point that Paul is leading to comes out in verses 22-24. He is using the idea of predestination to tell his fellow believers that the Israelites' racial status as God's chosen people will not bring them salvation. Their historically exalted position may have been intended by God only to make their destruction more meaningful, to clearly make the point that belief, not race, will bring salvation:

What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the vessels of wrath made for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

The point here seems to be to emphasize faith and God's absolute power instead of establishing predestination as a theological point. Also, predestination is mentioned primarily by Paul and is not found in the Old Testament. So, Protestant theologians could find mention of the idea in the Bible, but little emphasis on it as a religious cornerstone.

In contrast, the idea of a new covenant is firmly established in the Bible and is referred to and explained in both the Old and New Testaments. According to the Bible it is the covenant, or agreement, under which all men have lived since man's fall in the Garden of Eden.

When God created man he established a covenant with his creation, called afterward the old covenant or covenant of works. This covenant, which considered man and God as equals, stated that, in exchange for his "works" --primarily obeying God--Adam would be given eternal life. When Adam disobeyed, the agreement was broken and death replaced eternal life. And through Adam the covenant of works for all later men was broken since it was

based on an agreement between equals; all men were degraded by the original sin and could never again gain an equal footing for bargaining with God.

However, God made a new covenant through Abraham to establish nations blessed by God. In Genesis xvii.4-7 God tells Abraham,

"Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you."

The extent of this covenant and its complete intent are not clear in Genesis; it seems to be made primarily for historic necessity: God chose Abraham to begin establishing the nation of Israel, whose people would be blessed by God. In exchange for their belief, God would give the nation earthly prosperity. That much is clear in Genesis.

But Paul, in the New Testament, interprets this covenant in a way that deemphasizes its historical purpose and emphasizes the man-to-God relationship implicit in the agreement. In Romans ix.8 Paul says that it is not Abraham's physical or national descendants "who are

the children of God, but the children of the promise [believers] are reckoned as descendants." He clarifies this further in Galatians iii.28-29: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." To Paul the covenant has become a promise to save believers; salvation then "depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants--not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham, for he is the father of us all" (Romans iv.16). The covenant has become, in Paul's hands, more of a belief than of a contract between parties; he has given it potentialities that the historical version of the new covenant did not have.

One can say, then, that the idea of the covenant of works and original sin is clearly contained in the Bible, open to little dispute by Christians; that a new covenant is spoken of between God and Abraham, although its scope and terms are less clear; and that the idea of predestination is mentioned in the Bible but is not made the basis for any far-reaching conclusions or system

of theology. But in the hands of Protestant thinkers in Europe and colonial America these Biblical potentialities became the basis for theological systems. Their mixture contributes much to the ambiguity of Puritanism.

Calvin's View of the New Covenant and Predestination

John Calvin (1509-1564), a key figure in the history of religious thought, exerted a powerful influence on the Protestant thinking of his time, particularly through his Institute. Vergilius Ferm points out the importance of this work when he notes that

The Institute of the Christian Religion (Institutio Christianae), published in 1536, has been regarded in wide circles as the Primer of Protestantism. Institute signifies instruction. It was written as a sort of text-book of the tenets of the Christian religion by the rising Reformation leaders The system of theology and polity which developed from Calvin's Scriptural interpretations became known as Calvinism, a major system in historic Protestant thought.¹⁴

In this work Calvin emphasizes man's helplessness and God's omnipotence. The degraded state of man came about through original sin, which Calvin defines as "a hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused through all the parts of the soul, rendering us obnoxious to the divine wrath and producing in us those works which the Scripture calls 'works of the flesh.'"¹⁵

Calvin makes little of the new covenant as a restorative device for man; instead, as Perry Miller notes, he views it as "only a statement of the permanence of God's promises . . . or the institution of the sacraments of circumcision and baptism."¹⁶ Perhaps that is because he makes much of the more tenuous idea of predestination which, if believed, would tend to negate any sort of new covenant that called for free will on man's part, as Paul's interpretation of it would.

After first noting that no pious person "dares absolutely to deny" predestination, Calvin goes on to give his interpretation of the idea:

Predestination we call the eternal decree of God by which he has determined in himself what he would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not created with a similar destiny, but eternal life is foreordained for some and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say he is predestined either to life or to death.¹⁷

Realizing that this view seemed to remove human responsibility and impute Adam's fall to God, Calvin warned, "let no one murmur that God might have made a better provision for our safety by preventing the fall of Adam. For such an objection ought to be abominated as too presumptuously curious, by all pious minds."¹⁸

As harsh and as closed to criticism as the idea of predestination would seem to be, it also has some strong

appeals. First of all, it is logical if one accepts Calvin's assumptions. Calvin assumes that God is omnipotent and omniscient and that His decrees are eternal. It would follow that such a god would know in the very beginning those individuals who would achieve grace and those who would not. A lack of this knowledge on God's part would mean that God was not omniscient, or, as Horton and Edwards say, "since few men were prepared to maintain that God's power is in any way limited, one had only to accept the two major premises of God's omnipotence and man's depravity . . . and the rest of the system was inescapable."¹⁹ Secondly, predestination is sure. One who feels he is of the elect need not feel that his actions until death are being weighed, with his salvation depending on the outcome. Last, predestination appeals to the ego. As far as man knows, if he feels elected, he is elected. And, being of the elect, he is clearly superior to the unelected for all time.

However, there are defects in the doctrine also. It has little Biblical support; it negates the idea of free will from Adam onward; it makes man's earthly state a product of God's plan and perhaps a sign of election or reprobation; and it removes all need for preaching and for organized churches, since no amount

of preaching or practicing of religion can change an individual's fate.

With all of its strengths and weaknesses, the doctrine of predestination, which Calvin added to the Protestant theology of his time, "became the central doctrine of churches that accepted the Institutes as the rule of faith."²⁰ As discussed earlier, many critics number the American Puritans as basing their beliefs on predestination. But this view oversimplifies the idea, for the Puritans turned, not to Calvin for their theology, but to their own interpreters of Protestantism, interpreters who might themselves reinterpret earlier thinkers, including Calvin. Through a look at the theology of the best known and most influential of these Puritan theologians, William Ames (1576-1633), one can begin to see the emerging Puritan beliefs.

Ames's Interpretation of the New Covenant and Predestination

There is general critical agreement that Ames's Medulla Theologica (later translated as The Marrow of Theology), written in 1623, is extremely important in New England thought. In his introduction to the modern edition of the work, John D. Eusden says that "For a

century and a half William Ames's Marrow of Theology held sway as a clear, persuasive expression of Puritan belief and practice."²¹ Eusden goes on to call Ames perhaps the "greatest influence in the intellectual history of early New England."²² Edmund Morgan says that Ames's theological treatises "reign supreme in New England for a century and a half."²³ The Marrow, or Medulla, was used as a "standard textbook survey of theology . . . by New England students,"²⁴ according to Perry Miller; Frank H. Foster also notes this use of this work.²⁵ Eusden says that undergraduates "at Emmanuel College, Leyden, Harvard, and Yale had to read the Marrow in Latin as part of basic instruction in divinity"; indeed, "In England, Holland, and New England nearly all those who aspired to the Puritan way read the book."²⁶ Among those influenced by this work were John Cotton, one of the most important of the early New England ministers, and Jonathan Edwards, the best known 18th century theologian in America.²⁷ By the examination of Ames's major work, particularly on the issues of predestination and the new covenant, the extent of Puritan deviation from Calvinism will become clear, along with emerging applications of Puritanism to society.

Book One of the Marrow sets forth Ames's theology. He does this by breaking large topics down into their

parts, gradually becoming more and more detailed. Thus the whole topic, "Theology," is divided into "Faith in God" and "Observance"; "Faith in God" is divided into "Sufficiency" and "Efficiency"; "Observance" is divided into "Virtue" and "Good Works." All of the material coming under "Faith in God" gives Ames's theological theory. All that under "Observance" constitutes Book Two of the Marrow and tells how to apply the theology to life. The great virtue of Ames's method for the reader is that it is readily apparent what Ames considered to be most important and how the parts of his theological plan are related.

Ames discusses the covenant of works and man's fall in much detail in Book One. Of the old covenant he says "the law of God or his covenant with man in the creation was, Do this and you will live; if you do it not you shall die."²⁸ Ames emphasizes that Adam sinned through free will:

The principal cause [of the fall] was man himself in his abuse of free will For he had received righteousness and grace by which he might have remained obedient, if he had so chosen. That righteousness and grace was not taken from him before he sinned God therefore was in no way the cause of his fall; neither did he lay upon man the necessity of sinning. Man of his own accord freely fell from God. (p. 114)

Ames then goes on to explain original sin and to tell how it led to actual sin in Adam's descendants. Original

sin is "a habitual deviation of the whole nature of man, or a turning aside from the law of God" (p. 120). Actual sin "is a deviation of human action or turning aside from the law of God It follows from original sin as an act follows a habit, or as a person's misdeed flows from a fault of his nature" (p. 121). This transmission from Adam is broken down into two parts--imputation and real communication: "Imputation means that the individual act of disobedience which was Adam's becomes ours also"; "Real communication means that the individual sin, although not ours, is like ours in meaning and nature" (p. 127). Ames's interpretation of the fall of man through his breaking of the old covenant and of the effect of this sin on following generations seems to be rather conventional; his definition of original sin is very like that of Calvin. But what is apparent about Ames here is his logical ordering of ideas, his breakdown of ideas into major and minor parts, and his attention to detail. These qualities become very important in understanding his deviation from Calvin in explaining the new covenant and predestination.

As noted earlier, Calvin made little of the new covenant; for Ames it is a major support in his theological system. An equal topic with man's fall is man's

restoration; this restoration itself has two parts: the fact of redemption by Christ, and the application of this redemption to man through the new covenant. This application is further broken down into theoretical and practical sides. Application comes in theory through predestination, union by calling, and communion; practically, the application of redemption comes through the institution of the church and through the church's ministers. Thus Ames has made predestination only a subordinate part of the new covenant. How he is able to combine these antagonistic doctrines is revealing of the real complexity of Puritanism.

Ames views Christ as the mediator who has made possible man's redemption. But as Ames begins his discussion of this mediating power, leading to his analysis of the new covenant and a following chapter on predestination, he begins to qualify what he terms in chapter twenty-four "The Application of Christ." Ames says that Christ's redeeming power

depends, first, upon the Father's decree and donation by which he has given Christ certain men to be redeemed and saved Second, upon the intention of Christ whereby he has made satisfaction for the good of those who have been destined for him by the Father Third, upon the acceptance of the Father, or his ratification of the satisfaction given for the reconciliation and salvation of those persons. (p. 149)

This view, in spite of the agreement between God and Christ to work in behalf of man, seems to agree with the doctrine of predestination of Calvin. But by the ninth paragraph of this chapter on application Ames has begun to qualify his predestinarian view:

As for the intention of application, it is rightly said that Christ made satisfaction only for those whom he saved, though in regard to the sufficiency in the mediation of Christ it may also rightly be said that Christ made satisfaction for each and all. Because these counsels of God are hidden to us, it is the part of charity to judge well of every one, although we may not say of all collectively that Christ equally pleads the cause of each before God. (p. 150)

Ames then begins his discussion of the new covenant, noting nine differences between it and the old covenant and in doing so manages to make those who are under the new covenant the same that God had predestined to be saved. Ames's first two differences have been discussed earlier: that the covenant is an agreement between enemies and that man no longer has a bargaining position with God. But the third difference seems to make the new covenant the heir to predestination theology:

Third, it differs in the object, for the old was extended to all men, but the new belongs in a special way only to certain men. Although from the human point of view it is often offered indiscriminately, by its nature it belongs and with special propriety is directed to those whom God intended, those who are called sons and heirs of the promise and salvation, Gen. 15; Acts 2:39 and 3:25; Rom. 4:16, 13 and 9:7, 8; Gal. 3:21, 29. (p. 151)

The sections of the Bible listed here as support or source material are those sections dealing with the new covenant, explaining finally that, as was discussed earlier, the covenant depends on faith, rests on grace, and is guaranteed to all who share the faith of Abraham.

Ames then lists other differences between the two covenants: the new is directed by grace, is founded on Christ, promises both life and righteousness, has no prior condition such as perfect obedience of works, bestows righteousness, brings promised salvation instead of punishment, and is everlasting for those who are in it (pp. 151-52).

But in combining predestination and the new covenant, Ames obviously has a problem: since the new covenant, the covenant of grace, is founded on a faith that can be acquired, it would seem that the believer would be able to change from one destined for death to one destined to life. Ames attacks this problem in paragraph two of his next chapter, "Predestination." He first divides predestination into two sections, separated by an immense span of time. First, there is the decree of predestination, done at the time of creation: "Predestination has existed from eternity. . . . It operated in the very beginning of God's work" But to

Ames the decree is not a finished command but an unfulfilled promise to be completed later: ". . . but there is no inward difference in the predestined until the actual application of it." The fulfillment of predestination depends on the individual's reception of grace: "Predestination before the application of grace puts nothing in the persons predestined but lies hidden only in the One who predestines" (p. 152).

After this conditioned preface in paragraph two of "Predestination" Ames then analyzes predestination. Sounding Calvinistic, he first reaffirms the certainty of the decree, saying God knows the identity of each individual predestined; he goes on to say that there is no visible quality of a man that controls his fate: "the difference inherent in the decree does not depend upon man, but the differences found in men are the result of the decree" (p. 153). But then, as perhaps his capstone of reasoning, Ames reconciles his prefatory view of predestination with grace with the conventional idea of absolute predestination:

There is properly only one act of will in God because in him all things are simultaneous and there is nothing before or after. So there is only one decree about the end and means, but for our manner of understanding we say that, so far as intention is concerned, God wills the end before the means. . . . As for execution, however, he first wills the means and then directs them to their end. (pp. 153-54)

God wills predestination; the individual's reception of grace completes the act.

In his discussion of the new covenant and predestination, Ames has done two things to Calvinism. Through his insistence of God's absolute power, he has helped to preserve the cardinal belief of Calvin on God's complete freedom; through his modification of Calvin's doctrine of predestination he has opened the way to the covenant theology of early America, which helped push predestination from the mainstream of theology. Eusden notes that with Ames predestination became "a way of assuring the believer that he can expect the blessings of the Christian life."²⁹ Ames' students went on "to make the covenant of grace a theological hallmark of mid- and late-seventeenth-century Puritanism."³⁰

In the rest of Book One of the Marrow, Ames discusses the stages of election, the composition of the church, and the sacraments. The stages of election are the well-known ones of calling (the offering of grace to man), justification (God's forgiving of sins), adoption (taking man in as a son because of Christ), sanctification (the change in man from a sinner into an image of God), and glorification (God's bestowal of total perfection after death). The church is to be composed of the elect.

An individual church and its members are bound together by each person's renewing of the covenant, a "confession of faith and promise of obedience" (p. 180). And, since Ames has made election dependent on the reception of grace or faith, "The profession of the true faith is the most essential mark of the church" (p. 181). Thus it would seem that the reception of belief by the individual fulfills the decree of predestination, making one a member of the elect. As one of the elect, the believer is a member of the invisible church, one of the potential saints. A confession of this belief in a visible or earthly church body renews the covenant, saying that the believers will "bind themselves individually to perform all those duties toward God and toward one another which relate to the purpose of the church and its edification" (p. 180).

Ames's Application of Religion to Life

Ames has well spelled out man's duties toward God in Book One of the Marrow; in Book Two he takes up men's duties toward one another, helping greatly to clarify the application of Puritan theology to society, pointing the way to the puritanism of later centuries. Of particular interest to the student of Puritanism are Ames's

remarks on virtue and good works, as these two chapters explain the Puritan carryover of religion into daily life. For Ames virtue and good works (or virtuous action) were the two parts of man's observance of religion.

Virtue is "a condition or habit . . . by which the will is inclined to do well" (p. 224). And only theology "brings the whole revealed will of God to the directing of our reason, will, and life. . . . the Apostle expressly teaches that theology instructs us to live not only piously and righteously but also temperately and justly, or honestly and honorably . . ." (p. 226). Thus, through his definition of virtue, Ames immediately makes the observance of religion a matter of the individual's entire life; he does not hold that the "end of theology is the good of grace and that the end of ethics is moral and civil good" (p. 226). He makes ethics and theology one; the moral or civil life is also the religious life.

Ames's four conditions for virtue clarify this idea. The first is justice, "an inclination to act rightly by giving every man his own"; the second is prudence, "whereby all the force of reason is used to find out what is right and to apply the means of reason rightly"; the third is fortitude, "a firm persistence in doing right, meeting and overcoming all the difficulties which

may come about either from the continuation of the required act or from any other kind of obstacle"; the last condition is temperance, or "the assuaging and restraining of all those desires which divert men from well-doing" (pp. 228-29). So, of the four conditions, "the first orders and constitutes virtue, so to speak; the second directs it and frees it from error; the third strengthens it against misfortune; the fourth makes it pure and defends it against all allurements" (pp. 229-30). A man who takes his religion seriously, then, is just, prudent, persistent, and temperate in his everyday life.

