SACVAN BERCOVITCH AND THE NEW ENGLAND PURITAN IMAGINATION

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled ***Sacvan Bercovitch and the New England Puritan Imagination*** submitted to the University of Hyderabad in fulfilment of the requirements for award of the Degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** in **English** is a bonafide record of original research work done by ***Mr.*** *M. Devanand* ***Samuel*** during the period of his study 1991-97 in the Department of English, University of Hyderabad, under my supervision and guidance and that the thesis has not formed before the basis for the award of any Degree/Diploma/Associateship/ Fellowship or any other similar titles.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled ***Sacvan Bercovitch and the New England Puritan Imagination*** submitted to the University of Hyderabad in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** in **English** is a bonafide record of original research work done by me under the supervision and guidance of ***Dr. Sachidananda Mohanty*** and that the thesis has not formed before the basis for the award of any Degree/Diploma/ Associateship/Fellowship or any other similar titles.

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To the memory of my father

MADDIMADUGULA KOTI REDDY SAMUEL

(1929 - 1971)

Establish thou the work of our hands upon us.

Psalm 90:17

What am I ? Nothing — Sovereign Grace alone
Lives in my life, and does what I have done.

Cotton Mather
Magnalia Christi Americana.

CONTENTS

NOTE

All the Scriptural quotations in the thesis are from the King James Version of The Bible (1611) New York: American Bible Society.

For convenience the source of the references to Sacvan Bercovitch's writings and edited works are given in abbreviated forms as shown below :

Typology in Puritan New England: The Williams - Cotton Controversy Reassessed (1967) American Quarterly Vol.XIX T N E

2. Typology and Early American Literature (ed) (1972) Harvard: Massachusetts Univ. Press. T A L

3. The American Puritan Imagination: Essays in Revaluation (ed) (1974) New York: Cambridge Univ. Press. P I

4. The Puritan Origins of the American Self (1975) New Haven: Yale Univ. Press. P O

5. The American Jeremiad (1978) Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press. A J

6. Ideology and Classic American Literature (ed) (1986) New York: Cambridge Univ. Press. I A L

7. The Office of the Scarlet letter (1991) Baltimore: John Hopkins. S L

8. The Rites of Assent: Transformations in the Symbolic Construction of America (1993) New York: Routledge. R A

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

PURITANISM: AN ABIDING VISION

Ye are (he light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot he hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and if giveth light unto all that are in (he house. Let your light so shine before men, (hat they may see your good works, and glorify your bather which is in heaven.

Mathew 5: 14-16

Men shall say of succeeding plantations: (he Lord make it like that of New England: for wee must consider that wee shall be as a (.ity upon a Hill, the eies of all people are uppon us.*

John Winthrop,
A Model of Christian Charity, 1630

Jewish and Canadian-born, Sacvan Bercovitch shows a profound understanding of the intricacies of Christian theology, ecclesiastical history and American culture. His extensive knowledge of Puritan writings, as seen in his work, distinguishes his familiarity with the intellectual life of the Puritans and adds significance to his scholarship. His authoritative grasp of Puritanism in a European-American context has firmly established him as an accomplished contemporary scholar of the highest order.

The uniqueness of Bercovitch's work on Seventeenth Century New England Puritanism stems from the fact that he is the first to not only attribute immense imaginative potential to the Puritans but also to demonstrate the power of the New

England Puritan Imagination in shaping the American national character. He approaches Seventeenth Century New England Puritan imagination through rhetoric - the Puritans' preferred mode of expression which includes a vast body of religious writings, sermons, diaries, election-day addresses and personal correspondence. He does this at two basic levels: first, by a creative examination of what he calls the "rhetoric of identity" which, he considers, is the central legacy of New England Puritanism to American life and culture; second, by tracing the origins and development of the American Jeremiad, as distinct from its European form, and relating its significance to more than two centuries of turbulent American history.

Bercovitch's "suspicion of high rhetoric" and his "fascination for the redemptive promises of language" compel him to undertake an examination of the roots and premises of the ritual of American consensus. It leads him back to the religious discourse of Seventeenth Century Puritan New England and the sense of sacred mission and identity it espoused. His study of New England Puritan rhetoric enables him to identify the New England Puritan legacy to American culture as "a system of sacred-secular symbols (New Israel, American Jerusalem), for a people intent on progress, a set of rituals of anxiety that could at once encourage and control the energies of free enterprise; a rhetoric of mission so broad in its implications, and so specifically American in its application that it could facilitate the transitions from Puritan to Yankee, and from errand to manifest destiny and the dream" (R A, p.35).

#

Bercovitch's insistence on the continuing influence of New England Puritanism on American culture, however, should not be misconstrued as a celebration of Puritanism. He is careful in making it clear that to describe "the affirmative energies. . . . is not the same as to endorse them" (A J, p.xv). Furthermore, his assertion that the myth of America "is essentially projective and elite, the invention of expatriate idealists

who declared themselves the party of the future, and then proceeded, in an implicit denial of secular history, to impose prophecy upon history" indicates Bercovitch's scepticism towards American Puritanism (P O, p. 133). And finally, his declaration that the symbol of America "serves to blight and ultimately preclude, the possibility of fundamental social change" confirms Bercovitch's qualified acceptance of the influence of Puritanism on the American mind (A J, p. 179).

Bercovitch's identification and interpretation of Puritan rhetoric as the legacy of early New England to American life and culture is generally regarded as an extension of Perry Miller's work. It is true that Bercovitch takes issue with Miller on the premises that Miller "did not say everything; he was partial or mistaken about things he did say; and he drastically underrated the aesthetic dimension of the Puritan mind" (P I, p.2). It can be argued that Bercovitch extends Miller's work only to revise it, as can be seen in his approach to two central forms of Puritan rhetoric i.e., typology and the Jeremiad which, together, constitute Bercovitch's interpretation of the Puritan origins of America. Bercovitch perceives New England Puritan rhetoric not just as verbal embellishments but as "highly figurative, abounding in metaphor, parallel, allusion, type and trope" (Ibid:4). He asserts that the New England Puritans, contrary to being averse to typology (as Miller had concluded from his reading of the Williams-Cotton controversy), were actually steeped in it: "typology pervades all branches of early American writing, secular as well as religious" (1967:169) and it is in this typological mode of the New England Puritans' rhetoric that Bercovitch discovers the roots of American identity.

The most significant re-evaluation of Miller's thought lies in Bercovitch's treatment of the Jeremiad which constitutes a major portion of Miller's second volume of **The** New **England Mind** (1953) and offers a record, as Miller perceived it, of the gradual decline of Puritanism in New England. Miller argued that the sermons of the

second-generation Puritan settlers expressed "a deep disquietude. . . . troubled utterances, worried, fearful . . . New England was sent on an errand, and that it has failed" (1956:2). Bercovitch, on the other hand, asserts that the New England Puritan Jeremiads not only begin with the first immigrants of the Great Migration (1630), but they also, apart from berating a backsliding community, subsume every form of dissent into a reaffirmation of the Puritan Vision of America. According to Bercovitch, they "attest to an unswerving faith in the errand, and if anything they grow more fervent, more absolute in their commitment from one generation to the next" (A J, p.6). Bercovitch contends that the New England Puritans transformed the traditional form of the Jeremiad to confirm and perpetuate their firm belief in "the inviolability of the colonial cause" (lbid:7). Thus, for Bercovitch, "the most severe limitation of Miller's view is that it excludes (or denigrates) this pervasive theme of afffirmation and exultation[1]" (lbid:6). Therefore, Bercovitch's emphasis on the positive aspect of the New England Puritan Jeremiad not only contests Miller's tragic view of the decline of Puritanism in New England, but also confirms its continuing influence on American imagination.

Bercovitch argues that every major American writer, from Jonathan Edwards through Emerson, not only inherited the New England Puritans' modes of belief but also adopted the rhetorical form of what Bercovitch terms auto-American-biography or "the celebration of the representative self as America, and of the American self as the embodiment of a prophetic universal design" (P O, p. 136). The New England Puritans, according to Bercovitch, rhetorically developed their concept of American selfhood and national identity and fused their conjunction with the redemptive meaning of America. Thus, for Bercovitch, the entire corpus of classic American writing extends and reflects the Puritans' rhetorical creation of the myth and symbol of America.

Furthermore, while Cotton Mather, as the last sentinel of Puritan Orthodoxy, in Millerian terms, personified the tragedy of the failed theocracy, Bercovitch centralizes him in his study of American Puritanism. Bercovitch perceives Mather as a heroic figure linking the Founding Fathers with successive generations of their American descendents who, according to Bercovitch, not only inherited Puritan ideas and modes of belief but also consistently took recourse to them at every turn of the nation's difficult history. Thus, Mather's **Magnalia Christi Americana** (1702), as Bercovitch's proof text, far from being a Jeremiad decrying Puritan apostasy in early New England, defines itself as the representative source of the symbolic patterns and structures that constituted the Myth of America and a mode of consensus which, Bercovitch argues, ensured and sustained social unity and cultural cohesion throughout American history. In short, the Seventeenth Century New England Puritans, according to Bercovitch, through the rhetorical forms of typology and the Jeremiad, fashioned the myth of America. It not only developed a distinctive American ideology but also a hegemonic consensus which permeated every aspect of American culture. Bercovitch uses the Gramscian definition of hegemony to mean "a historically organic ideology based on genuine cultural leadership and `spontaneous consent', as distinct from ideologies imposed by 'state coercive power' " (A J, p.xiii) where ideology is non-pejorative and signifies "the web of ideas, practices, beliefs and myths through which society coheres and perpetuates itself (**R** A, p. 13).

Bercovitch admits that his fascination for `America' transformed his Graduate Studies Program into a number of successive inquiries which, he argues, conveyed a growing cultural awareness and **a** mode of acculturation. His discovery of the meaning of America "begins with the Puritan Vision of the New World" and, through the "explications of religious types opens into descriptions of national rituals, stategies of

symbolic cohesion . . . [to] end, provisionally with the dissensus within American literary studies" (lbid:l).

II

The primary aim of my study is to evaluate the premises and parameters of Bercovitch's analysis of New England Puritan Imagination by way of rhetoric and explore the possibilities of his thesis in providing fresh insights into Puritanism's influence on American life and culture. Evidently, his methodology and view points find a major focus in this study.

Bercovitch argues that his discovery of the Puritan vision of the New World had its genesis in "three shaping events of the modern age, all of which occurred in rapid succession at the turn of the Sixteenth Century" (Elliott 1988:33). The first, he asserts, was the invention of the Printing Press, 1456, followed by the exploratory, transatlantic voyage of Christopher Columbus ,1492, and finally, the most decisive event took place in 1517 when Martin Luther set off the dynamics of the Protestant Reformation with his **Ninety-Five Theses.** Bercovitch discovers the momentous textual-geographical spiritual implications of these historic events epitomized in Cotton Mather's description of the Great Migration of 1630: "The Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, well compared unto a ship, is now victoriously sailing round the globe" (1967, I:43).

Following Bercovitch's theory of the hegemonic influence of New England Puritanism, it can be argued that Puritan rhetoric is central to American life and culture even in the closing years of the Twentieth Century. The call of the American President during the recent Gulf War (1990-91) for a day of nation-wide fasting and **prayer** is **reminiscent** of the early New England Jeremiads. A striking example of Puritan

rhetoric as an ideological tool is seen in the President's congratulatory address to the manufacturers of the Patriot missiles. His ubiquitous plea for a 'New World Order' is once again an echo of the Founding Fathers. Finally, his suggestion that America's emergence as a World leader is "not our ambition, it is our destiny" leaves no doubt in the mind of the perceiver that the New England Puritan vision of establishing a 'City upon a **Mill'** not only persists but continues to influence the American psyche with undiminished vigour.

The survival of the Puritan vision through more than three and a half centuries of turbulent American history is demonstrative of not only Seventeenth Century New England rhetoric and the deep sense of mission it embodied but also the power of the Puritan imagination that produced it. Sacvan Bercovitch argues that the New England Puritan rhetoric was pivotal in fashioning not only American socio-political values but also an undying "exceptionalist" ideology unique only to the land.

In **The Puritan Origins** of **the American Self** (1975), Bercovitch describes how the Founding Fathers of New England inverted traditional hermeneutics to express the exceptionalist American ideology. By a typological interpretation of Mather's ***NehemiasAmericanus*** (1702), the New World, according to Bercovitch, was elevated to the equivalent of Canaan, granting the Puritans of New England a prophetic future and a sacred identity which resulted in a unique linguistic structure. This structure, a "distinctive symbolic mode," as Bercovitch argues, created the myth of America that runs through Classic American writings and generated enduring doctrines like Manifest Destiny, Redeemer Nation, American Dream and so on. While **The Puritan Origins of the American Self** defined Puritanism and the American myth in terms of religious rhetoric isolated from the social situation, **The American Jeremiad** (1978) relates the myth to its socio-political origins and functions. Bercovitch argues that the European

Jeremiad was appropriated and transformed by the New England Puritans. This was designed in order to serve as an ongoing rhetorical strategy to sustain and perpetuate the New England Puritan vision of the New World plantation as a "City upon a Hill," Bercovitch explains the political implications of this strategy which, he argues, transformed the Puritan sense of mission into an ideology of consensus. Such a consensus was meant to ensure the smooth, successful transition of Colony and Province into a World Power.