Ames goes on in his next chapter, "Good Works," to tell generally how virtue is expressed: through good works, for "virtue in its nature tends toward action (for it is an inclination to do well and not be idle) . . ." (p. 235). After giving his definition of good works--"An act of virtue is one which flows from the disposition of virtue" (p. 232)--Ames clarifies and qualifies this definition by discussing intentions and circumstances. He says that the intention must be good, but that is not enough: "an evil intention always makes an action evil and a good intention with other conditions adds much to the making of a good action" (p. 233). The individual circumstance must also be considered, instead

of trying to live by unthinking obedience to general moral rules:

To free a man from danger of death . . . seems to be good in itself, but many who are not evil are herein deceived, for the true goodness or wickedness of it in such action depends upon the circumstances and the object. To slay the innocent or set at liberty the guilty is evil, but to slay the guilty justly or to deliver the innocent upon just reason is good. (p. 234)

So the Puritan must think through his good works; a good means must be used to reach a good end, and each act must be considered individually.

What Ames has done in these two chapters is to blur one of the distinctions between the old and new covenants and to help iron out one of the primary issues of early American theology: the significance of good works in the eyes of God. As noted earlier, the old covenant was based on man's work done for God; when man broke the covenant, he could obtain redemption only by grace. Works were no longer sufficient since man was no longer the equal partner in the covenant. Theologically, then, good works seem uncalled for. This idea, combined with absolute predestination, would remove all impetus for almost any kind of human action. When Ames conditioned predestination, he returned man's fate partly to his own hands; with his logical sequence that made virtue a combination of religion and ethics and that made good

works the necessary expression of virtue, Ames restored good works to the theology of his time. But, typically, he attaches conditions to the significance of good works:

The works of the regenerate do not have any merit worthy of a reward obtained on the basis of justice. . . . Yet the reward which is given not out of indebtedness but out of grace . . . is sometimes assigned to these imperfect endeavors. . . . Although all our blessedness is solely the gift of God . . . yet the fruits of grace abounding in us are entered in the accounts which give us the certainty of the gift. (p. 234)

In other words, good works will not buy a man into God's grace; the works should be an effect of the grace. Nevertheless, good works as an expression of received grace will somehow be taken into account. Indeed, it would seem that, in Ames' view, good works are a necessary expression of having received grace.

In the rest of Book Two of the Marrow Ames explains the observance of religion on two sides, one the theoretical, following the analysis of the idea of virtue, the other the practical, dividing good works into its parts. It is in these last points that values emerge that need not die when Puritan theology has passed away. These points come under the general heading of "Justice and Charity toward Our Neighbor," the way good works become known.

"Justice," says Ames, "is the virtue by which we are inclined to perform our duty to our neighbor" (p. 300).

And, since a man's duties toward his neighbor are to be done with respect and desire for the neighbor's good, "this virtue is called love toward our neighbor . . ." (p. 301). Ames then sets up a sort of priority list to guide the Puritan in performing his duties toward those around him; this set of priorities is revealing of an evident emphasis on the family and on the community:

First . . . our blood kin, other things being equal, are to be given more love than strangers through the good things of this life--and, among our kin, especially those who are the nearest to us. . . . Second, a special friend is to be given more love than an ordinary blood kinsman (at least through those things which belong to the common duties of this life), for friendship may bring a greater nearness than consanguinity alone. . . . Third, parents are to be loved more than any friend. . . . Fourth, parents are to be given more love than children through the good things which ought to flow back to the cause from the effect, such as honor, esteem, reverence, thankfulness, and the like. Children are to be given more love than parents through the things which flow from cause to effect, such as sustenance, advancement, oversight, and the like. . . . Fifth, husbands and wives are to be given more love than parents and children in the matter of association and union in this life. . . . Sixth, those who have deserved well of us are more to be loved than others and among them the ones who have bestowed spiritually good things upon us are to be most loved. . . . Seventh, a community or whole society is more to be loved than an individual member of it, because a joining of a part with the whole is greater than a joining with another part.

(pp. 303-04)

Thus, the Puritan must be socially conscious--towards his community and his friends--and towards his house: his parents, children, and husband or wife. While it is apparent that these priorities overlap so that no clear order of duty can be constructed, one very important principle is clear: the Puritan had a duty toward his family, his friends, and his community, and was expected to work actively for all of their goods.

The rest of Book Two of the Marrow goes into specifics about community and family, helping to spell out the public and private roles of the Puritan citizen and ruler. Ames says that all those in a position of authority, whether it be private, such as "the husband in relation to his wife, parents in relation to their children, and the master in relation to his servants," or public, such as ministers or magistrates, "ought to provide for the needs of those under them--the means of salvation for their souls . . . and food, clothing, and fit housing for their bodies" (p. 311).

Ames also tells how to apply virtue between citizens. "Humanity," he says, "is the virtue by which we are inclined to preserve the life of our neighbor and his tranquility through lawful means. . . . This is done in two ways . . . the duties of humanity are . . .

some of them spiritual and some corporal" (p. 314). To fulfill these ends one should promote his neighbor's spiritual edification by prayer, good example, and admonition; the neighbor's corporal edification must be worked for in several ways. First, through "Meekness, patience, long-suffering, and placableness" (p. 315), each person must try to avoid conflict with others; by cherishing human society and working agreeably together each can promote the common good; and by defending and furthering the actual life of others, his power to work for the good is prolonged. Here Ames qualifies taking a human life by stating that killing by accident or through a just public authority is not a sin; neither is the pursuit of war if it is done by a just method for a lawful cause and does not involve non-participants (pp. 315-17).

In his last chapters of the Marrow, Ames goes into the private virtues, discussing marriage and man's material goals. Marriage he defines as

the individual joining of one man and woman by lawful consent for a mutual communication of their bodies and community of life together. . . . The joining is for bodily communication because in marriage godly offspring are first sought Marriage secondarily offers a remedy against the carnal desires which many without a special gift for continency have had since the fall of Adam; and these desires are so unbridled that unless help comes from this remedy men burn,

so to speak, making them unfit for pious duties.
(pp. 318-19)

Marriage was, to the Puritans it seems, a practical, community, and godly thing, typical of their approach to life.

This approach is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in Ames's remarks about the laying up of earthly goods. He sees no conflict between the public and private sectors of life involving man's work. Men's "occupations of life in their nature look to the common good and should be so directed by men, at the same time they look also to the private good of getting and keeping the benefits of this life" But

It is not enough that one should simply work: He must work for what is good Quietly and diligently let him follow an occupation which agrees with the will of God and the profit of men Laziness, voluntary beggary, worthless, irrelevant, unclean arts, and an unnecessary concern for other people's business--the work of the so-called . . . busybody--are the opposite of real work. (p. 322)

And if a man's virtuous work makes him rich, so be it: "Riches lawfully obtained are still the good gifts of God, although in their own nature they are not moral goods And poverty has the character of punishment or affliction Therefore, there is no perfection in casting away or forsaking wealth unless the special will of God requires it" (p. 323). Riches, then, while

not a sign of grace, certainly seem to point toward heavenly prosperity; poverty, evidently self-willed and unworthy of being relieved by the community, could point only toward God's disfavor. With predestination no longer independent of man's will or condition the Puritan must work for material gain as a sign of spiritual progress, while cautioning himself that grace cannot be bought.

This, then, is the Marrow of William Ames, an invaluable work for the understanding of Puritanism, since it shows new interpretations of Calvinism, particularly the basic new covenant ideas, and how the religious life was to become also the moral life to the Puritan. As stated before, this work was very influential in America; but before we turn to some expressions of American Puritanism in the context of the new covenant, an overall view of the new covenant idea, including its beginnings in England, its transmission to America, and its ultimate message, will help to put Ames into a historical context and establish that the basis of American Puritanism rested, in the beginning, on the new covenant. For these purposes there is no better source to turn to than Perry Miller's essay "The Marrow of Puritan Divinity," included in his Errand into the Wilderness.

Summary of New Covenant Theology

Miller begins by saying that "students of technical theology have long since realized that Calvinism was in the process of modification by the year 1630. . . . 'Calvinism' in the seventeenth century covered almost as many shades of opinion as does 'socialism' in the twentieth."³¹ This modification was underway to get around absolute predestination; theologians "were struggling to find some possible grounds for proving the necessity of 'works' without curtailing the absolute freedom of God to choose and reject regardless of man's achievement."³² There had been no grounds for either a moral obligation from man or individual assurance from God: "If the sway of the moral law over men were to be maintained, men must know what part it played in their gaining assurance of salvation; if men were to know the conditions upon which they could find an assurance, they must be convinced that God would be bound by those conditions"³³

The covenant of grace fulfilled this contractual requirement. It first surfaced, theologically, in the work of the Cambridge theologian, William Perkins (1558-1602), who defined this covenant as God's "contract with man, concerning the obtaining of life eternal, upon

a certain condition."³⁴ Perkins did not stress the covenant idea; his pupils did, the most eminent among them being William Ames. Other important pupils of Perkins were John Preston (1587-1628) and Richard Sibbes (1577-1635), whose works on the covenant were also well known to early New England settlers.³⁵

The covenant in the Bible and in the work of Ames has been discussed; however, Miller's comments on the changes made by the covenant and on the final result of the covenant will help to clarify the religious concept as it was preached in early America, before some American sermons on the subject are examined. First of all, Miller says, the covenant changed the concept of God:

He has transformed Himself in the covenant into a God vastly different from the inscrutable Divinity of pure Calvinism. He has become a God chained--by His own consent, it is true, but nevertheless a God restricted and circumscribed--a God who can be counted upon, a God who can be lived with. Man can always know where God is and what He intends.³⁶

God has allowed himself to be bound by a legal agreement:

"The covenant of grace defines the conditions by which Heaven is obtained, and he who fulfills the conditions has an incontestable title to glorification, exactly as he who pays the advertised price owns his freehold."³⁷

The covenant has made God concerned with man. Man need no longer think of God's "decrees in the abstract, as

though they were relentlessly grinding cosmic forces, crushing or exalting souls without regard for virtue or excellence."³⁸ The covenant then, Miller says, defined morality in New England. First of all, morality was "the specific terms of a compact between God and man, and rested, therefore, not upon mere injunction but upon a mutual covenant in which man plays the positive role of a coöperator with the Lord. In the second place, morality was also that which can be considered good and just"³⁹ (as it was discussed in Book Two of Ames's Marrow). In church practice the covenant became "a shamelessly pragmatic injunction. It permitted the minister to inform his congregation that if any man can fulfill the covenant, he is elected."⁴⁰

This belief, it would seem, would deal a death blow to predestination theory; but it should also be clear that when a present act--the receiving of grace--becomes synonymous with the fulfillment of the new covenant (as it did even with Ames's qualified predestination), it is the act that becomes more important than the machinery behind it. One could thus believe in salvation through belief without believing that God was bound by a legal contract. So the covenant, as a systemized belief, carried the potential for its own destruction

while leaving a moral legacy unfettered by organized theology. A brief view of the covenant in America will show its peak and its supersession.

NOTES

- 1 James D. Hart, The Popular Book (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1963), p. 9.
- 2 Hart, p. 10.
- 3 Hart, pp. 4-5.
- 4 Hart, p. 11.
- 5 Hart, p. 18.
- 6 Ellwood P. Cubberley, Readings in the History of Education (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1920), p. 299.
- 7 Cubberley, Readings, p. 301.
- 8 Morison, p. 84.
- 9 Hart, p. 8.
- 10 Morison, p. 85.
- 11 Hart, p. 9.
- 12 Hart, p. 18.
- 13 The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha, revised standard version, ed. Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 1415. All further Biblical quotations are from this Bible and will be cited in the text.
- 14 Vergilius Ferm. ed., Classics of Protestantism (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 67.
- 15 John Calvin, "Institute of the Christian Religion," in Classics of Protestantism, ed. Vergilius Ferm (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 92.
- 16 Errand into the Wilderness (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1964), p. 61, footnote 39.
- 17 Calvin, p. 110.

- 18 Calvin, p. 95.
- 19 Horton and Edwards, p. 22.
- 20 George M. Stephenson, The Puritan Heritage (New York: Macmillan Co., 1952), p. 14.
- 21 John D. Eusden, ed. and trans., The Marrow of Theology, by William Ames, 3rd ed., 1629 (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1968), p. 1.
- 22 Eusden, p. 10.
- 23 Morgan, p. 74.
- 24 The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (1939; rpt. with new introduction. Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 48. See also Miller's Errand into the Wilderness, p. 52.
- 25 Foster, p. 703.
- 26 Eusden, p. 1.
- 27 Eusden, p. 11.
- 28 Eusden, p. 113. This quotation is from Ames's work. Other quotations from Ames will be cited in the text.
- 29 Eusden, p. 27.
- 30 Eusden, p. 55.
- 31 Errand, p. 50.
- 32 Errand, p. 54.
- 33 Errand, p. 55.
- 34 The Works of . . . M. W. Perkins: Gathered into one Volume . . . (Cambridge and London, 1596-97), p. 32. Quoted in Errand, p. 58.
- 35 Errand, p. 59.
- 36 Errand, p. 63.
- 37 Errand, p. 71.

38 Errand, p. 73.

39 Errand, p. 89.

40 Errand, p. 88.

CHAPTER III

PURITAN THEOLOGY IN AMERICA, 1636-1741

The New Covenant and the New World

An interesting question, and one that probably cannot be answered with definite correctness, is the connection between the concept of the new covenant and the appeal of the New World. The Puritans certainly had reason enough to set out for foreign lands when their proposed changes in church organization opened them to charges of civil disobedience, just as other religious groups set out for more tolerant climes under persecution or the threat of it. Likewise, the New World drew men for a variety of reasons, many of them not concerned with religion. And, as noted earlier, less than a majority of the early New England settlers were church members. So, it would be too broad a generalization to say that a particular religious belief contributed to the overall settling of America.

But the question has a built-in limitation: the puritanism of later centuries had its beginning not with all of the New World settlers, but with the Puritans. And to the Puritans the New World seems to have offered a place for the fulfillment of the duties of life spoken

of in the second book of Ames's Marrow. This potentiality of America comes out in Mourt's Relation, printed in London in 1622, and Good News from New England, printed there in 1624; both were written near enough the actual settlement of Plymouth to give a Puritan's-eye view of America, aware of real conditions, yet not so involved with the reality of living in America to lose the early idealism of the adventure.

Mourt's Relation, actually entitled A Relation or Journall of the beginning and proceeding of the English Plantation settled at Plimoth in New England, was written by several of the Pilgrims; William Bradford and Edward Winslow are credited with most of the book, which narrates roughly the first year of the Plymouth settlement. Of particular interest is a letter included, probably written by Robert Cushman, entitled "Reasons and Considerations touching the lawfulnessse of removing out of England into the parts of America." One of the questions answered by Cushman is "how a man that is here [England] borne and bred, and hath lived some yeares, may remove himselfe into another countrie." Cushman replies that "a man must not respect only to live, and doe good to himselfe, but he should see where he can live to doe most good to others: for as one saith, He

whose living is but for himselfe, it is time he were dead."¹ He goes on to note that while some may have strong ties to the English church, government, or friends, others, because they are out of favor, lack opportunities, or are unable, cannot do good. These outcasts he urges to come to America:

Now such should lift up their eies and see whether there be not some other place and countrie to which they may goe to doe good and have use toward others of that knowledge, wisdome, humanitie, reason, strength, skill, facultie, &c. which God hath given them for the service of others and his owne glory.²

Whether or not the new covenant theology of men such as Ames contributed to this kind of outlook toward the New World is impossible to discern; but at the least one can say that, to the English Puritans, the New World offered the opportunity to both practice their religion and apply it to their lives to an extent that was not available elsewhere. The cardinal principle of practicing religion enunciated by Ames--working for the good of neighbors, family, and community--here seems to have been clearly in their minds.

Edward Winslow's Good Newes from New England continues the narration of the Plymouth colony's early years. In his dedicatory epistle Winslow lists the three things harmful to plantations, and in so doing confirms

the kind of men who should come to America. The three "banes" of plantations are, Winslow says,

the vain expectation of present profit
Ambition in their governours and commanders,
seeking only to make themselves great, and slaves
of all that are under them The careless-
ness of those that send over supplies of men unto
them, not caring how they be qualified³

Winslow, like Cushman, calls for men who will not "be seekers of themselves, but the common good of all for whom they are employed."⁴ Even considering that much of this last material was probably meant for the stockholders of the company, it is apparent from these two works that the leaders of the colony actually felt that their settlement in America should be based on a moral life that demanded community social consciousness.