But before proceeding further to a consideration of the writings of Sacvan Bercovitch, it would be appropriate at this point to set forth the aim, scope and method of this chapter which itself is offered as an introduction and background to the larger thesis. As the title itself indicates, the object of this chapter is first, to identify the centrality of the purist element in Christian tradition and to trace its continuities from Christ's times, second, to situate this purist element in Puritan thought, and third, to define Puritanism's essentially visionary aspect in the New World. The text of the argument gains strength from the ecclesiastical history of Roman Catholicism and its inherent tradition of dissent leading to the rise of Protestantism. The methodology adopted in the study is a combination of narration and analysis beginning with the Apostolic Age and culminating in the eventuality of establishing evangelical communities of Christian Saints in the New World. This introductory chapter concludes with Bercovitch's summation that the Puritan vision of the New World was the cumulative product of the Renaissance, the Printing Press and the Protestant Reformation.

As recent scholarship has demonstrated, the necessity of studying New England Puritanism goes beyond historical common places. Until the first Great War, American historians of the colonial period were superficial in their approach to New

England Puritan culture and remained content to record a few material manifestations of the Puritan Spirit. It became obvious that the first and most prestigious educational institutions which still dominate American academia were recognized and admired as having been established by pioneer immigrants of the Puritan persuasion; literature written by Seventeenth Century New England Puritans and their descendents constituted the corpus of American Literature till the turn of the Twentieth Century; and most importantly, the assumption that the socio-political and economic concepts developed by the Seventeenth Century Puritan Mind continues to inform life and thought in Twentieth Century' America came to be widely accepted.

It was only after the turn of the Twentieth Century, and in the 1920s in particular, that American intellectuals, thoroughly disinclined towards European culture, sought to take a closer look at their colonial origins isolated from the British imperialistic background. But, while the ideals and legends of the Founding Fathers unfolded before intellectual inquiry (New Humanists and Realists), there was growing dismay at the diversity of interpretations and their correlations to contemporary reality. Nevertheless, the polemics that ensued confirmed the fact that Puritanism was "firmly rooted in the American experience and in the emerging American mind of the Eighteenth Century. From New England as a center it has radiated its influence in American civilization, for good or ill, from that day to this; and the end is not yet" (Savelle 1948:27).

Therefore, the necessity of studying Puritanism gains greater significance from the ongoing fascination for the colonial origins and the turbulent history of a country whose citizens suffer from the intermittent compulsion of discovering the ever elusive meaning of their national character. Furthermore, the polarity between life and thought, the real and the ideal, individual practice and collective vision continues to provide the motivation for a reinvestigation of the intriguing influences of Puritanism on

the American mind. In this connection, it is interesting to note that Sacvan Bercovitch's first "encounter" with America and his response to it epitomize the crux of the problem. As he explains:

> . . . It was as though a special lunacy had stormed the general optimism of the land. Here was the Jewish anarchist Paul Goodman berating the midwest for abandoning the promise; the descendent of American slaves, Martin Luther King denouncing injustice as a violation of the American Way; here an endless debate about national destiny, full of rage and faith, conservatives scavenging for Un-Americans, New Left historians recalling the country to its sacred mission. Their problem was not what's usually called identity. These people never asked "Who are we?" but, as though deliberately avoiding the commonsense question, "When is our errand to be fulfilled? How long, O Lord how long?" And their answers invariably joined celebration and lament in reaffirming the dream (Girgus 1981:5,6).

Bercovitch's remarkable mastery of Puritan studies has earned him an enviable stature in the tradition of American Puritan scholarship only preceded by that of New England giants like Samuel Eliot Morison, Edmund S. Morgan, Kenneth B. Murdoch and most prominently Perry Miller. The latter's monumental effort firmly established New England Puritanism as an integral part of American studies and lent it a profundity unsurpassed by any other area of Americn historiography.

As is generally known, Puritanism was an extreme form of the Reformation and a protest against Sixteenth Century English Protestantism. It was a movement committed to the complete purification and restitution of *Ecclesia Anglicana* to the pristine Christianity of the Apostolic Age. But it was, as William Haller stated, "far more than a scheme of Church government and in this larger sense it continued uninterrupted to strengthen and extend its hold upon the English imagination" (1938:18).

Its purview extended beyond matters of ecclesiastical polity to develop a unique federal theology which envisioned England as the vanguard of the true Reformation and the chosen instrument of World-wide redemption. This radical perception of their exceptional identity and sacred destiny induced zealous Seventeenth Century English Puritans to embark on the transatlantic "errand" to the American strand to found a *theopolis* worthy of universal veneration. An analysis of the success of the Puritan venture, the nature of the theocracy they established and the extent of its influence on the American republic entails, first and foremost, a study of the origin and development of Puritanism. Because, as Perry Miller, the most eminent historian of Puritan New England stated, "without some understanding of Puritanism, it may safely be said, there is no understanding of America" (1963:1).

III

The term Puritan' gained currency in England during the 1550s to designate a group of Englishmen who wanted to purify the Church of England from the remnants of Roman ritual still in practice. They refused to conform to Queen Elizabeth's Religious Settlement' of 1559 which was a cleverly wrought compromise between Protestant doctrine and Catholic ritual, and demanded complete reformation of the English Church based on the sole authority of the Bible.

The Puritans' objections were primarily against the grandiose attire of the clergy which, they believed, not only imposed on the popular mind "the thought of the ministry as a spiritual estate of peculiar powers" but also contravened their conviction of the "priesthood of all believers"; the act of kneeling at the reception of the Holy Communion which, to the Puritans, implied an "adoration of the physical presence of Christ therein"; the utility of the ring in marriage "as continuing the estimate of

matrimony as a sacrament" and the exercising of "the sign of the Cross in baptism as superstitious" (Walker 1959:403).

Therefore, Puritanism in Sixteenth Century England was, first of all, a religious movement which "began as a liturgical reform, but it developed into a distinct attitude towards life" (Davies 1948:9). The Puritans' perception of life as a perennial struggle between good and evil lent Puritanism a strong moral consciousness. It must be noted that the term moral' meant much more than the generally accepted notion of good behaviour which, according to the Puritans, was merely suggestive of works without faith. As Thomas Watson said, "Civility is not purity . . . a man may be clothed with moral virtues - justice, prudence, temperance -- and yet go to hell. If we must be pure in heart, then we must not rest in outward purity" (1977:172). But at the same time, Puntanism was not just a personalized movement aimed at transforming individual "life from ungodliness and unrighteous dealing" (Breward 1970:343). It was a reform movement which drew strength from the deep conviction that life, personal and communal, needed to be changed and that the change ought to be made in strict accordance with scriptural prescriptions. Thus, Puritanism was also a movement in which the Bible was central to every aspect of English life and thought. It is interesting to note at this point that the question of authority has always been seminal to the rise of various reformist movements in ecclesiastical history. But nowhere else does one find a parallel to Puritanism which subordinated every institution, law and practice of the land to the ultimate authority of the Bible.

Puritanism can also be described as a visionary movement which gained its sustenance from a singularly unique vision of a reformed, evangelical society. Therefore, "the summons to a reformation" that pervaded the popular mind of the Puritan

era " was a call to action, first to transform the individual into an instrument fit to serve the divine will, and then to employ that instrument to transform all of society" (Seaver 1970:44).

Thus, Puritanism as a historic event began as a demand for liturgical reform and gradually developed into a multi-dimensional movement within the Church of England in the Sixteenth Century. It is instructive to note that the modern understanding of Puritanism as "a movement of the learned godly', the religious intellectuals of the day, a movement that found its strongest support in University circles" is misleading (Davies 1975:285). It is true that University Professors and the clergy developed the motivating theories and theological concepts of the movement and provided it with a strong intellectual background but if it was not for lay participation the movement would have had little success. Furthermore, Puritanism in England was greatly influenced by the radical Protestantism of the Continent brought home by the returning Marian exiles to evolve into a religio-secular philosophy of life with far reaching international consequences. In the final analysis:

> Puritanism was a world view, a total Christian philosophy, in intellectual terms a Protestantized and updated medievalism, and in terms of spirituality a kind of monasticism outside the cloister and away from monkish vows (Ryken 1986:xvi).

The emergence of Puritanism as a mass movement "was nothing new or totally unrelated to the past but something old, deep-seated, and English, with roots reaching far back into medieval life" and to the earliest Christian times (Haller 1938: 5). It is interesting to note that the reformative impulse of Puritanism can be explained as the derivative of a protracted tradition of protest within the Roman Catholic Church. According to Charles W. Kegley, the "need for cleansing and reform in thought and life

appeared, ironically, at the very beginning of Christian history (1965:16). It is recorded in the New Testament as Jesus' rebuke to Peter: "Get thee behind me Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savorcst not things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Math. 16:23). This distinction between "things that be of God" and "those that be of men" attains prophetic dimensions and its Jeremiad undertones foreshadow the tension between an evangelical minority and the ecclesiastical majority throughout the history of Western Christendom.

But before addressing the question of the Protestant legacies of Puritanism, the term `Protestant' needs to be defined. In popular opinion, a Protestant is understood as one who protested against the authority of the Roman Catholic Church and that the protest was, in the modern sense of the word, a display of resentful emotion. It is true that at the Diet of Spiers of 1529, the representatives of the Lutheran group expressed their disagreement with the decisions of a Roman Catholic majority, but it can be argued that terms such as " 'Protestant' and `Reformation' are unhappy designations for a movement that in essence was not protest but affirmation, not reform but conservation, not reaction but propulsion" (Anderson 1944:43).

Protest is a derivative of the Latin root `protestiari' (a combination of pro: forth, and testiari: to call to witness) which means to affirm - not contravene, the only true evangelical faith of the Apostolic Age over that of the Roman Catholic Church which was founded on ecclesiastical tradition. The protest was, in effect, a solemn declaration that there could be "no sure preaching or doctrine but that which abides by the Word of God" (Flew 1954:12-13). Bercovitch attributes the dynamics behind the tradition of dissent to a mode of sacralization that was prevalent throughout pre-Reformation Christendom. The early Christians, he argues, by taking recourse to the Old Testament, perceived the holy land as the source of spiritual nourishment for their

redeemed souls. The subsequent growth and power of the Roman Catholic Church brought a shift in this perception and the Holy See not only usurped the holy significance of the Biblical land but also became, with unlimited spiritual authority, the ultimate dispenser of universal salvation. The dissenting minority throughout ecclesiastical history, according to Bercovitch, including their Protestant successors, rejected this mode of sacralization of temporal places and ecclesiastical institutions. Bercovitch asserts that the opponents of Catholicism claimed that "Until the Second Coming, . . . the only Canaan in this world was the Kingdom within accessible only by a radical inward turning of the will from self to Christ, from secular to sacred time" (R A, p.77). But the Seventeenth Century Puritans, Bercovitch argues, as the extremist heirs of the tradition of dissent took recourse to the Old Testament promises to sacralize the New World as the New Promised Land for a new chosen people of God.

Beginning with the close of the Apostolic Age, amidst Christological controversies and post-persecution en masse conversions, attempts to preserve the purity of Christian life and thought went hand in hand with calls for ecclesiastical austerity. The first protest against ecclesiastical corruption occurred in the second century in the form of Montanism. The Montanists proclaimed that "the end of the world was at hand and that the heavenly Jerusalem was about to be established . . . In preparation for this fast approaching consummation the most strenuous asceticism should be practised, celibacy, fastings, abstinence from meat . . . " (Walker 1959:56). The second protest' movement was started by Anthony of Egypt, in mid-third century who founded Monasticism by literally putting into practice Christ's answer to the question "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" (Matt. 19:16) — a question that reappeared at the turn of the Sixteenth Century whose response plunged Europe into unprecedented religious turmoil and left Western Christianity irrevocably altered. The third attempt at reform that warrants mention was

made by the Donatists in the early Fourth Century' who rallied themselves into a radical group by exacting the claim that they represented the true Church comprising `Visible Saints', or Clergy and membership, untainted by sin. In this connection, it is instructive to note that the Augustinian modification of the Donatists' extreme position became an essential doctrine of Puritanism. Edmund S.Morgan, a renowned historian of Puritan New England, stated that the perfectionism of Puritanism as embodied in their concept of visible sainthood of Donatism was "levelled against the most ardent reformers in England, the Puritans" (1963:4). Then, there were the Cathari, or `pure', also called Albigenses who voiced

> strong criticism of the wealth and power of the Church, a rejection of the medieval sacrament in favour of baptism and the Lord's Super, a high evaluation of the laiety, the centrality of the sermon and most prominently of all, a dependence on Scripture for authority (Anderson 1944:31).

Another important sect that contributed to the tradition of protest' were the Waldenses who literally practised and preached the text of Mathew 19:21.