But while the contribution of the new covenant theology to the aspirations of the Puritans who came to America is somewhat nebulous, the fact that the covenant theology itself was preached in New England in the seventeenth century is beyond doubt. The earlier discussion of William Ames showed the basis of the new covenant theology, and the material from Perry Miller's Errand into the Wilderness outlined its growth and final form; a brief look at an early and late covenant sermon will illustrate this theology as it was preached in America.

Cotton's Emphasis on the New Covenant

In June of 1636, three years after arriving in New England, John Cotton (1584-1652) gave a sermon at Salem in which he talked about the new covenant both as a basis of church government and as a means of salvation. As the best known early Puritan minister, Cotton's remarks will give a good idea of the use the Puritans made of this doctrine.

As the text for his sermon Cotton uses Jeremiah 1.5, "Come, and let us cleave unto the Lord in a perpetual and everlasting covenant which shall never be forgotten" [Cotton's translation].⁵ He then explains the old and new covenants to his listeners. Cotton's conception of the old covenant differs somewhat from that discussed earlier, primarily in timing. Instead of considering the covenant of works as being broken from the time of Adam's fall, Cotton, in common with many theologians, discussed it as running through the Old Testament (which is sometimes termed the Old Covenant). At the time of Moses it became apparent, at least symbolically, that the old covenant had failed:

this is the old covenant that God made with his people, and is called a covenant of works; the Lord requireth righteousness and works, He promiseth life to their works, and they say, Amen, to enter into a curse. Now this was a temporal covenant; this my covenant they brake, saith the Lord; and

they did quickly turn aside from the ways of the Lord, and therefore Moses when he cometh and seeth the calf which they had made, he brake the tables of the covenant.⁶

Man's work was to live up to the Ten Commandments; as he could not, the covenant of works was broken.

The New Testament, then, covers the time of the covenant of grace; Jesus Christ was sent as the surety for it:

And hence it is that all the promises of this covenant are made directly to Jesus Christ; the old covenant was made to the people, but this is made to Christ. . . . so long therefore as this church keepeth her to Christ, and holdeth Christ for her head and husband, the Lord doth keep covenant⁷

Membership within this covenant is maintained, Cotton says, through the faith of the individual, a faith God requires. But, to God, faith is not a test of man, for God will actively work to help man find and keep his faith:

He will make us able to do it, and willing to do it, and so to do it. And this is the true meaning of all that the Lord doth require in the everlasting covenant; when He doth command He doth promise. Doth He require seeking of Him? He will put his spirit within us: Doth He require weeping and mourning? He will pour down a spirit of grace and supplication So that this is the everlasting covenant. The Lord prepareth the heart: certain duties indeed He doth lay upon them; as to believe in his name, to yield the obedience of faith, and to mourn for him; and He doth convey an effectual power to work them.⁸

So Cotton, like Ames, and like St. Paul, says that if one believes, he will be saved. The God who predestines some to life and others to death has little in common with Cotton's God, who sounds like the prototype of the Puritan minister, working at bringing His people into the church.

Cotton goes on in this sermon to discuss the only way of breaking the covenant, and then outlines the basis for membership in visible churches. According to Cotton the covenant of grace is so comprehensive and God so forgiving that only a denial of God by a knowledgeable man can break it:

So mark you what it is that doth dissolve this everlasting covenant; not this that they kill the Messiah; it was a horrible murder; but they may not separate for murder: What! if it be the eternal Son of God! You may not separate for that neither so long as you do not sin against knowledge; but when they do sin against knowledge, and after they have been taught and convinced, do yet rebel, then is this everlasting covenant broken, else it is not broken till they come to this desperate extremity.⁹

This view goes far from the covenant-of-works concept; Cotton is saying that while good works will not get one into heaven, evil works, even the killing of Christ, will not break the new covenant. Only a refusal to believe by one who has been preached to and who understands what God requires of him will break the covenant.

The rest of the sermon discusses ways that the church and its members can assure themselves that they are within the covenant. As the covenant is also a social agreement among church members, there is a danger that members of the social covenant may be considered automatically as members of the invisible church: "Now, if we do enter into a covenant to keep the ordinances of the law, of the gospel, and of the civil state, (for that was the tripartite covenant) all this may be but a covenant of works."¹⁰ Cotton's solution is the text of faith: "Build a church upon any other foundation but faith, and the profession of faith, and it will break into manifold distempers. . . . by this means the covenant will keep us constantly, sweetly, and fruitfully, in an everlasting kind of serviceable usefulness one to another."¹¹

Cotton later expands on this reception of faith, again emphasizing that it is beyond the individual's control. Self-reformation is no assurance; there should be a sense of sin and unrighteousness, followed by a feeling of the spirit of God: "and such a man hath Christ, and is blessed, and the covenant of grace is his, you may safely receive him into your church fellowship"¹² Thus, the basis for membership in the Puritan church in America, as enunciated by one of its founding fathers, was the simple profession of faith--a confession

of receiving God's grace. That this was so on a wide basis in New England is confirmed by Edmund S. Morgan in Visible Saints. Morgan notes that after a candidate's background had been examined

he was expected to make a narration, perhaps fifteen minutes in length, of the way in which God's saving grace came to him. Questions might be put to him about this experience by any member in order that all might be certain of its genuineness; and in some cases the whole demonstration may have consisted of questions and answers.¹³

Cotton's sermon thus gives a good look at covenant theology as it began to be practiced in America. Two important points should be noted: Calvinism, in the sense of teaching absolute predestination, is totally lacking; and faith and its confession is made the basis of entry into both the visible and invisible church.

Willard's Legalistic Interpretation of the New Covenant

Cotton did not emphasize the legalistic basis of the covenant, although that basis remained; a later covenant theologian, Samuel Willard (1640-1707), explained the legalism of the covenant when he preached on "Covenant-Keeping: The Way to Blessedness" in 1682. This series of sermons was printed as a book of the same title, with a "To the Reader" section by Increase Mather, by James Glen of Boston in 1682. This work shows the

covenant of grace in all of its aspects and gives a complete look at covenant theology in America.

Willard's exposition on the covenant was preached to help in renewing the covenant. He emphasizes the legal aspects of the covenant more than Cotton; he also affirms a belief in free grace and explicitly denies predestination--ideas which, as noted before, need not necessarily have a connection to a legal agreement between God and man.

After the "To the Reader" section in which Increase Mather discusses some of the interpretations of the covenant, Willard explains that both the old and new covenants were legal agreements. Of the old he notes that "such were the conditions of the Covenant made with Adam: Do and live. He was to have earned his happiness in a way of doing, and this is legal."¹⁴ This is due, Willard says, to the nature of a covenant: "In every Covenant there is something to be performed and something to be received upon performance";¹⁵ thus,

there is no Party in a Covenant that is at liberty, or stands free, but is under engagement: It is not now at his pleasure whither he will do or not do, though before it might be: Yea, God Himself, though a free Agent, and His Grace is free Grace, . . . yet acknowledgeth His Covenant engagement in which He hath bound Himself¹⁶

So God, while retaining his absolute power, has agreed to certain limitations of that power in the field of salvation; He has set up a legal contract that controls

his power. As Willard puts it, God might have "promised Life and salvation, illimitedly to these or those according to pleasure; but because He hath chosen to deal with Man in the way of a Covenant, therefore He doth not so do. An absolute Promise cannot be a Covenant-Promise"17

The terms of the old covenant were "Obey and live." The terms of the new are equally simple to Willard: if one believes, God is under contract to grant him salvation. God requires only that "we receive this Saviour, that we embrace Him with our whole hearts"18 ". . . it is the first thing required in the Covenant, viz. that we believe."19 A believer must not only have faith, but must confess it to others: "By Beleevers I do not only intend those that are such by a true and living Faith, but such also as are so by an open and acknowledged profession of their Faith"20 The church is thus composed of those who have faith and have said so to the church as a whole; church then means the "covented Elect."21

So Willard, in this sermon, confirms points discussed earlier: that the covenant, as a legal agreement, was the basis of the early New England churches; that the primary condition for covenant membership was that the

individual believe; and that confession of that belief gave membership in the visible church. But Willard goes further than earlier Puritan writers in his discussion of predestination: seeing that the idea of a covenant negated predestination, he explained, not that the covenant was a part of predestination, as Ames did, but that it was well for man that predestination was not a fact. God gave the covenant

Because hereby, not only Salvation itself, but the way to the attaining of it, is also made plain and clear. If God had only made it known, or declared that he would save by Might, and by Power a number of fallen Adam's Progeny, there might indeed have been some generall and languishing hope afforded to particular Men and Women, but it had been upon very weak and uncertain grounds; nor could their hopes have been able to ballance their fears; their state of Misery being certain and evidently demonstrable, but their happiness (at least) but in a remote probability. But when God not only reveals Salvation to be provided, but publisheth the way in which it is to be attained, and certainly enjoyed: Now the People of God have an argument, and an evidence, and a clear manifestation of the particular love of God to them. Now all this is done in the way of a Covenant, in which there are Termes, Propositions, and Conditions. Thus it is that we come to be ascertained, not only that a number shall be saved, but who they be: They are here Characterized to us: and now Man knows what he hath to stand to, how to erect his hopes, and confirm them: By this way there comes to be a very fair intelligence between God and his Creatures²²

In this passage from Willard, Puritan theology has reached the end of a developmental stage. In the cocoon

of the covenant of grace changes have taken place: pre-destination has been modified, conditionalized, and, in essence, discarded; membership in God's elect has been put back in man's hands, calling only for his belief; the image of God has changed from that of a stern judge to that of an all-powerful but reasonable father and friend; and with these changes man's view of himself has changed from that of a sinful creature deserving God's wrath to that of a "child of God [who has in him] a great deal of foolishness, by reason of which he often misseth his way, and wandreth from the precept."²³ It remained only for later writers to discard the binding covenant and retain its transformed contents.

In agreement with earlier writers, Willard says that good works are called for by religion: "If Salvation should be of Works as the Cause, it would shut out Grace; but that good Works may be of the things that accompany Salvation, and that necessarily as concomitants, is very well consistent with the free Grace of God, appearing in our Salvation."²⁴ That works will not buy salvation, but will accompany it, seems to be a basic Puritan view in the 17th century, running at least from Ames through Willard.

So, in the view of Samuel Willard, there is a legal relationship between God and man, personified by the legal

terms of the covenant, and designed to guide man as a father guides an errant child. But the child must not only follow the road of belief to salvation, he must also perform good deeds to his neighbor during the journey. To facilitate this, God provided man with a New World, relatively free of interference: "The main errand which brought your Fathers into this Wilderness, was not only that they might themselves enjoy, but that they might settle for their Children, and leave them in full possession of the free, pure, and uncorrupted liberties of the Covenant of Grace."²⁵

Edwards Discards the Legalistic Covenant

But, as noted earlier, the means of fulfilling the covenant were becoming more important than the concept of the legal agreement. Later ministers saw that man could achieve salvation through his profession of faith without feeling that God was bound by a legal agreement that limited his power; thus the Calvinistic belief in God's unlimited power could be retained while discarding the Calvinistic belief in absolute predestination. God could keep his power but man could achieve some control over his destiny and see some reason for leading a moral and ethical life; the covenant of grace, a transitional

idea, made this result possible. In Jonathan Edwards' sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," the discarding of the legalistic interpretation of the covenant will clearly show; John Wesley's "Free Grace" will show what was retained--what was, in fact, the end result of the Puritan theology brought to America.

Jonathan Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" is probably the most famous sermon preached in America. Preached in 1741, it is Edwards' attempt to restore to God the power taken by the legal interpretation of the covenant. To emphasize God's true power, Edwards delves in fire and brimstone; but the essential fact is that Edwards is telling his audience that an unfettered God is offering them salvation through faith.

In the first part of the sermon Edwards explains his text: "Their foot shall slide in due time."²⁶ He goes on to continually emphasize God's power and man's dependence on it. After saying that man has always been "exposed to destruction" Edwards notes that it is man's own fault; men are "liable to fall of themselves, without being thrown down by the hand of another."²⁷ Thus, man cannot blame God by saying that he was destined to slide. The only thing that can save man is God's unfettered power: "'There is nothing that keeps wicked men

at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God'--By the mere pleasure of God, I mean his sovereign pleasure, his arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation, [and] hindered by no manner of difficulty"28

After establishing that God has no obligation or restraint in saving the souls of men, Edwards then goes into greater detail about man's place in God's eyes. But here it should be noted that Edwards is speaking specifically of "wicked" men: "There is no want of power in God to cast wicked men into hell"29 Two paragraphs later he defines these men: "John iii.18. 'He that believeth not is condemned already.' So that every unconverted man properly belongs to hell"30

What Edwards is working toward is instilling in his listeners, not that an arbitrary God might suddenly seize them and cast them into hell, but that there is no binding contract on God to save or condemn: God does not predestine some to salvation, does not save for good works, and will not save a people because they see themselves as participants in a racial or national covenant of grace.

Edwards makes those points very clear at the end of his textual section. He says that

God has laid himself under no obligation, by any promise to keep any natural man out of hell one moment. God certainly has made no promises either of eternal life, or of any deliverance or

preservation from eternal death, but what are contained in the covenant of grace³¹

Here Edwards' emphasis is on the idea of grace, while refuting the voluntary limitation of God's power that Willard spoke of. That Edwards is denying the legal concept of the covenant is clear when he says that

whatever pains a natural man takes in religion, whatever prayers he makes, till he believes in Christ, God is under no manner of obligation to keep him a moment from eternal destruction. . . . In short, they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobligated forbearance of an incensed God.³²

In emphasizing God's power here, Edwards is ambivalent; he says that God's forbearance is "uncovenanted" but also that when a man believes in Christ, God is obligated to save him. As it must, logically, the belief in the covenant of grace puts some limitations on God's power; He cannot agree to save for faith and at the same time be arbitrary in his use of power.

The "Application" section of the sermon exhorts unbelievers to change their ways. Edwards points out that those without belief are in danger of immediate doom:

all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all of you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in

the hands of an angry God.³³

But man can change this state, for "Now God stands ready to pity you; this is a day of mercy; you may cry now with some encouragement of obtaining mercy."³⁴ Edwards ends with encouragement for those unconverted to join the elect; now

the election will obtain, and the rest will be blinded. . . . Therefore, let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over a great part of this congregation: Let every one fly out of Sodom: "Haste and escape for your lives, look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed."³⁵

In the hands of Jonathan Edwards, then, the covenant of grace is not a legal agreement that bound God; it left Him free but in doing so denies arbitrary predestination, suggests that God, despite reasons for wrath, is withholding that wrath so that man might yet be saved, and, as a combination of those facts, says that man has some control over his own fate. So, while Perry Miller notes that, in his attempt to restore unfettered powers to God by doing away with the "covenant scheme," Edwards "went back, not to what the first generation of New Englanders had held, but to Calvin, and . . . became, therefore, the first consistent and authentic Calvinist in New England,"³⁶ Edwards could not completely do so. The

basic part of the covenant was not the legalistic binding and limitation of the parties, but the idea that God would grant salvation to those who believed. On that basic point Edwards agrees with the theologians discussed back to William Ames and, because of his belief in the covenant of grace, Edwards could never restore to God the power He had in Calvin's system, which involved no promise of any kind. So, one might better say that Edwards preached a more nearly Calvinistic approach than to say, as Frank High Foster does, that Edwards "began the revival work of his life with a re preaching of the fundamental doctrines of Calvinism."³⁷

Predestination Versus Grace

As stated earlier, then, there was an irreconcilable conflict between the doctrines of predestination and of the covenant of grace. Covenant theology, searching for a place for good works in the scheme of religion and asserting an agreement between God and man, was brought to America as the dominant factor in Puritan theology. And while Jonathan Edwards declared God free to do anything he wished, Edwards still preached that through

faith came salvation--the real foundation of the covenant of grace. In a sermon given in 1739 John Wesley (1703-1791) preached on "Free Grace." An extract from this sermon is given here not as a product of American Puritanism but as a summary of the conflict between predestination and grace. The sermon shows the direction in which American Puritanism was headed at the time of its last strong exponent, Jonathan Edwards. Edwards was very impressed with the preaching of George Whitefield, the famous Methodist preacher, who preached in Northampton, Massachusetts, the location of Edwards' congregation, in 1740.

For his text Wesley chose Romans viii.32, "He that spareth not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"³⁸ To Wesley, this text has one meaning: "The grace of love of God, whence cometh our salvation, is FREE IN ALL, and FREE FOR ALL."³⁹ He then goes on to explain and attack predestination.