The brief survey of ecclesiastical history strengthens the fact that the "Elizabethan controversy", from which, according to Bercovitch, the Seventeenth Century Puritan immigrants derived their sense of sacred identity "was set in the whole context of the history of Western Christendom" (Porter 1971:2).

However, as Paul Tillich, one of the greatest theologians of modern times noted, the eventuality of the Protestant movement as a historical landmark had to await "the one fundamental principle -- Luther's breakthrough to the experience of being accepted in spite of being unacceptable, which in Pauline terms is called justification by grace through faith" (1967:203).

The quest for purity in religion and conduct, extending from the Montanists of the Second Century to the Reformation, was sustained by a troubled conscience which struggled to free itself from the unscriptural confines of ecclesiastical traditions and pagan superstitions. But conscientious Christians, by virtue of their knowledge of Classical languages and their exclusive accessibility to canonical writings and theological commentaries, were limited to the rich and the noble, while the masses remained steeped in ignorance, serfdom and Papal coercion. It must be noted that the various reformist schools of thought, mentioned earlier, did not lead to spontaneous, popular uprisings chiefly because the medieval mind was so conditioned to be occupied with the hereafter that little thought was given to the correction of ecclesiastical abuses and unjust social practices in the here and now. It is this bent of mind that not only established and perpetuated Monasticism till the late Middle Ages as the purest form of Christian living on this side of death, but also aided the Roman establishment in becoming the wealthiest authority in Western Christendom.

However intense and inescapably widespread Papal persecution was, the purist temper of the reformist heretics' was an equally unending continuum of evangelical convictions and ecclesiastical criticisms through out the Middle Ages. These movements were not isolated outbursts but related occurences as seen by the similarities in the basic substance of their protests. The obvious reason for the progression of reformist thought through more than a millennium is that

> The thousand years between AD 500 and AD 1500 were marked by vast movements of people.... Beginning in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries, the movements of peoples were notably increased in the Euro-Asiatic land mass. For a thousand years and more the centres of civilization were

> disturbed again and again by incursions of semi-civilized and barbarous people (Latourette 1941:3).

It is evident that the inner struggle for purity beginning with the Montanists gained wider acceptance in successive waves of evangelical protests against a backdrop of medieval socio-political uncertainities. What primarily started as a quest for personal redemption, with the passage of time, turned outwards in the form of an indictment against clerical immorality, Papal coercion and doctrinal corruption. The Montanists' apocalypticism, the Monasticists' asceticism, the Donatists' saintliness, the Albigensian and Waldensian glorification of the laiety and total reliance on the Scriptures, the Christian teaching of the Brethern, the Lollardsian doctrines of consubstantiation, salvation by faith alone and the infallibility of the Scriptures, the Hussites distinction between clerical and civil office, the attempts to implement the `Priesthood of all Believers' by the translation and publication of the Bible -- to name only a few representative legacies -- collected cumulatively and converged as a centripetal force precipitating conditions ideal for the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation.

The unseen forces of religio-secular change threatening Papal rule were unpredictably activated by the harmless act of an Augustinian Monk, who, driven by conscience, expressed his opinion on a contemporary issue. Martin Luther's **Ninety Five Theses** (1517), set off the historical event of the Protestant Reformation as a culmination of the centuries-old tradition of protest. The immediate implications and far-reaching effects of this simple act were entirely due to the providential invention of printing which Luther described as "God's highest and extremest act of grace, whereby the business of the Gospel is driven forward" and as "the last flame before the extinction of the World" (Eisenstein 1979:303). Contrary to Luther's initial expectation of eliciting a debate on the propriety of the system of indulgences, his treatise, secretly translated and

published, heralded the commencement of the new epoch in the history of Western Civilization. Beginning with this event, Gutenberg's invention was seen as a special blessing bestowed on the German nation to not only vanquish the Roman Anti-Christ and establish true religion in Germany but also to prepare all nations for the imminent Second Coming of Christ and the Millennium. This unique envisioning of a divine mission supposedly initiated by God was subsequently appropriated by

> the Marian exiles and exploited in a manner that suited Elizabethan statecraft. By associating printing with the providential mission of a prospering expansive realm, the English Protestants pointed the way to later trends - revolutionary messianism in the Old World and Manifest Destiny in the New (Ibid:305).

The central tenets of Protestantism emerged as;

> Salvation by faith rather than by works, the authority of the Bible interpreted by the consecrated conscience, the priesthood of all believers, and the service of God in secular as well as clerical callings (Harbison 1955:53).

IV

Puritanism, like Calvinism, was an extension of the Reformed tradition in the sense that it insisted on a complete purification of England's pseudo-Protestantism as explained earlier in this chapter. It is instructive at this point to note that while Puritanism can be established an outgrowth of the Protestant tradition, there has been considerable speculation regarding its theolgical origins. A study by Leonard J. Trinterud has shown that Puritan thought was not Calvinist in its entirety, as is popularly accepted, but essentially English in its formulation (1951:37-57). However, in the light of the historical continuites traced above, if the reformative impulse of Puritanism gained

strength from the cumulative legacy of a long tradition of evangelical `protest', the Puritan vision of the "City on a Hill" gained its substance from the projection of Protestant thought, thrown into relief, against the exotic geography of the New World through the medium of the printed word. This proposition is conclusively argued by Sacvan Bercovitch in his essay ***The Modernity of American Puritan Rhetoric*** wherein he states that although Seventeenth Century Puritans were deeply religious "their vision of New England and the New World was quintessentially literary, a product of the myth-making imagination (Kennedy 1987:43). He undertakes an analysis of crucial events in the later Middle Ages to identify the religio-literary origins and development of `America' as the most enduring symbol of the modern world.

Firstly, Bercovitch argues that the invention of the Printing Press not only resurrected literary antiquity but it also facilitated the publication of the Bible and realized the twin concepts of Protestantism; the equality of all believers and the infallibility of the Scriptures. The consequent practice of textual reliance led the more ardent Protestants of Sixteenth Century England to interpret themselves in biblical terms and develop an identity unequalled by any other community since Mosaic times. Thus, the highly exceptionalist self-identification of the Puritans as the English Israel', `Elect Nation' and the Chosen Warriors of Christ embattled against Papal enormity and Roman captivity, became the core of their imagination. But, just as in Luther's Germany, the sacred identity of Sixteenth Century Puritans as God's Chosen failed to materialize as community in England and was eventually transplanted to the New World to fructify in the New England locale.

Secondly, Bercovitch argues that the Columbian venture of 1492 across the Atlantic marked the beginnings of the transplantation of European culture and the

westward movement of the forces of modernization. Me asserts that the discovery of America inspired exotic descriptions of the New World which exerted a deeply impressionistic influence on the Renaissance mind. The emergent religio-secular forces of Sixteenth Century Europe translated America into a land of unfathomable natural wealth; a heathen habitation awaiting Christian conversion; and an ideal land for the unhampered institution of evangelical societies.

Lastly, the third constituent, according to Bercovitch, that went into the making of the modern world, was the Protestant tradition and its spiritual conflict with the Roman Catholic Church. The doctrine of *Sola fide*, or Salvation by faith alone and not by works, led Protestants to consider themselves as an exclusive community whose common enemy was Roman Catholicism. But, it was the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* or total dependence on the scriptures, that extended their imagination further by offering a new view of history and their role in it. The inspirational text was The Book of Revelation or the Apocalypse of John, the last prophetic book of the Bible, which disclosed the awesome course of history through 'figures' or types' of a chosen people's confrontation with the Anti-Christ culminating in Christ's Second Coming and the Millennium. The biblicism of the Puritans and the typological mode of their imagination led them to interpret themselves as latter-day Christian Israelites perpetuating the final act of God's redemptive plan for mankind beginning with the fall of Adam and culminating with the commencement of the Millennium in New English Canaan.

Sacvan Bercovitch, from his religio-literary analysis of the Puritan imagination, concludes that

> the Puritan vision of New England was the child of Protestantism, Renaissance exploration, and the printing press. But America' as the single most potent cultural symbol of the modern world and also (in its various aesthetic-religious forms) as symbolic center of our modernist literary tradition, was the discovery of Puritan New England (Kennedy 1987:43).

In the final analysis, it can be concluded that the Puritan concept of New England as the 'City upon a Mill' was not exclusively English in its origin. It owed much of its constitution to the protracted legacy of the quest for purity in Christian life and thought conjoined later by the Puritans' struggle for chastity in worship. However, the entire process of adapting and substantiating the centuries-old desideratum of establishing a community of Saints -- a New Jerusalem -- in an American wilderness, untainted by the enormity of Old-World institutions was consummated by the singularly powerful dynamics of Seventeenth Century Puritan imagination and its rhetorical manifestation. Therefore, while the vision of establishing evangelical communities in the New World was an outgrowth of historical exigencies mentioned earlier in this chapter, it can be argued that the substantiation and perpetuation of the Puritan Vision of the City on a Hill' was the exclusive work of Seventeenth Century New England Puritan rhetoric. A classic, oft-quoted, example of New England Puritan rhetoric as the embodiment of the Puritan vision is the sermon *A* ***Model of Christian Charity*** of John Winthrop (1630), the first Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, delivered as an exposition of the nature and function of the prospective New England Plantation. The sermon can also be read as a paradigm typifying the indivisible conjugation of Puritan vision and Puritan rhetoric, one drawing strength from the other in a mutually sustaining, co-existing continuum. Furthermore, the Puritan Vision of New England as a City on a Hill', far from being restricted to Seventeenth Century New England, gained breadth and complexity during

succeeding epochs of American history to enfold and transform the whole of the United States into the unique *Theopolis Americana.*

It would thus be amply clear that Sacvan Bercovitch, in an effort to demonstrate the shaping influence of Puritan imagination on American life and thought, undertakes to define New England Puritanism in terms of its rhetoric. He argues that Seventeenth Century New England rhetoric evolved as an integral part of the Puritans' transatlantic vision and colonial experience to develop into enduring modes of national expression. It not only reflected the New England Puritans' unique conception of themselves as Visible Saints but also justified their New World enterprise as an extension of Biblical prophesy and their singular role in redemptive history as the sole agents of the Millennium. According to Bercovitch, New England Puritan rhetoric manifested itself on two levels: one, it sanctified the New World locale and gave New England Puritans an exceptional American' identity based on Scriptural types' thereby lending sacred meaning to the Great Migration and the entire Puritan Colonial experience; two, it provided a highly effective ritual of consensus', in the form of Jeremiad, to sustain and perpetuate the Puritan vision of America as the `City of God'. Bercovitch explains the political implications of the American Jeremiad which, he argues, transformed New England Puritans' sense of mission into an ideology of consensus to ensure the smooth, successful transition of Colony and Province into World Power. With a brilliant stroke of genius, he attributes the transformation of Colony into Republic, theocracy into free democracy and millennial agency into World dominance to the Puritans' ability to combine religious rhetoric with social strategy which he terms as an enduring "ritual of consensus". He explains that

> a major reason for the triumph of the republic was that the need for a social ideal was filled by the typology of

> America's mission ... It gave the nation a past and future in sacred history, rendered its political and legal outlook a fulfilment of prophesy, elevated its true inhabitants', the enterprising European Protestants who had immigrated within the past century or so, to the status of God's chosen, and declared the vast territories around them to be their chosen country. The rhetoric of trial provided moral support for the Federalists' emphasis on depravity. The concept of American revolution transformed self-reliance into a function not only of the common good but of the redemption of mankind. In virtually every area of life, the Jeremiad became the official ritual form of continuing revolution. Mediating between religion and ideology, the Jeremiad gave contract the sanctity of covenant, free enterprise the halo of grace, progress the assurance of the chiliad, and nationalism the grandeur of typology. In short, it wed self-interest to social perfection, and conferred on both the unique blessings of American destiny (A J, pp. 140-41).

Given the fact that Bercovitch has made a special contribution to the understanding of the Puritan imagination by way of its rhetoric, the aims of this study will be: first, to examine the religio-historical origins and development of America's exceptionalist ideology; second, to analyze the premises and methodology of Bercovitch's thought as reflected in **The Puritan Origins of the American Self** and the application of his theory to classic American literature; third, to examine Bercovitch's definition of the American Jeremiad and its shaping influence on American culture; and in conclusion, to offer a critical summation of Bercovitch's theory of American Puritan Origins, the disintegration of the consensual tradition and the rise of dissensus as an indication of the need to reestimate established cultural norms and finally to examine the personal element in Bercovitch's work.

Thus, after having undertaken an introductory overview of this project, it is appropriate to closely examine in the next chapter, the related issues of the Puritan Mind like Sacred Mission and Manifest Destiny.

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Chapter II

THE PURITAN MIND: SACRED MISSION AND MANIFEST DESTINY

For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.

Deuteronomy 14:2

All you the people of Christ that are here Oppressed, Imprisoned and scurrilously derided, gather yourselves together, your wives and little ones, and answer to your several Names as you shall he shipped for his service, in the West erne World, and more especially for planting the united Colonies of New England, Where you are to attend to the service of the King of Kings,

Edward Johnson
Wonder-Working Providence, 1653

Thus stands the cause between God and us: We are entered into Covenant with him for this worke . . . Now if the Lord shall please to heare us, and bring us in peace to the place wee desire, then hath he ratified this Covenant and sealed our commission. . . .