First Wesley explains the basic doctrine of predestination held by its advocates: grace is free ". . . only for those whom God hath ordained to life; and they are but a little flock. The greater part of mankind God hath ordained to death; and it is not free for them. . . . And this he absolutely decreed; because so was his good

pleasure; because it was his sovereign will."⁴⁰ He then points out that those who seemingly deny predestination but believe that the election of grace means "God, before the foundation of the world, did elect a certain number of men to be justified, sanctified, and glorified"⁴¹ also, in essence, believe the whole decree. And even those who profess not to believe in reprobation at all but only that God "decreed, that all being dead in sin, he would say to some of the dry bones, Live, and to others he would not"⁴² do also, in fact believe in predestination. In sum, Wesley says,

Call it therefore by whatever name you please, election, preterition, predestination, or reprobation, it comes in the end to the same thing. . . . by virtue of an eternal, unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, one part of mankind are infallibly saved, and the rest infallibly damned⁴³

Wesley spends much of the rest of the sermon in explaining the consequences of such a belief. One important consideration is that it would make "all preaching vain" for "It is needless to them that are elected And it is useless to them that are not elected, for they cannot possibly be saved."⁴⁴ Just as importantly it "directly tends to destroy our zeal for good works" because it destroys our love for the greater part of mankind, the evil and unthankful, and "cuts off one of the strongest motives to all acts of bodily mercy, such

as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and the like; viz. the hope of saving their souls from death. For what avails it to relieve their temporal wants who are just dropping into eternal fire?"⁴⁵ Particularly, it destroys zeal for the greatest good work of all, "the saving of souls from death."⁴⁶

As a last point against the doctrine of predestination, Wesley shows how it contradicts accepted religious teaching by making Christian revelation contradict itself: "For it is grounded on such an interpretation of some texts . . . as flatly contradicts all the other texts, and indeed the whole scope and tenor of Scripture."⁴⁷ Wesley then cites several texts that have been used to support predestination and gives others that clearly contradict them. He also points out that predestinarian teachings make Christ a hypocrite: "For it cannot be denied, that he every where speaks as if he was willing that all men should be saved. . . . To say then, he did not intend to save all sinners, is to represent him as a gross deceiver of the people."⁴⁸ Wesley notes that such an idea is blasphemy, and concludes that "no scripture can prove predestination."⁴⁹

Wesley's final view of man's relationship to God is given in the last section of the sermon, a section filled with Biblical quotations that support Wesley's

point about free grace:

Yea, the decree is past: and so it was before the foundation of the world. But what decree? Even this: "I will set before the sons of men, 'life and death, blessing and cursing.' And the soul that chooseth life shall live, as the soul that chooseth death shall die." This decree, whereby "whom God did foreknow, he did predestinate," was indeed from everlasting This decree yields the strongest encouragement to abound in all good works, and in all holiness; and it is a well spring of joy, of happiness also, to our great and endless comfort. This is worthy of God⁵⁰

The desired ends of the covenant of grace--to keep God all-powerful, yet understandable, and to give good works and holy strivings a place in religion--are fulfilled by freeing the doctrine of grace from the machinery of the covenant. It would seem, then, that Puritanism was headed toward the same type of doctrine advocated here by Wesley, but by completely different courses. But while Wesley's theology has the same end as that of the Puritans discussed, it does not work through the same means--the covenant of grace--or with the need to keep omnipotence and man's depravity clearly in the mind of the listener. If Puritanism had dropped those emphases it would no longer really be Puritan--it would be Methodism or some other creed.

The Puritan View of Life

Several emphases emerge from this discussion of the

one hundred plus years of active Puritanism between the times of Ames's Marrow and Edwards' "Sinners." One is an emphasis on God's absolute power, a power that is used in a way understandable to man instead of arbitrarily. Of equal importance is the idea that God desires man's salvation and so gives him an opportunity to secure it through faith or belief; God's grace is not arbitrary and there seems to have been little emphasis on absolute predestination or limited atonement. Taken as a whole, then, these first two facets of Puritanism point toward an essentially optimistic, rather than fatalistic, view of life. The idea of original sin was not overturned, but the Puritan could feel that it might be overcome by God's grace since its effects could be forgiven by His mercy.

The way to God's grace for the Puritan is ambiguous; the primary requirement is belief or faith. But allied to this requirement are some temporal ones: a confession of faith before a covenanted church body and service to other men, or good works. The confession gave one a place in the religious community; and good works, despite each theologian's pointing out that they were an effect and not a cause, gave the Puritan an active part in religion. As Ames made clear, the observance of religion, the living of the religious life, comes out in good works--justice and charity toward our neighbor. Most particularly,

it meant service to the less fortunate social and financial classes of the community.

In sum, the theology of Puritanism contained no "cold Calvinism" to chill the imagination, unless it be the knowledge of original sin, a doctrine hardly limited to Calvinism. Instead, it left several ideas as a possible religious legacy. It says that man's destiny is understandable and man personally has some freedom in fixing it: he must believe and become a part of a visible church. Also, man must live a moral life, one that does not try to separate belief from action, a life that, above all, works for the material and spiritual edification of the whole community. And man in America should always be aware that, through the new covenant and the New World, God had created an opportunity for man to work for that perfection of life and society that seemed to be God's desired end for him.

This, then, is the theology of Puritanism as it evolved from the theologians and preachers who formed, nurtured, and expounded it, a moral force certainly influential on later religious ideas and institutions in America. But the theology does not itself show its influence on the "rank and file" of later times. That applications of this theology survived and were transmitted down to at least the nineteenth century will be

evident when we examine three works that brought Puritanism to a great number of people: The Day of Doom, the New England Primer, and Webster's Spelling Book.

NOTES

- 1 William Bradford and Edward Winslow, Journall of the English at Plimoth [Mourt's Relation] (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc., 1966), p. 67.
- 2 Journall of the English at Plimoth, p. 67.
- 3 Edward Winslow, "Text corrections for 'Good Newes from New England,'" Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 2nd Series, 9 (1832), 76.
- 4 Winslow, p. 76.
- 5 John Cotton, "A Sermon Delivered at Salem, 1636," John Cotton on the Churches of New England, ed. Larzer Ziff (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1964), p. 44.
- 6 Cotton, p. 48.
- 7 Cotton, p. 53.
- 8 Cotton, p. 51.
- 9 Cotton, p. 55.
- 10 Cotton, p. 57.
- 11 Cotton, p. 57.
- 12 Cotton, p. 63.
- 13 Morgan, p. 89.
- 14 Samuel Willard, Covenant-Keeping: The Way to Blessedness (Boston: James Glen, 1682), p. 5.
- 15 Willard, p. 8.
- 16 Willard, p. 9.
- 17 Willard, p. 11.
- 18 Willard, p. 60.
- 19 Willard, p. 88.

- 20 Willard, p. 68.
- 21 Willard, p. 26.
- 22 Willard, pp. 51-52.
- 23 Willard, p. 93.
- 24 Willard, p. 33.
- 25 Willard, p. 117.
- 26 Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," in Classics of Protestantism, ed. Vergilius Ferm (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 181.
- 27 Edwards, p. 182.
- 28 Edwards, p. 182.
- 29 Edwards, p. 182.
- 30 Edwards, p. 183.
- 31 Edwards, p. 187.
- 32 Edwards, p. 187.
- 33 Edwards, p. 189.
- 34 Edwards, p. 192.
- 35 Edwards, p. 197.
- 36 Miller, Errand, p. 98. Samuel Eliot Morison agrees with this view: The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England, p. 160.
- 37 Foster, p. 727.
- 38 John Wesley, "Free Grace," in Classics of Protestantism, ed. Vergilius Ferm (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 166.
- 39 Wesley, p. 166.

- 40 Wesley, pp. 166-67.
- 41 Wesley, p. 167.
- 42 Wesley, p. 167.
- 43 Wesley, p. 168.
- 44 Wesley, p. 168.
- 45 Wesley, p. 171.
- 46 Wesley, p. 172.
- 47 Wesley, p. 172.
- 48 Wesley, p. 175.
- 49 Wesley, p. 176.
- 50 Wesley, p. 178.

CHAPTER IV

PURITANISM FOR THE MASSES, 1662-1783

Puritanism in The Day of Doom

The Day of Doom of Michael Wigglesworth (1631-1705), first published in 1662, was America's first best seller; it is estimated that in its first year of publication one of every twenty-five people in New England bought a copy, comparable to a first edition sale of eight million copies in modern times.¹ And it kept on selling, being passed around and memorized to the extent that "for many years before its author's death (as for a hundred years afterward) children were required to learn this versified statement of the savage Calvinistic dogma along with their catechisms."² Even in the early nineteenth century "there were old people in New England who could repeat the whole of it by heart."³ But exactly what The Day of Doom taught those people who read it is not as clear an issue as its popularity. It has been called an "extraordinary exposition of Calvinistic theology" that displayed the "hatefulness of an angry God";⁴ but it has also been said that the poem "carried home to every man, woman, and child the essential message of New England's intellectual class: that man was free to

choose eternal bliss or eternal damnation; that his salvation rested on his will to believe, on his own efforts to meet that saving grace which Our Lord proffered to him"5

This last view, as has been discussed, is not consistent with the tenets of Calvinism, but does coincide with the dominant characteristic of Puritanism: the availability of free grace. Perhaps The Day of Doom best shows that, in popular as well as theological expositions of Puritanism, the issues of predestination and free grace are resolved only by some compromise, one that leaves the basic nature of Puritanism somewhat ambiguous. From the discussion of Puritan theology it seems that predestination was modified to accommodate free grace, thereby bringing into account man's good works; in The Day of Doom the same compromise is apparent. But, as in Ames, the compromise is worked in subtly; separate sections of the poem seem to support absolute predestination and absolute free grace. But taken as a whole, the poem is in the mainstream of Puritan theology, pointing towards Edwards and Wesley and not back to Calvin; such would be appropriate for its time of publication.

In the first part of the poem the regenerate and the reprobates are called up for judgment:

Before his Throne a Trump is blown,
 Proclaiming th' Day of Doom:
 Forthwith he cries, ye Dead arise,
and unto judgment come.^o

Christ then speaks of the elect, justifying their destiny to the unelected seemingly by absolute predestination:

These Men be those my Father chose
 before the worlds foundation,
 And to me gave, that I should save
 from Death and Condemnation. (St. 40)

In stanza 42 Christ says that the elect are not just the lineal descendants of Abraham: "Thus I esteem'd, thus I redeem'd / all these from every Nation"; but in verse 43 there is no mention of the enlarged covenant of believers but, instead, a reemphasis of God's arbitrary power:

My grace to one is wrong to none:
 none can Election claim,
 Amongst all those their souls that lose,
 none can Rejection blame.
 He that may chuse, or else refuse,
 all men to save or spill,
 May this Man chuse, and that refuse,
 redeeming whom he will.

Stanzas 45 and 46 somewhat modify this rigid view by listing two of the qualities of the elect, faith and good works. Verse 46 shows the relationship of these qualities:

Their sin forsaking, their chearful taking
 my yoke, their Charity
 Unto the Saints in all their wants,
 and in them unto me,
 These things do clear, and make appear
 their Faith to be unfaigned. (St. 46)

Later stanzas move further from absolute predestination, stressing man's free will to accept or reject grace, thereby making election open to all:

At this sad season, Christ asks a Reason
 (with just Austerity)
 Of Grace refused, or light abus'd
 so oft, so wilfully:
 Of talents lent by them mis-spent,
 and on their Lust bestown:
 Which if improv'd, as it behov'd,
 Heav'n might have been their own! (St. 60)

Why, when he stood off'ring his Blood
 to wash them from their sin,
 They would embrace no saving Grace,
 but liv'd and dy'd therein? (St. 64)

This seeming paradox between absolute predestination and available grace is resolved when Christ explains God's ways to those who plead that God had predestined them to reprobation. They plead that

Whom God ordains to endless pains,
 by Law unalterable
 Repentence true, Obedience new,
 to save such are unable:
 Sorrow for sin, no good can win,
 to such as are rejected;
 Ne can they grieve, nor yet believe,
 that never were elected. (St. 145)

Christ's reply to this idea, which is at the heart of the ambiguity of Puritanism, reveals, as Ames did in dealing with this same problem, the subtle logic of Puritan theology. First Christ says that these people are condemned because they have broken God's laws and are unable to understand the implementation of God's

decrees:

I damn you not because
 You are rejected, or not elected,
 but you have broke my Laws:
 It is but vain your wits to strain,
 and end and means to sever:
 Men fondly seek to part or break
 what God hath link'd together. (St. 147)

Christ then explains that man's freedom to choose or reject grace is part of God's predestination:

Whom God will save, such he will have,
 the means of life to use:
 Whom he'll pass by, shall chuse to dy,
 and ways of life refuse.
 He that fore-sees, and fore-decrees,
 in wisdom order'd has,
 That man's free-will electing ill,
 shall bring his will to pass. (St. 148)

So Wigglesworth, like Ames, separates the decree of predestination from the fulfillment of it; man's free will, in choosing or rejecting grace, completes the decree.

Those who were destined to be among the elect were those who chose grace, while those who were destined to be reprobates rejected it. But, until the very time of the choice, man had the freedom of will to go either way. Christ is free to tell those imputing their destruction to predestination that "There's no Decree whereby such be / ordained to Condemnation" (St. 152). They have "rejected Grace, / when Grace was freely prof-fer'd" (St. 154). Seemingly, Wigglesworth has then preserved God's absolute power while giving man free

will and a need to perform good works--the "Charity / Unto the Saints" mentioned in stanza 46.

But the theological dilemma has not been solved: God has agreed to save those who accept his grace, which is offered to everyone; thus, there is a condition for salvation and God's absolute power is limited. Perhaps nowhere in Puritan writing is this contradictory nature of Puritanism so well revealed as in the section of The Day of Doom in which Christ explains the condemnation of the reprobate infants. God is able to condemn them and save Adam, the original sinner, because God's grace cannot be limited:

I may deny you once to try,
 or Grace to you to tender,
 Though he finds Grace before my face,
 who was the chief offender:
 Else should my Grace cease to be Grace;
 for it should not be free,
 If to release whom I should please,
 I have no libertee. (St. 177)

God thus has absolute power to grant grace to anyone; He does offer this grace to everyone, since it is free grace; thus any man might accept it and be saved; and so God's absolute power leads to a limitation of that power, for he must save those who receive his grace. But if God could not offer grace to everyone, his power would already be limited. In making man's acceptance of grace the end of God's predestination the Puritan took

the only available compromise; but, as is seen in this last passage, the contradiction of absolute power and free grace could never be completely resolved.

Wigglesworth, like the other Puritans discussed, emphasized man's ability to receive grace through faith. His interpretation of predestinarian theology gives an optimistic view of life that teaches that if a man strives for grace, he will attain it--that he can help fulfill the decree of God. And while man is striving for grace, his deportment toward others will help reflect his degree of success; good works will be a sign of real faith. Wigglesworth's exposition of these ideas, in the mainstream of Puritan thought as discussed here, was read by millions of Americans for over one hundred years. It had "a popular influence second only to the Bible and the Shorter Catechism. It was, in fact, assigned for memorization along with the Catechism, and a century after its first publication New England grandmothers and grandfathers were able still to recite The Day of Doom from memory."⁷ If the poem could not be said to teach later generations Puritan ideas, although it probably did to some extent, it is unlikely that it could have had such a long publishing life if its ideas were not in general accord with those of the masses who read it.

The New England Primer

Its Importance

A much stronger case for teaching can be made by the New England Primer, the "most popular textbook of colonial or provincial times."⁸ The Primer was used in the elementary school, which was required schooling for most children; they read the Primer since it was "the basic elementary curriculum"⁹ of those schools. And the Primer must have had a great influence on the thought of early America; few students went on to college,¹⁰ leaving most people with the common intellectual ground of those ideas taught them in the churches and the elementary schools.

Besides influencing the thought of early New England, the Primer was also a continuing and widespread influence; "it outlasted the Century of Enlightenment, and was reprinted and used in New York and Pennsylvania almost as extensively as in New England."¹¹ Between 1680 and 1830 six to eight million Primers were printed;¹² in 1849 it was estimated that 100,000 copies of modern editions had been circulated in the last dozen years,¹³ and an edition was printed as late as 1886.¹⁴ The Primer, then, had a strong influence on the mass mind of America;

"for almost one hundred and fifty years [1680-1830], this miniature of a book was the sole elementary, educational factor that laid the foundation and was responsible for the ultimate development of the mind of the founders and ancestors of these United States."¹⁵

The New England Primer, the "Little Bible of New England,"¹⁶ probably first saw the light of day in 1683 when it was registered in the Stationer's Register by John Gaines, a London printer. Little is known of Gaines. In London at that same time was another printer, named Benjamin Harris. Between 1676 and 1681 Harris printed tracts and broadsides in London, concentrating on anti-Catholic material; among this material was the Protestant Tutor, a little book designed to train a child in Protestant ways. However, in 1679, Harris got into trouble with the Catholic-leaning royal court and in 1681 was forced to cease his printing.