John Winthrop
A Model of Christian Charity, 1630

Granted that the Protestant Reformation emerged as a culmination of the long tradition of dissent inherent in the Roman Catholic Church, the tradition of dissent, which broke the authority of Rome and divided the Church continued to persist

in the post-Reformation Anglican establishment in England in the form of Puritanism. Puritanism, as an extension of English Protestantism, sought a greater reformation of *Ecclesia Anglicana* in strict accordance with *Sola Scriptura*. The persecution at home and the resistance of the Anglican establishment to their demands for further **purification** led the English Puritans to seek new havens abroad where they could freely establish and practise their evangelical faith. The Puritans' biblicism led them to identify themselves with the ancient Israelites, whose history of oppression, the Puritans believed, was being relived by them in contemporary England. The Seventeenth Century Puritans were particularly endeared to the Old Testament Hebrews who, they believed

> belonged to the same human race, faced, feared and fellowshipped with the same unchanging God, and struggled with essentially the same spiritual problems (Packer 1991:129)

Sacvan Bercovitch argues that the Seventeenth Century Puritans developed and established a rhetoric which was commensurate with their deep religious convictions in migrating to the New World. Their rhetoric was not only instrumental in according them the sacred identity of God's chosen people but also facilitated the envisioning of the prospective settlement of New England as their Promised Land which had been exclusively reserved and sanctified for them from eternity.

This chapter traces, in parts, the English religio-political antecedents that led to the Great Migration of 1630 with a view to understanding Puritan concepts like Sacred Mission and Manifest Destiny which, according to Bercovitch, were deeply rooted in the "Elizabethan Premises for national election" (P O, p.73). It also elucidates the influential potential of John Foxe's **Book of Martyrs** (1554) and, as

argued by Bercovitch, shows how this book, only next to the Bible in its popularity, conditioned the Puritan Mind and gave rise to the notion of their chosenness. Furthermore, through a study of the career of John Winthrop, the first Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, and his writings on the eve of the Great Migration, the chapter offers an insight into the contemporary religious temper. It shows how Winthrop's rhetoric infused a sense of sacred mission and identity into their transatlantic venture. The chapter also explains and demonstrates the immigrant Puritans' use of typology and the Old Testament concept of Covenant which not only governed every aspect of colonial life but also substantiated and ensured the success of their New World enterprise.

I

Major civilizations of the World owed their ascension to greatness to their perception of unique ideologies of mission and destiny. For instance, Edward McNall Burns sketches the history of these concepts and argues that the Hebrews, Chinese, Greeks, Egyptians, Indians and many others claiming antiquity, acquired power and grandeur by nourishing their imagination with ideas of Providence and national chauvinism (1957:3). The common consideration among them was that the people outside their cultural domain were barbarians who needed to be dominated and civilized. Their sense of mission evolved from the deep conviction that they were predestined to be deliverers of ignorant and enslaved peoples of the world and lead the less fortunate into paths of enlightenment. Burns argues that

> Every great nation is in some sense a chosen people of God. The Jews were a chosen people through whom the pure worship of one God was to be preserved and the Messiah was to come. The Greeks were a chosen

> people for the development and realization of the beautiful in art and the true in Science and Philosophy. The special mission of the Romans was to cultivate the growth of the state, law and jurisprudence. ... (Ibid: 15).

Ideas of chosenness and national mission did not remain confined to antiquity but continued to dominate and influence the national minds of successive epochs of World history. The Nineteenth Century Russians, for example, envisioned themselves as being charged with the messianic mission of redeeming Europe, and the world from the corrupting influence of materialism and drawing them into the Russian Orthodox tradition (Maynard 1948:92-96). Furthermore, the afflatus of being a chosen people, and the tradition of adopting the ideology of mission as national policy continued to be appropriated by Western nations in order to justify their activities both at home and abroad. More recent examples of the invocation of ideas of mission and destiny for national purpose are the French revolutionaries and the British imperialists.

It is interesting to note at this point that the nations hitherto mentioned were countries situated within definite geographical parameters, with established institutions, durable systems of governance, long histories and rich traditions. But no where in human history does one find a parallel to the awesome strength and efficacy of ideas of chosenness and mission as that of the United States of America which not only motivated the founding of a new nation but also facilitated the transformation of these ideas into enduring institutions.

A survey of colonial histories shows that the dynamics of colonization sprang essentially from the lure of wealth, territorial expansion, trade and the promise of enhanced power they jointly entailed. The prime motivator for any foreign invasion was always territorial aggrandizement, and religion was only an incidental factor in the processes of colonization. It can be argued that even though the

New World colonization was primarily promoted by the common lust for bullion, a new element hitherto unseen in Asia or Africa, emerged as a significant force in Europe's transatlantic ventures. This unique feature in the Westward movement of European colonialism had its genesis in the religious turbulence of the Sixteenth Century European Reformation and developed to add an exclusively religious dimension to the transatlantic colonial impulse. It is instructive to briefly recount here the origins and development of the American colonial experience with a view to evaluating the preeminence of Seventeenth Century New England -- the explicit purpose of which was the practice and propagation of evangelical Christianity.

It is by now an accepted fact that the extension of empire into the transatlantic realm of the Unknown was primarily precipitated by changing conditions in the later Middle Ages which greatly transformed European life and thought. Trevor H Colbourn has this to say on the above point:

> The decline of feudalism, the accelerating growth of commercial capitalism (influenced by the Crusades which had stimulated the Western demand for Eastern goods), the role of the Renaissance and the new scientific aids of navigation, the rise of the nation-state, and the religious climate that led to the Protestant reformation -all were factors in promoting the expansion of the Old World into the New (1966:1).