It is possible that Gaines and Harris were the same man or that the first New England Primer was written by Harris and printed by Gaines. Regardless, Harris seems to have had some definite connection with this first edition, since the earliest Primers contained a considerable amount of material found in the Protestant Tutor. There was no second edition of the English New England

Primer, probably because of Harris' moving to New England in 1686. He evidently wasted little time in bringing out the first American edition of the Primer; it was done between 1687 and 1690 since Henry Newman's Almanack, entitled News from the Stars and printed by R. Peirce for Benjamin Harris at the London Coffee-House in Boston late in 1690, contains an advertisement for the second edition of the Primer:

There is now in the Press, and will suddenly be extant, a Second Impression of The New-England Primer enlarged, to which is added, more Directions for Spelling: the Prayer of K Edward the 6th and Verses made by Mr. Rogers the Martyr, left as a Legacy to his children.

Sold by Benjamin Harris, at the London Coffee-House in Boston.¹⁷

No copies of these earliest Primers survive; the earliest extant issue was printed in Boston by S. Kneeland and T. Green in 1727.

The Primer and Education

The New England Primer helped to serve a basic need of Puritanism: to educate the citizen. The Puritan theology, as discussed in Chapter II, found its basic doctrines in the Bible; this theology emphasized the individual:

No mass or prayer, no priest or pastor, stood between man and his Creator, each soul being morally responsible for its own salvation; and

this tenet forced every man to think, to read, to reason. As the Reformation became possible only when the Bible was cheapened by printed versions, so the moment each man could own and study the Book Puritanism began. Unless, however, man could read, independence was impossible, for illiteracy compelled him to rely upon another for his knowledge of the Word; and thus, from its earliest inception, Puritanism, for its own sake, was compelled to foster education.¹⁸

But this education was not limited to learning to read, for the Primer at the same time taught religion as interpreted by the Puritans. So, ". . . this was the function of the New England Primer. With it millions were taught to read, that they might read the Bible; and with it these millions were catechised unceasingly, that they might find in the Bible only what one of many priesthoods had decided that book contained."¹⁹

The 1727 Primer and many of the later editions, particularly of the 18th century, contained a page of Biblical quotations opposite or near the title page. Of these quotations the first has since served as an identifying phrase for what the Primer intended to do: "Prov. 22.6 Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." And, as the idea of training a child in the way he should go connotes moral or religious training, so most of the material of the Primer had that kind of emphasis.

Puritanism in the Primer

Through its long history changes were made in the Primer by its various publishers; poems were added and dropped, different catechisms were used, and different verses and woodcuts for the rhymed alphabet were used. But there is a consistency within the Primer; some parts of it were never or hardly ever changed. From an examination of those parts the transmission of Puritan ideas into the nineteenth century can be documented. Primers from the earliest available copy (1727) until at least 1841 contained this major religious and moral material, besides "The Lord's Prayer" and "The Creed," "An Alphabet of Lessons for Youth," the rhymed alphabet, John Roger's advice to his children, and the Westminster Catechism.

The "Alphabet for Lessons for Youth" is characterized by a general religiosity that does not go into specific theological details. Each letter of the alphabet is used to begin a sentence which states a precept: "A Wise Son maketh a glad Father; but a foolish Son is the heaviness of his Mother";²⁰ "FOolishness [sic] is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."²¹ There is a warning against materialism: "BETTER is a little with the

Fear of the Lord, than great Treasure and Trouble therewith"²² and an idea of free will: "EXHORT one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any one of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin"; "NOW is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."²³ But the alphabet does not discuss predestination, social obligations, or the value of good works; there is only a general stress on living a religious life.

The famous rhymed alphabet with woodcuts, beginning with "In Adam's fall, / We sinned all," does go into some of the emphases of Puritanism, mixing religious and non-religious material. While some of the verses were changed during the history of the Primer, with religious verses sometimes inserted for non-religious verses (such as substituting "Moses was he / Who Israel's Host / Led thro' the Sea" for "The Moon gives light / In time of night"), there always remained in the verses an emphasis on original sin, on education, and on living a moral life.

"In Adam's fall / We sinned all" is a blunt statement concerning original sin and is certainly in keeping with the tenets of Puritanism as discussed in this chapter. This verse was never changed in the Primer. The verses generally given for "B" emphasize reading the

Bible: "Thy Life to Mend / This Book Attend";²⁴ "Heaven to find, / The Bible mind."²⁵ The verse for "H" usually concerned education; "My Book and Heart / Must never part"²⁶ or "My Book and Heart / Shall never part."²⁷ The letter "F" also stressed education: "The Idle Fool / Is whipt at School."²⁸ Other verses seem designed to instill obedience, acceptance, and general morality: "Job feels the rod, / Yet blesses God";²⁹ Xerxes the great did die, / And so must you & I."³⁰ The last verse of the alphabet, changed only in wording in the Primers examined for this study, seems to encourage man to strive. Perhaps it was not changed because it seemed very appropriate, or perhaps a word beginning with "Z" was hard to find: "Zacheus he / Did climb the Tree / His Lord to see";³¹ "Za-che-us, he / Did climb the tree, / Our Lord to see."³²

The advice of the martyred John Rogers to his children, given in a 156-line poem that was included in all Primers, does go into theology. Actually written by another martyr, Robert Smith, in 1555, the poem was left to serve much the same purpose as the Primer itself:

I leave you here a little book,
For you to look upon,
That you may see your father's face
When he is dead and gone.³³

The author then explains the duties of his children to those about them, bringing out the Puritan emphasis on

social awareness and good works. One duty is to care for the family:

Give honor to your mother dear;
 Remember well her pain;
 And recompense her, in her age,
 With the like love again.
 Be always ready for her help,
 And let her not decay:
 Remember well your father, all,
 Who should have been your stay.³⁴

Another duty is to the poor:

Give of your portion to the poor,
 As riches do arise;
 And from the needy, naked soul
 Turn not away your eyes;
 For he, who doth not hear the cry
 Of those who stand in need,
 Shall cry himself, and not be heard,
 When he doth hope to speed.
 If God hath given you increase,
 And blessed well your store,
 Remember, you are put in trust,
 And should relieve the poor.

 Impart your portion to the poor,
 In money and in meat;
 And send the feeble, fainting soul
 Of that which you do eat.³⁵

And workers must be treated fairly:

Defraud not him who hired is,
 Your labor to sustain;
 But pay him well, without delay,
 His wages for his pain.³⁶

In the theological points of the poem, original sin is affirmed:

I know I am a sinner born,
 From the original,
 And that I do deserve to die
 By my forefather's fall.

However, salvation through faith is discussed as a solution rather than predestination:

But by our Savior's precious blood,
 Which on the cross was spilt,
 Who freely offered up his life,
 To save our souls from guilt--
 I hope redemption I shall have,
 And all who in him trust,
 When I shall see him face to face,
 And live among the just.³⁷

So, the "Advice to his Children" in the Primer reaffirms earlier points derived from the Puritan theology. Man's life must be lived on a religious and moral plane that combines belief and good works, resulting in a sense of social duties to the family and community. Man has free will to work for his own good and is not predestined to any fate; the author of the poem might feel among the elect, but through his own effort and seeking, not through a timeless decree of God.

But the part of the Primer that most clearly taught children the tenets of Puritanism was the Westminster and Cotton catechisms. The Westminster catechism was almost always included, and the one of John Cotton was frequently given; at times the Protestant Episcopal Catechism was also included and, in some, "Dr. Watts's Catechism for Young Children."

"The Shorter Catechism, Agreed Upon by the Reverend Assembly of Divines at Westminster in England," generally

referred to as the Assembly Catechism, was framed by the Westminster Assembly which met in England from July 10, 1643, until March 3, 1649. Out of this primarily Presbyterian Assembly came the Westminster Confession of Faith (1648) and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.³⁸

In 1648 the Congregationalist Cambridge, Massachusetts, Synod adopted the Westminster Confession as its creed. The Shorter Catechism became a familiar part of American thought; an editor of the Primer remarked in 1841 that "The doctrinal views, contained in their summary of belief, have been regarded with deference in New England, where the Catechism has had a high reputation for more than 180 years, and has become venerable for its antiquity and the character of its compilers."³⁹

The "doctrinal views" expressed by the Shorter Catechism are somewhat ambiguous on some of the important issues of Puritanism--in common with several other works discussed, such as Ames's Marrow of Theology and Wigglesworth's The Day of Doom.

On the issues of the old covenant and original sin the Shorter Catechism agrees with the other theologians discussed here. The old covenant was created between God and man when "he [God] entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience,

forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death" (Answer 12). When Adam fell, so did man, through original sin: "The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression" (Answer 16).

In Answer 7 predestination is defined in a Calvinistic way: "The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his own will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." In Answer 20 this view seems reaffirmed in discussing the elect and the reprobate, confining the covenant of grace to those elected through predestination: "God, having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the state of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer."

But in discussing how the Redeemer brings about this salvation the limited "some" who have been elected is expanded to include all of those who follow Christ. This expansion of the elect is clear in Question 29, which asks "How are we [*italics mine*] made partakers of

the redemption purchased by Christ?" Answer 31 notes that God "doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel." This point is clearly working toward the concept of man having the free will to accept or reject salvation. Such is made clear in the explanations of justification, adoption, and sanctification, in which free grace is emphasized. Justification is "an act of God's free grace wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone" (Answer 33). Adoption is defined as "an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have right to all the privileges, of the sons of God" (Answer 34). Sanctification is also a work of "God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man, after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto rightecusness" (Answer 35). As stated before, both free grace received through faith and an elect composed of those who choose to believe contradict strict predestination; but in this Catechism, as in the other post-Calvin works examined, the emphasis is on the opportunity given to man to find his salvation through belief rather than on an arbitrary God and a powerless man.

The rest of the Catechism is taken up with explaining the Ten Commandments, the sacraments, and the Lord's Prayer. In the explanations of the Commandments there is some discussion of good works and social responsibilities. The duties required by the fifth commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," are given as "preserving the honor and performing the duties belonging to every one in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals" (Answer 64). The eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," is interpreted as requiring "the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth or outward estate of ourselves and others" (Answer 74). And the tenth commandment, which warns against coveting "anything that is thy neighbor's" is said to require "full contentment with our own condition, with a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbor, and all that is his" (Answer 80).

The Catechism, then, reaffirms the Puritan emphasis on free will, free grace, and social responsibility as outlined in the Puritan theology. It is consistent with works published before it, such as Ames, and it shows that what has been discussed as a mainstream of Puritanism through Edwards in fact continued into the

nineteenth century and was not confined to sermons or to New England, since the Primer "was reprinted and used in New York and Pennsylvania almost as extensively as in New England" (see note 11). Important as theology at its inception, the Westminster Shorter Catechism continued to be imprinted on young minds long after the religious struggles that led to its writing had been solved by a much more diversified religious climate.

The other important catechism of the New-England Primer, John Cotton's "Spiritual Milk for American Babes," is more consistent theologically: as in the sermon of Cotton discussed earlier, his emphasis is on the covenant of grace, with no mention of predestination. The fact that both the Assembly Catechism and Cotton's "Spiritual Milk" were frequently included in the same Primer indicates that predestination was probably not made a major issue in teaching from the Primer.

Cotton's catechism, composed in 1641, seven years before the Westminster Shorter Catechism, is much shorter than the Assembly Catechism, having sixty-four questions instead of one hundred seven, with most of the answers also being shorter in themselves. Cotton's catechism has two primary parts: an explication of the ten commandments and an explanation of the way to salvation via the covenant of grace.

The answers given about the ten commandments are primarily conventional religious ones; only in the case of the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," does the Puritan stress on social responsibility emerge.⁴⁰ Stealing is defined as taking "away another man's goods without his leave, or to spend our own without benefit to ourselves or others."⁴¹ We should therefore "get our goods honestly, to keep them safely, and spend them thriftily."⁴² Again, the Puritan must make himself a helpful part of the community.

As in his sermon discussed earlier, Cotton makes the new covenant the basis for man's salvation. His catechism defines a church as "a congregation of saints joined together in the bond of the covenant, to worship the Lord, and to edify one another in all his holy ordinances."⁴³ This covenant is that one made with Abraham and his spiritual descendants; "It is the profession of that covenant which God has made with his faithful people, to be a God unto them, and to their seed."⁴⁴ One enters this covenant "By receiving thro' faith the Lord and his covenant to themselves, and to their seed and accordingly walking themselves and training up their children in the ways of the covenant."⁴⁵ No one is predestined to life or death; man must believe and work good works.

Then, "At the last day we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account of our works, and receive our reward according to them."⁴⁶ Only then will the decision be made as to each person's fate; "The righteous shall go into life eternal, and the wicked shall be cast into everlasting fire with the Devil and his angels."⁴⁷ While predestination is mentioned in the Assembly Catechism, it is impossible to find it in Cotton's "Spiritual Milk," even by implication.

In sum, then, The Day of Doom and the New England Primer, works written and much read during Puritan times and which continued to be read after Puritan times, do contain certain views of life discussed earlier as growing out of Puritan theology. The Day of Doom in particular exhibits the Puritan compromise necessary to retain the all-powerful God implicit in predestinarian theology while also giving man some voice in his destiny and showing a necessity for good works. As discussed earlier, this compromise presents an optimistic view of life in that man has the power to better himself and that he will be judged, at least partially, by his works.

The Primer makes several points of the Puritan ethos clear. Its very existence and long use point to the Puritan concern with education--an education designed to

instill Puritan ways in the child. The enduring sections of the Primer display both the theology and morality or ethics of Puritanism. The Westminster and Cotton catechisms teach the religious point that man can find salvation through faith, illustrating the optimistic view of life. Material in both catechisms also teaches social responsibility. The John Rogers poem, not a work of theology, does display the Puritan morality removed from a set theological system. Its religious teaching is compatible with the views of the Puritans who read the Primer, but it is given in a moral rather than a theological context. The poem's teaching of community and family responsibility and its view that man can gain grace are examples of Puritanism growing into puritanism. The "Alphabet of Lessons for Youth" and the rhymed alphabet also demonstrate this morality that has grown out of theology, emphasizing education, the value of the Bible, and man's free will.

But to complete this extended examination of the evolution of Puritanism into puritanism one other work read by millions of Americans must be discussed: Webster's Spelling Book. This work, written after Puritan times, written just after America had become a nation, and written by a native-born non-theologian concerned

with establishing American values, will show the ethical system that grew out of the Puritan theology by the early nineteenth century.

NOTES

- 1 Morison, p. 214.
- 2 Frank Luther Mott, Golden Multitudes (New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1947), p. 12.
- 3 Morison, p. 215.
- 4 Mott, p. 12.
- 5 Morison, p. 215.
- 6 Michael Wigglesworth, The Day of Doom, in Seventeenth-Century American Poetry, ed. Harrison T. Meserole (Garden City: N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1968), p. 59, verse 17. All further quotations are from this source, which uses the 1666 and 1673 London editions of The Day of Doom, and will be cited by stanza in the text.
- 7 Meserole, p. 37.
- 8 George Emery Littlefield, Early Schools and School-Books of New England (1904; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), p. 152.
- 9 John A. Nietz, Old Textbooks (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1961), p. 51.
- 10 Morison, p. 57.
- 11 Morison, p. 81.
- 12 Charles F. Heartman, The New-England Primer Issued Prior to 1830: a Bibliographical Check-List (New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1934), p. xxii. See Table 1, Chapter V, for the number of children in school during this period.
- 13 Paul Leicester Ford, The New England Primer; A History of its Origin and Development, with a Reprint of the . . . [1727 edition] (New York: Teachers College Press, 1962), p. 19.
- 14 Ford, p. 52.
- 15 Heartman, p. xi.

- 16 Ford, p. 1.
- 17 Ford, p. 17. This discussion of the history of the Primer is taken from Ford, pp. 12-19, Morison, pp. 79-82, and Heartman, pp. xiv-xvii.
- 18 Ford, p. 2.
- 19 Ford, p. 4.
- 20 The New-England Primer Enlarged (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1727), p. 14, in Ford, The New-England Primer Page numbers have been supplied to correspond with those used by Ford in restoring missing pages.
- 21 The New-England Primer Improved (1777; rpt. Hartford: Ira Webster, [1850]), p. 20. Unpaged; numbered from the first page of the book.
- 22 The New-England Primer Enlarged ([1781-1787]; rpt. Boston: Ginn and Co., [1900]), p. 27. Unpaged; numbered from the first page of the book.
- 23 The Improved New-England Primer (Concord: Roby, Kimball and Merrell, 1841), p. 14.
- 24 The New-England Primer Enlarged (1727), p. 9.
- 25 The Improved New-England Primer (1841), p. 10.
- 26 The New England Primer Improved (1777), p. 16.
- 27 The New-England Primer Enlarged (1781-1787), p. 17.
- 28 The New-England Primer Enlarged (1727), p. 9.
- 29 The Improved New-England Primer (1841), p. 11.
- 30 The New England Primer Enlarged (1727), p. 12.
- 31 The New-England Primer Enlarged (1727), p. 12.
- 32 The Improved New-England Primer (1841), p. 13.
- 33 The Improved New-England Primer (1841), p. 20.

34 The Improved New-England Primer (1841), p. 21.

35 The Improved New-England Primer (1841), p. 21.

36 The Improved New-England Primer (1841), p. 21.

37 The Improved New-England Primer (1841), p. 22.

38 The Westminster Confession is still used by the Presbyterian Church, with a 1903 "Declaratory Statement" added that disavows absolute predestination. See F. E. Mayer, The Religious Bodies of America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), p. 237, footnote 57.

39 The Improved New-England Primer (1841), p. 22. Further references to the Shorter Catechism will be given in the text.

40 See Chapter II, pp. 47-52 and Chapter III, pp. 84-85.

41 The New-England Primer Improved (1777), p. 69.

42 The New-England Primer Improved (1777), p. 69.

43 The New-England Primer Improved (1777), p. 73.

44 The New-England Primer Improved (1777), p. 73.

45 The New-England Primer Improved (1777), p. 73.

46 The New-England Primer Improved (1777), p. 73.

47 The New-England Primer Improved (1777), p. 77.

CHAPTER V

PURITAN EMPHASES, 1783-1829

Nineteenth Century Education

At the beginning of Chapter II of this dissertation I gave some comment on the literacy rate and reading materials of the early colonial period. After the great popularity of the New England Primer has been discussed, some information about American education and population needs to be given so that the number of textbook sales can be seen in perspective. The following chart, Table 1, "Beginning School Children, 1688-1820," compiled from a method used by Lawrence A. Cremin in American Education: The Colonial Experience 1607-1785 (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 571-572, gives an idea of the number of children who would be of beginning school age from the time of the Primer until well into the reign of Webster's American Spelling Book. The figures in the last column are probably high, since slaves were included in the population figures and also because girls frequently were not sent to school. In 1787, for instance, the non-slave population of the United States was 2,256,000.¹ That decrease of one-half million from the chart figure of 2,776,000 would decrease the number of beginning

TABLE 1

BEGINNING SCHOOL CHILDREN, 1693-1820

Year	Population	No. of Children to 16 years	School Children 5-16 years	Children of Beginning School Age
1688	200,000	80,000	53,600	5,360
1727	502,800	200,800	134,536	13,453
1783	2,389,300	955,720	640,322	64,033
1787	2,776,000	1,110,400	743,968	74,396
1790	3,929,827	1,571,930	1,053,193	105,319
1800	5,305,925	2,122,370	1,421,987	142,198
1810	7,239,814	2,895,925	1,940,269	194,026
1820	9,638,131	3,855,252	2,583,018	258,301

children to about 60,000. If one assumed that no girls were educated this figure would be substantially reduced. But it is quite possible that some of the girls were sent to school, while others were educated at home, at least enough to read. Therefore, the chart figure for children of beginning school age represents a possible, but not a probable, high.

Before 1790, when the American Spelling Book took the Primer's place as the most popular textbook, the average number of beginning school children, taken from the first five years on the chart, was 52,000; the Primer's average yearly sale from 1680 to 1830 was 37,000.² Since the Primer was reusable, this figure shows that it is probable that a majority of the children who learned to read before 1790 learned from the Primer. After 1790 Noah Webster's The American Spelling Book took the lead as the most-used textbook; by 1807 it was said to be selling 200,000 copies a year, more than the estimated number of beginning school children in 1810.

The following chart, "Free Population of the United States in 1787," will give some idea of the distribution of the populace when The American Spelling Book was first printed. In those states with an asterisk, Noah

Webster had licensed a printer to print and sell his Spelling Book at that time. From this chart it is

TABLE 2

FREE POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES IN 1787³

*New Hampshire	102,000	*Maryland	170,000
*Massachusetts	360,000	*Virginia	252,000
*Rhode Island	58,000	*North Carolina	164,000
*Connecticut	202,000	*South Carolina	102,000
*New York	233,000	*Georgia	<u>78,000</u>
New Jersey	138,000		
*Pennsylvania	360,000		
Delaware	<u>37,000</u>		
Total of non-slave states	1,490,000	Total of slave-holding states	766,000
Total non-slave United States population: 2,256,000			

evident that the New England and middle colonies, although smaller in land area than the remainder of the colonies, contained two-thirds of the total population. Massachusetts, even after the Revolutionary War and 150 years of the growth of America, had more people than any state except Pennsylvania, with which it tied for the greatest population.

The number of children who might have gone to school has been cited; the large number of textbooks sold suggests that many of them did come into contact with education. Specific figures on class attendance are

lacking because in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries education was largely a church, local, or private matter and attendance was not required or recorded by the federal or state governmental agencies. Ellwood Cubberley's summary of the state of American education in 1800 will explain the different attitudes toward schools:

It was the . . . States of New England which most deeply believed in education as a necessity for salvation, and they so established the school idea among their people that this belief in schools persisted after the religious motive for education had died out. Spreading westward, they carried their belief in education into the new States in which they settled. In the middle colonies, where the parochial school idea and the plan of apprenticing and educating orphans and paupers dominated, we see States where all elementary educational effort was turned over to private, church, and pauper schools, the State aiding only the last, or at most the last two. In the religious-freedom State of Rhode Island, and the old Anglican colonies of New Jersey and the Carolinas, we see the English "no-business-of-the-State" attitude for a time reflected in the indifference of the State to education.⁴

Several states did make constitutional provisions for education. The Pennsylvania constitution of 1776 said that "A school or schools shall be established in every county by the legislature, for the convenient instruction of youth."⁵ The North Carolina constitution of 1776 declared "That a school or schools shall be established by the legislature, for the convenient instruction

of youth."⁶ Georgia's 1777 constitution said that "Schools shall be erected in each county, and supported at the general expense of the State";⁷ Vermont's constitution of the same year stipulated that "A school or schools shall be established in every town, by the legislature, for the convenient instruction of youth."⁸ The Massachusetts constitution of 1780 goes into detail about education:

Wisdom and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of the people, being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties; and as these depend on spreading the opportunities and advantages of education in the various parts of the country, and among the different orders of the people, it shall be the duty of the legislatures and magistrates, in all future periods of this Commonwealth, to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries of them; especially the university at Cambridge, public schools, and grammar-schools in the towns⁹

The 1784 constitution of New Hampshire says that

Knowledge and learning generally diffused through a community being essential to the preservation of a free government, spreading the opportunities and advantages of education through the various parts of the country being highly conducive to promote this end, it shall be the duty of the legislatures and magistrates, in all future periods of this government, to cherish the interest of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries and public schools¹⁰

The Northwest Ordinance in 1787 established that in the Northwest territory "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of

mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."¹¹ Thus it can be seen that at the beginning of the nineteenth century New England, Middle, and Southern states made constitutional provisions for education. States with no constitutional provision for education did not lack schools. Connecticut continued the colonial laws of 1700 and 1712 as a state; these laws required "all parishes or school societies operating schools to maintain an elementary school for from six to eleven months a year."¹² In 1798 New York had 60,000 students enrolled in the state school system, but did not have a permanent school law until 1812.¹³ The lack of constitutional provisions for schools in Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and New Jersey may have been because of the prominence of pauper and parochial schools in these states. "The idea had become so fixed in these middle colonies that education belonged to the Church and to charitable organizations that any interference by the State, beyond assisting in the maintenance of pauper schools, came in time to be bitterly resented."¹⁴

Some accounts of early America demonstrate concern for education even in areas seemingly inhospitable to it. John Davis, a travelling Englishman, spent four and one-half years in America, from 1798 to 1802. He worked

as a tutor and gives several accounts of schools in America. In Charleston, South Carolina, Davis advertised in one of the papers for the place of tutor in a family. He was offered the job by a planter a mile from town but turned it down. He soon received other applications and took a position at Charleston College, which he kept for three months.¹⁵ Travelling through South Carolina into Georgia, Davis describes a school letting out: "A throng of boys and girls was just released from the confinement of the school, as I reached Bee's Creek"¹⁶ Going to a plantation in Virginia to become a schoolmaster, Davis was amazed at the people's enthusiasm for education:

The following day every farmer came from the neighbourhood to the house, who had any children to send to my Academy, for such they did me the honour to term the log-hut in which I was to teach. Each man brought his son, or his daughter, and rejoiced that the day was arrived when their little ones could light their tapers at the torch of knowledge! I was confounded at the encomiums they heaped upon a man whom they had never seen before, and was at a loss what construction to put upon their speech. No price was too great for the services I was to render their children; and they all expressed an eagerness to exchange perishable coin for lasting knowledge. If I would continue with them seven years! only seven years! they would erect for me a brick seminary on a hill not far off; but for the present I was to occupy a log-house, which, however homely, would soon vie with the sublime College of William and Mary I thought Englishmen sanguine; but these Virginians were infatuated.¹⁷

Even frontier areas were concerned with education. The Northwest Ordinance has been mentioned; a Texas teacher's contract from 1825 shows how people, in the absence of state or local laws, tried to ensure their children's education. Offering Thomas Jefferson Garner a school, board, firewood, and "one dollar and fifty Cents a month for Each Scholar two thirds of which may be discharged in young Cattle, (Bulls Excepted)," Garner was expected to

use the utmost of his Abilities to Teach their Children in Spelling, Reading writing & Arithmetic as his abilities admit & they capable to Receive in Testimony whereof we the under Subscribers have Set our different hands with the number of Scholars annexed hereto Any widow in indigent circumstances--under good Report of her Neighbors--her child or Children Shall and will be taught grattis18

Americans at the beginning of the nineteenth century did send their children to schools whenever possible and worked to establish schools. Figures on the exact extent of schooling are unavailable because of the great variety of schools and teachers.

We do know . . . that there were individual teachers of reading, writing [and ten other subjects] . . . and every conceivable combination of these and other subjects; that these teachers taught part time and full time, by day and by evening, in their homes, in other people's homes, in rented rooms, in churches and meetinghouses, in abandoned buildings, and in buildings erected especially for their use; that they were self-employed and employed by others The

combinations and permutations were legion, and the larger and more heterogenous the community, the greater the latitude and diversity of the arrangements.¹⁹

An appreciable number of Americans, relying primarily on the New England Primer, learned to read on their own or with the help of friends or relatives.²⁰

This concern with education resulted in a high literacy rate toward the beginning of the nineteenth century. Lawrence Cremin studied this literacy rate from several viewpoints. If the literacy rate is derived from a percentage study of the signatures and X's on deeds, wills, militia rolls, and voting rosters, the figures vary from seventy to one-hundred percent.²¹ As a comparative study, American colonial newspapers in 1775 sold one copy for each seventy people; English papers of the same year sold one copy for each sixty-four people.²² If literacy in America is taken to mean not only the ability to read but as a "liberating literacy, in which a growing technical competence is combined with expanding motivation, expanding need, and expanding opportunity" then the rate would be roughly equivalent between English and American white males: fifty percent in rural areas, seventy-five percent in towns.²³

Exact figures on literacy and school attendance are available for later in the century through the United

States Census. In 1850, with a native white population of almost eighteen million, almost four million were at school; eighty percent of the native white children aged five to fifteen were at school.²⁴ At this same time the percentage of white illiterates to the white population was 4.92 percent; this ranged from a high of 9.22 percent in the southern states to 1.88 percent in the New England states.²⁵ With these figures in mind, Cremin's figures of fifty to seventy-five percent literacy in 1800 appear to be conservative figures.

The method of teaching used in schools at the beginning of the nineteenth century was "letter-perfect memorization."²⁶ Cubberley describes this method as it was practiced in early American schools: "Children came forward to the teacher's desk and recited individually to the master or dame"²⁷ Rowland Jones, a Pennsylvania schoolmaster, gave this account of the memorization method in 1730:

Sir, you required an account of my method of instruction in school. I endeavor, for beginners, to get Primers with syllables, viz., from one to 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8. I take them several times over them till they are perfect, by way of repeating according as I find occasion, and then to some place forward according to their capacity and commonly every two or three leaves. I make them repeat perhaps two or three times over, and when they get the Primer pretty well

I serve them so in the Psalter, and we have some Psalters with the proverbs at the latter end. I give them that to learn, the which I take to be very agreeable, and still follow repetitions,²⁸ till I find they are masters of such places.

The old field school in Georgia, the type of school John Davis taught in at the beginning of the nineteenth century, used the same method: "Pupils came up by classes and stood before the master to recite. Memory was the only faculty of mind that was developed. Whoever could say exactly what the book said was considered a good student. Those who failed to repeat the exact words were punished."²⁹ Paul Monroe says that the memorization method of teaching was in general use in the colonial and early national period:

The methods of the early period had been in general that of simple imitation of the teacher. The good dame knew the alphabet, the Lord's Prayer, the catechism, and usually but not always knew how to put the alphabet together to make the latter. Whether she carried the little beginner into actual reading or merely aided him to memorize letter and text, he by dint of repetition and imitation acquired the simple knowledge which enabled him to continue with the reading of the biblical text or such literature as Wigglesworth's Day of Doom or other pious selections which the orthodoxy of the time would permit. As one reports, "I was then four and a half years old and had learned by heart nearly all the reading lessons in the Primer and much of the Westminster Catechism."³⁰

This memorization method of teaching would ease the task of passing down a heritage of facts and ethical teachings to be learned and shared by the school children--a mass culture--from generation to generation. Textbook authors used the schools for such a purpose; concerned with molding "the wax in virtue rather than in learning,"³¹ nineteenth century schoolbooks "offered both information and standards of behavior and belief that the adult world expected the child to make his own."³² In learning to read from the New England Primer in the eighteenth century the child was made to memorize material designed to instill certain principles of life into his mind. In the late eighteenth century The American Spelling Book took this task over from the Primer.

History of the Spelling Book

Noah Webster (1754-1843) brought out the first edition of his speller in 1783, Part I of A Grammatical Institute of the English Language. This edition, with some changes, such as the addition of a list of "Moral Sentiments" in 1785, remained in print until 1787, when the book was revised and retitled The American Spelling Book. With this revision the percentage of religious materials in the book jumped from one-third to one-half.

It was again revised and retitled in 1829 as The Elementary Spelling Book. That revision dropped some of the moral material in overt form, such as fables and a moral catechism, and added sentences to "inculcate thrift, sobriety, and other virtues."³³ The American Spelling Book remained in print from 1787-1845, The Elementary Spelling Book from 1829-1903.

This "opulent enlargement of the New England Primer"³⁴ was printed by contract and sold in New York, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia by 1787.³⁵ It was also pirated and sold by other printers. Exact sales figures are somewhat indefinite. Both The Grammatical Institute, Part I and The American Spelling Book are grouped as The American Spelling Book. Most of the sales were probably of the latter version, since it went through 254 editions, as opposed to The Grammatical Institute's six. From 1829 to 1845 sales figures must include both The American Spelling Book and The Elementary Spelling Book. In 1845 The American Spelling Book went out of print, and the sales figures would include only The Elementary Spelling Book.

As The American Spelling Book or the first part of The Grammatical Institute, the book sold rapidly from

the beginning. In 1803 Webster remarked that "In a great part of the northern States, it is the only book of the kind used; it is much used in the middle and southern States; and its annual sales indicate a large and increasing demand."³⁶ In 1807 the annual sales were over 200,000 copies per year, to an American population of about 7,000,000.³⁷ By 1816 three million copies had been sold;³⁸ an 1827 edition of The American Spelling Book said that five million copies had been sold by 1818.³⁹

With the publication of The Elementary Spelling Book in 1829 sales increased. In 1837 Webster estimated that a total of fifteen million copies had been sold;⁴⁰ by 1843, the year of Webster's death, annual sales were a half-million copies a year with a total sale of nineteen million.⁴¹ After The American Spelling Book went out of print in 1845, The Elementary Spelling Book continued to sell well; in 1880 William H. Appleton of D. Appleton and Company said that Webster's Speller "has the largest sale of any book in the world except the Bible. We sell a million copies a year."⁴²

These sales, as stated earlier, were distributed over much of the nation as it was then constituted. As would be expected, the book was very popular in New

England. It was also used "extensively . . . in the Southern States."⁴³ In the South Webster's Spelling Book "was often the first book put into the hands of the child when he entered school and often was the only book many children ever studied. It served as primer, reader, and moral guide."⁴⁴ Its use in the South and West continued to grow until the Civil War.⁴⁵

At least a part of its popularity was due to its inclusion of religious and moral material. "The reading lessons in the speller . . . were carefully gauged to meet the requirements of an age in which religion and morality, in spite of the wave of liberalism that followed the Revolution, were still dominant factors."⁴⁶ Webster felt that such material would influence the later thinking of children even if they did not at once understand it; once it is memorized, "when their understandings are matured, they will be enabled to direct, to useful purposes, the principles with which they had stored their minds in school."⁴⁷ Webster's exclusion of religious material from his edition of the New England Primer has been cited as the reason for that Primer's very limited appeal.⁴⁸ His reader, published as Part III of The Grammatical Institute, failed for the same reason: ". . . the percentage of its religious content was very low and for that reason it failed to gain the approval

of teachers and parents"49

Webster's Spelling Book, then, was designed by Webster and used by the schools to give children moral and religious material that, once memorized, would guide the children when grown. This moral and religious material was not picked by the children; rather it was made up of the ideas that the adults--parents, teachers, and schoolbook writers--felt were worthwhile and must be preserved and passed on. Part of the mass culture learned and shared by children who read and memorized The American Spelling Book was derived from Puritanism. Chapter IV showed the New England Primer's strong ties to Puritan theology. The Spelling Book will show the application of Puritanism to life, without these strong ties to explicit Puritan theology.

Puritan Emphases in The American Spelling Book

Puritanism, summarized as a theology at the end of Chapter III and as a set of theologically-based emphases at the end of Chapter IV, consisted of these points:

1. God holds absolute power;
2. Man has fallen through original sin;
3. God offers man an opportunity for atonement through offered grace;
4. Good works are a necessary expression of the religious life;

5. The Bible is very important as a source of religious and moral truth; and
6. Education is necessary, particularly to enable man to read the Bible and know his duties toward God.

Number three points toward an optimistic view of life; number four takes in family and community social consciousness. These six points will be discussed as they appear in the 1803 edition of Noah Webster's The American Spelling Book to show that this heritage of Puritanism was being taught to millions of children at the beginning of the nineteenth century and thus formed part of the mass culture of the time.

The first line of the first reading lesson in the Spelling Book points out God's absolute power: "No man may put off the law of God."⁵⁰ Original sin is also spoken of in this lesson: "All men go out of the way. / Who can say he has no sin?" (p. 55). "No man can say that he has done no ill, / For all men have gone out of the way" (p. 56).

This first lesson also tells of salvation, saying that man has the opportunity to obtain God's grace. First man must "Let your sins past put you in mind to mend" (p. 56) for "He doth live ill that doth not mend" (p. 56). This mending comes through Christ: "He who came to save us, will wash us from all sin; I will be

glad in his name" (p. 57). Man should remember that God is "nigh to them that pray to him, and praise his name" (p. 57).

Good works are taught both in general and in social contexts. A child should "Help such as want help, and be kind" (p. 56); "A good boy will do all that is just: he will flee from vice; he will do good, and walk in the way of life" (p. 57). In Webster's "Moral Catechism" (pp. 169-80) avarice is said to hurt "In an exact proportion to its power of doing good" (p. 177). More specific examples of doing good in social situations are also pointed out. God is said to watch to "see if our hearts are hard to the poor, or if by alms we help their wants: If in our breast we pine at the rich, or if we are well pleased with our own state" (p. 116). In the "Moral Catechism" children are taught that "Rulers of a merciful temper will make their good subjects happy; and will not torment the bad with needless severity. Parents and masters will not abuse their children and servants with harsh treatment. More love, more confidence, more happiness, will subsist among men, and of course society will be happier" (p. 170). It is said to be man's duty to give to the poor; "When others really want what we can spare without material injury to ourselves, it is

our duty to give them something to relieve their wants" (p. 175). The objects of this charity are "Persons who are reduced to want by sickness, unavoidable losses by fire, storms at sea or land, drouth, or accidents of other kinds. To such persons we are commanded to give . . ." (p. 176). Within the family, children are told to "Honor their [parents'] gray hairs, and support them in the evening of life . . ." (p. 94). Among brothers and sisters help should be given: "Is thy brother in adversity, assist him; if thy sister is in distress, administer to her necessities and alleviate her cares" (p. 94).

Webster also teaches the use of the Bible, both by example and as a rule to follow. The second question of the "Moral Catechism" asks "What rules have we to direct us in our moral conduct?" Webster answers that "God's word, contained in the bible, has furnished all necessary rules to direct our conduct." To the next question "In what part of the bible are these rules to be found?" Webster replies "In almost every part: but the most important duties between men are summed up in the beginning of Matthew, in CHRIST's Sermon on the Mount" (p. 169). Webster gives part of the Sermon on the Mount in a lesson on pp. 84-85. The sections given tell man

to stop worrying about obtaining the material things of life, for God will provide what is needed. Man instead should seek the kingdom of heaven. He should pray in secret, forget about the treasures of the earth, and follow the Golden Rule: "ALL things which you would have men do to you, do ye the same to them; for this is the law and the prophets" (p. 85).

The American Spelling Book gives much emphasis to education. Webster gives the same line that prefaced many New England Primers: "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not de-part from it" (p. 76). The reader is told to "Be a good child; mind your book; love your school, and strive to learn" (p. 57). When good children are at home they "will read some good book, that God may bless them" (p. 58). When at school one should "make no noise, but keep your seat, and mind your book; for what you learn will do you good, when you grow to be a man" (p.62). One should "read with care such books as have been made by wise and good men; think of what you read in your spare hours . . ." (p. 63). "A wise child loves to learn his book . . ." (p. 63); "He that lies in bed when he should go to school, is not wise . . ." (p. 62).

In Webster's Spelling Book, as in his teaching, religion and education are bound up together; he urges parents and children to get a moral education. To the children he says "As for those boys and girls that mind not their books, and love not the church and school, but play with such as tell tales, tell lies, curse, swear and steal, they will come to some bad end, and must be whipt till they mend their ways" (p. 58). This point is made more strongly to the parents:

Art thou a parent? Teach thy children obedience; teach them temperance, justice, diligence in useful occupations; teach them science; teach them the social virtues, and fortify thy precepts by thine own example; above all, teach them religion. Science and virtue will make them respectable in this life--religion and piety alone can secure to them happiness in the life to come. (p. 94)

Webster's Spelling Book goes into many other areas also, such as moral fables, a "History of Thrifty and Unthrifty," and into many moral virtues in the "Moral Catechism." The overall effect of the reading lessons in the book is a strong mixture of religious and moral material with little factual or entertaining matter. Part of this material is identical to the emphases of Puritanism discussed in this dissertation.

The Use of Webster's Spelling Book

Many accounts of early American education say

that Webster's Spelling Book was used in schools of both North and South. John Davis' account of his teaching in the South mentions Webster's book twice in such a way that demonstrates it was well known at the turn of the century. On being asked by a South Carolina planter "What spelling-book do you use?" Davis replies "Indeed--really--upon my word, Sir,--any--oh! Noah Webster's, Sir." The planter is very aware of the book and tells Davis "Oh! I perceive you are a New England man by giving the preference to Noah Webster."⁵¹ When Davis leaves as master of a Virginia academy, one of his pupils laments that she will have to return to ordinary studies: "I must now quit my French, my poetry and English grammar! I shall be taught no more geography! I shall no more read in Paul and Virginia, but be put back into Noah Webster's horn-book!"⁵² According to Richard Johnston, in "Early Educational Life in Middle Georgia," one could identify an old field school schoolmaster because of the way he spoke and because he had rules and maxims from Webster's Spelling Book inscribed on the sweatband of his hat, which he quoted from "in season and out."⁵³ In these old field schools Webster's Spelling Book was "relied upon at the time [it was written] and for generations afterwards."⁵⁴

A series of articles in The American Journal of Education, compiled by Henry Barnard, the first United States Commissioner of Education, gives several accounts of schooling at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In an article entitled "Schools as they were Sixty Years Ago," printed in 1863, the Reverend Heman Humphrey said that "Our schoolbooks were the Bible, 'Webster's Spelling Book,' and 'Third Part,' mainly."⁵⁵ In this same article Joseph T. Buckingham said that in December of 1784 "Webster's Spelling Book made its first appearance in the schools" and that "Webster's Spelling Book was not in general use before 1790 or 1791."⁵⁶ In a later article that same year Salem Town told Barnard that about 1788 "Dr. Webster's Elementary Speller, was . . . introduced."⁵⁷

In 1866 several other writers told Barnard what school had been like at the beginning of the century. Jeremiah Day said that "When Webster was first introduced, it excited much curiosity"⁵⁸ A. Bronson Alcott said that in his school days "Webster's Spelling Book, the American Preceptor, and the New Testament, have been the principal books used."⁵⁹ In 1867 S. W. Seton wrote Barnard that in his schooling of 1796 "Here 'Webster's spelling book' was continued to 'Baker and

Dominion,' that being the preparatory step to commencing to read."⁶⁰ Writing himself in 1882, Barnard said that "Few books have done more to give uniformity to the orthography of the language or to fill the memory of successive generations with wholesome truths than Webster's Spelling Book."⁶¹ The Reverend I. N. Tarbox, writing in the Congregational Quarterly, vii, part i, p. 4, agreed with Barnard, saying that

There can be no doubt that this little work is intimately associated with the primary education of a greater number of minds than any other book ever used in this country. The present generation (1865) of living men and women, in almost every part of the land, when they go back in memory to their early school days find their thoughts resting upon this, as their only and all-important text-book.⁶²

Records of textbook purchases support the wide usage of Webster. In the common schools of Virginia in 1844, sixty-three counties used Webster's Spelling Book; the next most popular speller was used in thirty-one counties.⁶³ In the textbooks purchased for the schools of Arkansas in 1846, 4,200 copies of Webster were purchased, twice the number of any other book purchased.⁶⁴ In the rules of the "Manner of Teaching" in the Union Institute of North Carolina in 1849, a forerunner of Duke University, it is stipulated that "In Webster's speller everything should be learned as the child advances."⁶⁵

Noah Webster's The American Spelling Book, then, was widely used in American schools at the beginning and well into the nineteenth century. It was read and memorized by children and in this way helped to transmit the emphases of Puritanism into the mass culture as part of the learned and shared ideas of the early nineteenth century. Webster's book did this for millions of Americans, as has been previously discussed; but to show that Webster's text was not atypical of the time, four other spellers will be examined to show that they also contain these Puritan emphases.

Other Spellers

Caleb Bingham's The Child's Companion, printed in 1792, contains both short sayings and fables and tales that bring out Puritan emphases. God's omnipotence is stressed early in the book: "The Lord doth know the way of good men, and the works of bad men are not out of his sight."⁶⁶ Man's sin is also pointed out: "No man can say he has done no harm" (p. 19); "All men have gone out of the way" (p. 19).

The solution to man's sin is to seek God's grace. The child is told to "Turn thy feet from the road to

death" (p. 17), for "He doth live ill, who doth not mend" (p. 18). So ". . . all must turn from their sin" (p. 19); "The Lord loves them who love him" (p. 18). Man therefore can find forgiveness: "The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants; and none of them, who trust in him, shall be desolate" (p. 30). Following these instructions the child will be able to say "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears" (p. 29).

Bingham's text also teaches the child to do good works. He is told to "Depart from evil and do good: seek peace and pursue it" (p. 29). The moral of the "Story of Philip, Robinson and Stephen" is that one should help others rather than looking to hurt them (pp. 61-63). In the story "Old John" a youth is taught to respect the infirmities of old age (pp. 67-69):

Like Webster, Bingham uses the Bible as a means of teaching and tells children that they should read it. The story of John the Baptist is given on pp. 38-40. Part of the Sermon on the Mount is given on p. 43. The child is told to "Rest in the Lord, and mind his word" (p. 18). The story "Joseph" shows that a child so instructed must be responsible for his behavior: "A child who is well instructed in the commands of God, as well as in those of his father, merits to be doubly chastised

when he has the wickedness to break them" (p. 60).

Reading is made a moral matter by Bingham. "A good child will love to read his book" (p. 18) while "A bad child hates to learn to read" (p. 18). The "Dialogue between Charles and Ferdinand" teaches that one must not be idle about schoolwork (pp. 64-65). In the "Dialogue Between Charles and Henry" Henry says that "I love to play too in play hours. But my parents send me to school to learn" (p. 72).

The New American Spelling-Book of John Peirce also has the Puritan emphases, with particular stress on grace and good works. God's omnipotence, man's sinfulness, and the offer of grace are summed up in two lines: "What if his dreadful Anger burn, / While I refuse his offered Grace?"⁶⁷ His power and grace are also spoken of in this sentence: "As for such as love not his Way, he will hide his Face from them, and will not save them, but they shall go down to the Pit" (p. 17). The solution offered is to accept the offered grace "Lest thou have Cause, with Grief of Heart, to say, How did I hate the good Way, and why did I let my Heart turn from the right path" (p. 29).

Good works are mentioned several times. The child should learn that ". . . Joy is to be the Lot of all who

do well" (p. 6) and that he should "love and do Good to all that he can" (p. 6). The child should "mark the good man, and do like him" (p. 9), for ". . . he who does what Good he can, / Will gain the Love of God and man" (p. 9). In society this means that "He that oppresseth the Poor to increase his Riches; and he that giveth to the Rich, shall surely come to Want" (p. 57). Children should do good to their parents: "assist and support them in the Decline of Life" (p. 134). These good works will be taken into account on Judgment Day: "The Lord, who is Judge of all men, will be sure to judge us at the last Day; and, as our Deeds have been in this Life, so will our Lot be in the next; and wo to those who die in sin" (p. 28).

Peirce, like Webster and Bingham, includes parts of the Bible in his speller. Jesus' childhood is described on pp. 67-72, the story of Lazarus on pp. 73-75, and Judgment Day on p. 89. A poem urges the child to learn to read the Bible while criticizing non-Bible-based religions:

They [children] gave him Honour with their Tongue
 While Scribes and Priests blaspheme.
 Samuel the Child was wean'd and brought
 To wait upon the Lord:
 Young Timothy betimes was taught
 To know his holy Word.

Then why should I so long delay
 What others learn so soon?
 I would not pass another Day
 Without this Work begun. (p. 78)

Peirce, like Webster and the author of the New England Primer, felt that one should "Train up a child in the Way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (p. 54). The child then should "Take thy Book, and read with care" (p. 9); at school he should "apply thyself, with the utmost Diligence, to whatever Studies, or Business thy master appoints thee" (p. 147).

The Child's Spelling Book of Elisha Babcock leaves no doubt of God's omnipotence: "Let all the earth fear the Lord, stand in awe of him" ⁶⁸ He is equally blunt as to original sin: "Man was at first made in a state of bliss; but by sin he fell from that good state into a state of woe and misery" (p. 37). But the child is assured that it is possible for him to find grace:

'Twas to save thee, child, from dying,
 Save my dear from burning flame,
 Bitter groans and endless crying,
 That thy blest Redeemer came. (p. 33).

Good works are spoken of several times in this speller; Babcock says that man's fate after death will depend on his works. "God will judge us at the last day: as our deeds have been in this life, so our lot will be in the next: And woe to those who die in their sin" (p. 21).

These deeds include helping the unfortunate: "No character is so glorious, none more attractive of universal admiration and respect, than that of helping those who are in no condition to help themselves. . . . He that easeth the miserable of their burden, shall hear many blessing him; he who giveth to the poor, shall never want treasure" (p. 103). Babcock teaches that wherever charity "fixes her abode, happiness is there" (p. 102) and that "Frugality is rich in Store; while Sloth remains a Beggar-poor" (p. 72).

As with the other spellers discussed in this section, Babcock makes use of material from the Bible. Christ's life is described on pp. 37-43; part of the Sermon on the Mount is given on p. 49. That the child is supposed to read the Bible is also indicated by the frontispiece, which pictures an open Bible next to the picture of an ink pot and pens. The child is instructed by God to "Let thine heart retain my words; keep my commandments and live" (p. 47).

Babcock ties education and religion closely together. On the title page he gives part of the purpose of the book as "To impress upon their [children's] minds the importance of Religion" The purpose of learning is given in a religious context: "Get wisdom, and

she will give to thine head an ornament of grace" (p.47); "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life" (p. 47). With this kind of instruction in mind, Charles the student is told ". . . what a fine thing it is to read well!" (p. 65).

The Child's First Primer, published in Philadelphia in 1800, is a very short (30 pp.) speller whose chief feature is a religious catechism that bases its teaching on the covenant of grace. Man is said to have fallen from his happy estate "By breaking covenant with God."⁶⁹ The followers of Adam are then born into "A sinful and miserable estate" (p. 26). As an answer to the question "Is there any way to be saved from that sinful and miserable estate?" the reader is assured that salvation can be secured through the covenant of grace (p. 27). The child is taught "That I am filthy and polluted by nature, and that there is a cleansing virtue in the blood of Christ for me" (pp. 29-30). Good works are mentioned in connection with the Ten Commandments. The first four Commandments give man's duty to God; the remaining six give man's duty to man (p. 29).

Thus the catechism included in this text takes up the first four of the Puritan emphases discussed in this chapter. Other than the material in the catechism, there is no use of the Bible in this text. Education is

mentioned in connection with the alphabet: "He who will not learn these letters, / Shall not rank among his betters" (p. 5). The letter y is said to stand for "a wild Youth" who "did not love school" (p. 13).

Conclusion

The Puritan emphases which were a part of Puritan theology as it had evolved by the early eighteenth century, when Puritanism ceased to be the dominant religion in America, were incorporated into materials that reached a large public both during and after Puritanism's theological reign. The Day of Doom and the New England Primer, both written by Puritans before the beginning of the eighteenth century, taught Puritan ideas to children who were unborn at the time of Jonathan Edwards' death.

The Primer remained in print and in use until well into the nineteenth century (I have examined a copy in use in the 1850's). The Puritan emphases that were a part of that work were also a part of textbooks written after the Revolutionary War. Webster's The American Spelling Book is the chief example of how the emphases of Puritanism were incorporated into a secular textbook that was read and memorized by millions of school children. These Puritan emphases were thus a part of two

of the most important texts printed: Webster's "American Spelling Book, which, next to, if not, indeed, surpassing, the New England Primer, has been the greatest inanimate force in American education."⁷⁰ Through these books, and other spellers also, Puritan emphases were learned by children and became a part of their shared heritage. Part of this learned and shared heritage, or culture, must then be said to be Puritanism.

As stated early in this chapter, the authors of early textbooks thought that the lessons taught by these books would have some effect on the individual's adult thought and actions. The probable effect of school texts on mass thought is discussed by Ruth M. Elson in a study of over one thousand nineteenth-century American schoolbooks. She concludes that

Books used in the nineteenth-century school were undoubtedly more influential [in forming public opinion] . . . than are those of the twentieth century. . . . Not only did the nineteenth-century child read little besides his schoolbooks, but the schoolbook itself occupied the central position in most public schools throughout the century. Educational theories . . . required that most of the textbooks be memorized word for word. . . . Obviously the beliefs and concepts held later by adults are not entirely the product of schoolbooks used in childhood. It seems safe to say, however, that the child more readily adopts those attitudes from his first formal study of society that are not contradicted by his own immediate experience. . . . Conversely, schoolbook attitudes

toward ideas and people remote to his experience probably influence his thinking more strongly on these subjects71

NOTES

- ¹ Evarts B. Greene and Virginia D. Harrington, American Population Before the Federal Census of 1790 (1932; rpt. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1966), p. 8.
- ² Heartman, p. xxii.
- ³ Greene and Harrington, p. 8.
- ⁴ Public Education in the United States (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1919), p. 71.
- ⁵ Edgar W. Knight and Clifton L. Hall, Readings in American Educational History (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951), p. 113.
- ⁶ Knight and Hall, p. 113.
- ⁷ Knight and Hall, p. 114.
- ⁸ Knight and Hall, p. 114.
- ⁹ Knight and Hall, p. 115.
- ¹⁰ Knight and Hall, p. 116.
- ¹¹ Henry Steele Commager, ed., Documents of American History, 6th ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1958), p. 131.
- ¹² Cubberley, Public Education, p. 67.
- ¹³ Cubberley, Public Education, p. 67.
- ¹⁴ Cubberley, Public Education, p. 67.
- ¹⁵ John Davis, Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America During 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, and 1802 (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1909), pp. 52-62.
- ¹⁶ Davis, p. 106.
- ¹⁷ Davis, pp. 395-96.
- ¹⁸ Knight and Hall, p. 405.

- 19 Lawrence A. Cremin, American Education: The Colonial Experience 1607-1785 (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 499-500.
- 20 Cremin, pp. 393-94.
- 21 Cremin, p. 546.
- 22 Cremin, p. 547.
- 23 Cremin, pp. 548-49.
- 24 Statistical View of the United States (Washington: Beverley Tucker, Senate Printer, 1854), p. 150.
- 25 Statistical View of the United States, p. 152.
- 26 Elson, p. 8.
- 27 Cubberley, Public Education, p. 37.
- 28 Knight and Hall, pp. 467-68.
- 29 Dorothy Orr, A History of Education in Georgia (Chapel Hill: The Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1950), p. 60.
- 30 Paul Monroe, Founding of the American Public School System (1940; facsimile. New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1971) I, 344.
- 31 Elson, p. 1.
- 32 Elson, p. 11.
- 33 Clifton Johnson, Old-Time Schools and School-Books (1904, rpt. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1963), p. 184.
- 34 Colyer Meriwether, Our Colonial Curriculum 1607-1776 (Washington D. C.: Capital Publishing Co., 1907), p. 34. Quoted in Ervin C. Shoemaker, Noah Webster: Pioneer of Learning (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1936), p. 64.
- 35 Shoemaker, pp. 83-84.
- 36 Noah Webster, "Preface," Noah Webster's American Spelling Book (1831; facsimile rpt. with intro. by Henry

Steele Commager. New York: Teachers College Press, 1962), p. 15. The 1831 edition is a reprint of the 1803 revision.

37 Shoemaker, p. 88.

38 Elson, p. 382.

39 Elson, p. 384.

40 Shoemaker, p. 88.

41 Shoemaker, p. 89.

42 Quoted by Lawrence A. Cremin, "Preface," Noah Webster's American Spelling Book, p. i.

43 Edgar W. Knight, Public Education in the South (New York: Ginn and Co., 1922), p. 272.

44 Knight, p. 273.

45 Johnson, p. 184.

46 Shoemaker, p. 158.

47 Noah Webster, "Preface," Elements of Useful Knowledge, Part II. Quoted by Shoemaker, p. 167.

48 Shoemaker, p. 145.

49 Shoemaker, p. 163.

50 Noah Webster, Noah Webster's American Spelling Book, p. 55. Further quotations will be cited by page in the text.

51 Davis, p. 54.

52 Davis, p. 428.

53 Quoted in Orr, p. 59.

54 Orr, pp. 61-62.

55 "Schools as They Were Sixty Years Ago," The American Journal of Education, 13 (1863), 127.

56 "Schools as They Were Sixty Years Ago," pp. 130-31.

57 "Schools as They Were in the United States Sixty and Seventy Years Ago," The American Journal of Education, 13 (1863), 738.

58 "Schools as They Were in the United States Sixty and Seventy Years Ago," The American Journal of Education, 16 (1866), 126.

59 "Schools as They Were in the United States Sixty and Seventy Years Ago," 16 (1866), 132.

60 "Schools as They Were in the United States Sixty and Seventy Years Ago," The American Journal of Education, 17 (1867), 556.

61 Henry Barnard, "School Books and School Apparatus," The American Journal of Education, 32 (1882), 966.

62 Quoted in Shoemaker, p. 88.

63 Knight and Hall, p. 490.

64 Knight and Hall, p. 499.

65 Knight and Hall, p. 505.

66 Caleb Bingham, The Child's Companion: Being a Concise Spelling Book (Boston: Samuel Hall, 1792), p. 20. Further quotations will be cited by page in the text.

67 John Peirce, The New American Spelling-Book, 6th ed. (Philadelphia: Joseph Cruikshank, 1793), p. 12. Further quotations will be cited by page in the text.

68 Elisha Babcock, The Child's Spelling Book (Hartford: John Babcock, 1798), p. 25. Further quotations will be cited by page in the text.

69 The Child's First Primer (Philadelphia: W. Jones, 1800), p. 25. Further quotations will be cited by page in the text.

70 Edwin Grant Dexter, A History of Education in the United States (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1904), p. 215.

71 Elson, pp. vii-viii.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The confusion regarding the nature of Puritan theology and the subsequent influence of Puritanism on later American life is due to the efforts of the Puritans to follow the teaching of Calvin while also showing a need for good works and a need to give man some control over his ultimate destiny. The Puritans, following Calvin, believed God to be omnipotent and man to be depraved; it was then hard for them to deny predestination. But they also felt that good works were a part of the Christian life and that the very existence of churches and preaching demanded that man have some say in his fate. So the Puritans started with the idea of God's omnipotence and began to compromise predestination.

William Ames, the foremost theologian of the American Puritans, made predestination a two-part decree. Ames said that God had predestined man but that the decree was not complete until each individual either accepted or rejected God's grace. Ames then went on to make good works on the family and community level one of the major points of his theology.

Other theologians turned to the idea of the new covenant as a means of reconciling God's omnipotence

with man's freedom to accept or reject grace. Under this theory God's power was in fact unlimited but God had agreed to limit it; while all men deserved destruction, God agreed to save those who believed instead of arbitrarily electing some to salvation. John Cotton preached the covenant of grace theology in early America. Samuel Willard in the second half of the seventeenth century gave the covenant of grace theology a very legalistic interpretation, emphasizing God's agreement to bind himself and pointing out that such an arrangement offered much more hope to man than did predestinarian theology. In the eighteenth century Jonathan Edwards told his listeners that God was not legally bound to save any man but that He would withhold his all-powerful wrath for a time; for a sinner to find salvation he must believe and seek God's grace before that time expired.

Out of this discussion of Puritan theology as it was formulated and preached some overall characteristics or emphases of Puritan theology emerged. Puritanism assumed an all-powerful God and that man fell through original sin. Man is therefore doomed in God's eyes, and might gain salvation either through God's arbitrary predestination or through God's agreeing to grant

salvation on some condition. The Puritans in America believed that God would grant grace in return for man's faith or belief. The fatalism of predestination was not taught without some qualification that made the granting of grace part of that predestination. The Puritans also believed that good works for family and society were a necessary expression of the religious life but that good works alone were not sufficient for salvation. Education is also one of the emphases of Puritanism, tied in with the necessity for the Puritan to be able to read the word of God, the Bible, on which the Puritan theology was based.

The above emphases, apparent in Puritan theology, reached New England through Puritan preaching. After the decline of the Puritan theology in America these same emphases were first brought to non-Puritan times through two written works that were composed by Puritans, widely read during Puritan times, and widely read after Puritan times: The Day of Doom and the New England Primer. The Primer, used to teach children to read and to know their moral and religious duties, brought the emphases to several generations of children. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Primer was still in use, Noah Webster's Spelling Book became widely used in

teaching children. It, and other spellers of the time, also taught the Puritan emphases. Between the Primer and the Spelling Book the Puritan emphases were taught to millions of children. Thus what began in Puritan theology was made a part of their culture. There is, then, a Puritan heritage that became a part of the mass culture or heritage of the early nineteenth-century American.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abel, Darrel. American Literature: Vol. I, Colonial and Early National Writing. Woodbury, N.Y.: Barron's Educational Series, 1963.
- Ames, William. The Marrow of Theology. Trans. from the 3rd ed., 1629, and ed. John D. Eusden. Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1968.
- Babcock, Elisha. The Child's Spelling Book. Hartford: John Babcock, 1798.
- Barnard, Henry. "School Books and School Apparatus." The American Journal of Education. 32 (1882), 961-72.
- Bingham, Caleb. The Child's Companion: Being a Concise Spelling Book. Boston: Samuel Hall, 1792.
- Blair, Walter, Theodore Hornberger, and Randall Stewart. American Literature: A Brief History. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1964.
- Blankenship, Russell. American Literature as an Expression of the National Mind. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1931.
- Bradford, William, and Edward Winslow. Journall of the English at Plimoth [Mourt's Relation]. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc., 1966.
- The Child's First Primer. Philadelphia: W. Jones, 1800.
- Clapham, E. Sheffield. "The Influence of Puritanism on American Literature. Living Age, 4 Oct. 1902, pp. 38-47.
- Classics of Protestantism. Ed. Vergilius Ferm. New York: Philosophical Library, 1959.
- Cremin, Lawrence A. American Education: The Colonial Experience 1607-1785. New York: Harper and Row, 1970.
- Cubberley, Ellwood P. Public Education in the United States. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1919.
- _____. Readings in the History of Education. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1920.

- Davis, John. Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America During 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, and 1802. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1909.
- Day, Martin S. History of American Literature from the Beginning to 1910. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1970.
- Dexter, Edwin Grant. A History of Education in the United States. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1904.
- Documents of American History. 6th ed. Ed. Henry Steele Commager. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1958.
- Elson, Ruth Miller. Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1964.
- Ford, Paul Leicester. The New England Primer; A History of its Origin and Development, with a Reprint of the . . . [1727 edition]. New York: Teachers College Press, 1962.
- Foster, Frank Hugh. "The History of the Original Puritan Theology of New England, 1620-1720." American Journal of Theology, July, 1897, pp. 700-27.
- Gaer, Joseph, and Ben Siegal. The Puritan Heritage: America's Roots in the Bible. New York: New American Library, 1964.
- Greene, Evarts B., and Virginia D. Harrington. American Population Before the Federal Census of 1790. 1932; rpt. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1966.
- Hart, James D. The Popular Book. Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1963.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "Main Street." The Complete Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, with Introductory Notes by George Parsons Lathrop. New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1883. III, 439-76.
- Heartman, Charles F. The New-England Primer Issued Prior to 1830: a Bibliographical Check-List. . . . New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1934.

- Horton, Rod W., and Herbert W. Edwards. Backgrounds of American Literary Thought. 2nd ed. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967.
- Howells, William Dean. Literature and Life. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1911.
- Hudson, Winthrop. Religion in America. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965.
- The Improved New-England Primer. Concord: Roby, Kimball and Merrell, 1841.
- John Cotton on the Churches of New England. Ed. Larzer Ziff. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1964.
- Johnson, Clifton. Old-Time Schools and School-Books. 1904; rpt. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1963.
- Knight, Edgar W. Public Education in the South. New York: Ginn and Co., 1922.
- _____, and Clifton L. Hall. Readings in American Educational History. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951.
- Littlefield, George Emery. Early Schools and School-books of New England. 1904; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1965.
- Mayer, F. E. The Religious Bodies of America. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956.
- Mead, Frank S. Handbook of Denominations in the United States. 2nd rev. ed. New York: Abingdon Press, 1961.
- Miller, Perry. Errand into the Wilderness. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1964.
- _____. The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century. 1939; rpt. with new introduction. Boston: Beacon Press, 1961.
- Monroe, Paul. Founding of the American Public School System. 2 vols. 1940; facsimile. New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1971. I.

- Morgan, Edmund S. Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea. New York: New York Univ. Press, 1963.
- Morison, Samuel Eliot. The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England. 3rd ed. New York: New York Univ. Press, 1965.
- Mott, Frank Luther. Golden Multitudes. New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1947.
- The New-England Primer Enlarged. [1781-1787]; rpt. Boston: Ginn and Co., [1900].
- The New-England Primer Improved. 1777; rpt. Hartford: Ira Webster, [1850].
- Nietz, John A. Old Textbooks. Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1961.
- Noah Webster's American Spelling Book. 1831; facsimile rpt. with intro. by Henry Steele Commager. New York: Teachers College Press, 1962.
- Nye, Russel B. American Literary History: 1607-1830. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970.
- O Brave New World: American Literature from 1600 to 1840. Ed. Leslie A. Fiedler and Arthur Zeiger. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1968.
- Orr, Dorothy, A History of Education in Georgia. Chapel Hill: The Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1950.
- The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha, revised standard version. Ed. Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965.
- The Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933. II, 1248.
- Peirce, John. The New American Spelling-Book. 6th ed. Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1793.
- Puritanism in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts. Ed. David D. Hall. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1968.

- The Puritans. Ed. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson. New York: American Book Co., 1938.
- The Reinterpretation of American Literature. Ed. Norman Foerster. 1928; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1959.
- Rutman, Darrett B. American Puritanism: Faith and Practice. New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1970.
- "Schools as They Were Sixty Years Ago." The American Journal of Education. 13 (1863), 123-44.
- "Schools as They Were in the United States Sixty and Seventy Years Ago." The American Journal of Education. 13 (1863), 737-52.
- "Schools as They Were in the United States Sixty and Seventy Years Ago." The American Journal of Education. 16 (1866), 125-36.
- "Schools as They Were in the United States Sixty and Seventy Years Ago." The American Journal of Education. 17 (1867), 556-60.
- Seventeenth-Century American Poetry. Ed. Harrison T. Meserole. Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday and Co., 1968.
- Shoemaker, Ervin C. Noah Webster: Pioneer of Learning. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1936.
- Statistical View of the United States. Washington: Beverley Tucker, Senate Printer, 1854.
- Stenhouse, Lawrence. Culture and Education. New York: Weybright and Talley, 1967.
- Stephenson, George M. The Puritan Heritage. New York: Macmillan Co., 1952.
- Tyler, Moses Coit. A History of American Literature 1607-1765. Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1949.
- Webster's New International Dictionary. 2nd ed. Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1961.

Willard, Samuel. Covenant-Keeping: The Way to Blessedness. Boston: James Glen, 1682.

Willson, Lawrence. "The Puritan Tradition in American Literature." Arizona Quarterly, 13, No. 1 (Spring 1957), 33-40.

Winslow, Edward. "Text Corrections for 'Good Newes from New England.'" Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society. 2nd Series, 9 (1832), 74-104.