The American colonial experience began with the maritime achievements of Portugal and Spain which not only possessed the necessary domestic stability but also the requisite resources to realize their acquisitive resolve. While the Portugese continued to expend their energies in discovering ever- new sea routes in their quest for the legendary wealth of India and the Orient, the Spaniards consolidated themselves in the New World and, for a century after Columbus (1415-1506), retained

their predominance as the major perpetuators of Empire. Spain's interests **were** largely restricted to Southern regions like Mexico and Peru where large reserves of gold and silver were discovered and the comparatively unproductive Northern regions were totally neglected. By the time the French, English and Dutch colonizers could settle their first floundering communities, the Spanish Empire in South America was firmly established as a wealthy Roman Catholic domain with a highly centralized administration under Imperial rule. It is interesting to note the summation of Eric Wolf that the Conquistadores' transatlantic mission and "their purpose had a transcendental simplicity: gold, subjects, souls" which can also be extended to epitomize the early colonial persuasions of Sixteenth Century France and early Elizabethan England (1962:3). It can be argued at this point that all the early efforts of the English were purely mercantile in nature and lacked the courage and fortitude of their Puritan successors who were entirely driven by deep religious convictions. In this connection, Douglas R. McManis asserts the following:

> Religious dissension had little place in motivating English colonization before 1620. Ironically, it was the primary force in the beginning of permanent settlement in New England and the theocratic nature of New England's development was one of the hallmarks of New England's distinction as a unique seaboard colonial region (1975:25).

Charles M Andrews, the eminent American historian, in **Our Earliest Colonial Settlements** (1933) concludes that Massachusetts was the first Puritan Commonwealth in the New World which was exclusively founded for religious reasons. He explains that while religion had always been an integral part of colonial dynamics, its motive, however, did not go beyond that of a Crusader's eagerness to proselytize. Furthermore, by citing examples of numerous sectarians

like the Quakers, Huguenots, Moravians, Mennonites, Mystics, Pietists, Roman Catholics and others who also sought freedom of religious practice according to individual convictions, Andrews asserts that "no one of these religious groups founded a colony the sole design of which was a new order of religious organization and discipline" (1933:59).

Francis J. Bremer argues that the Puritan preception of England's unique mission of propagating evangelical faith world-wide, was largely based on John Foxe's **Book of Martyrs** which not only chronicled Marian persecution of Protestant saints but also foretold the pivotal role England would play in the Protestant battle against Roman Catholicism:

> In that catalogue of suffering, Foxe had argued from his reading of the Book of Revelation that there were five distinct periods of Church history. The first four passed: that in which the Church in all its purity was persecuted by heathen emperors; that in which the Church was supported by the post-Constantine Roman State; that reaching from AD 600 to the Norman conquest, during which time the Church was retarded by the influence of the Roman primates; and the reign of Anti-Christ, inaugurated by the accession of Hildebrand to the Papacy. The fifth period, initiated by the Reformation was that in which Puritan Englishmen lived. It was a time when the forces of Christ and the forces of Anti-Christ did battle; the ultimate outcome would be the final triumph of the true reformed Church (1976:34).

Against this perception of history, the Seventeenth Century Puritans envisioned themselves as the last standard bearers of the Protestant Crusade who would destroy Popery once and for all. Accordingly, the writings that issued during this period reflected the religious dynamics of this mode of their imagination. Edward Johnson, while deploring "the sad condition of England, when this people

removed" proclaims that "in this very time Christ the glorious King of his Church, raises an Army out of our English Nation, for freeing his people from their long servitude under usurping Prelacy;... Christ creates a New England to muster up the first of His forces in" (1654:23). Cotton Mather records the "wonders of the Christian Religion, flying from the depravations of Furope to the American Strand" with the firm conviction that " our Lord Jesus Christ carried some thousands of Reformers into the retirements of an American desert on purpose ... unto many of his faithful servants, to enjoy the precious liberty of their Ministry, though in the midst of temptations ... He might there, to them first, and then by them, give a specimen of many good things, which He would have His Churches elsewhere aspire and arise unto" (1967, I:27). Therefore, the Seventeenth Century Puritans undertook the great transatlantic migration of 1630 as "errand" As Perry Miller explained it was:

> Not a mere scouting expedition: it was an essential manoeuver in the drama of Christendom. The Bay Company was not a battered remnant of suffering Separatists thrown up on a rocky shore; it was an organized task force of Christians, executing a flank attack on the corruptions of Christendom. These Puritans did not flee to America; they went in order to work out that complete reformation which was not yet accomplished in England and Europe, but which would quickly be accomplished if only the saints back there had a working model to guide them (1956:11).

It is instructive to note that while Perry Miller interpreted the Puritans' concept of the "errand into the wilderness" from a religious point of view, Bercovitch approaches it from a broader cultural perspective. Bercovitch argues that the errand when considered theologically, was a "radical troping of Christian tradition to fit the fantasies of a particular sect" but when "considered as ideology; it was a mode of consensus designed to fill the needs of a certain social order" (**R** A, p.32). He offers a new interpretation of the "errand" which he believes, was fundamental to the Puritans' mode of consensus concerning New England's mission and destiny. He

explains that the term "errand", for the Puritans, meant a forward movement into modernity resulting in the growth and consolidation of middle-class American culture. The deeper intricacies of the Bercovitchian definition of errand comprised three functions, namely, migration, pilgrimage and progress, and these are explained in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

It can be argued that if the New World was the geographical discovery of the Renaissance Spirit, its biblical identity as an Edenic paradise, the promised land of Canaan awaiting the arrival of the English Israelites, was the exclusive creation of the Seventeenth Century Puritan imagination. The emigrant Puritans

> conceived of themselves as the veritable instruments of Providence in effectuating the plan of the universe. With its abundance of land, vast resources, and stimulating climate, America seemed like a land of promise hidden away by God until, in His own good time, it was ready to be occupied by His Chosen people. Here under divine guidance and protection they would work to bring light and salvation to the rest of the Earth (Burns 1957: 30).

Sacvan Bercovitch's argument that these unique conceptions of the Anglo-American Puritans are deeply rooted in the "Elizabethan premises for national election" makes it imperative for us to study the religio-political antecedents in England that occasioned the Great Migration and the successful settlement of the Puritans in the New World.

Puritanism, as an extension of the centuries-old tradition of `protest' did not always remain as a purely religious phenomenon. It evolved into a revolutionary movement engaged in an intense struggle for political control in England. The increasing dissatisfaction and subsequent militancy amongst the dissenters can be attributed to the inconsistent religious policies of the English monarchy beginning with

the self-serving Anglicanism of Henry VIII (1491-1547). The bloodiest period in Reformation England was the reign of Queen Mary (1553-1558), daughter and successor of Henry VIII, and a devout Catholic, She, in a determined effort to exterminate Protestantism and restore England to the Roman Catholic faith of her forbears, exiled eight hundred and executed two hundred and seventy five English men and women for non-conformity and heresy.

William Haller, the renowned Puritan historian, maintains that while the execution of leading dissenters was a major error, exiling others or allowing them to escape to the Continent was a greater mistake. Some of those among the exiled were eminent personalities like Richard Cox, Edmund Sandys, John Ponet and Edmund Grindal who settled at Strasbourg and launched a vigorous campaign of letters against the Marian regime. It can be argued that long years of religio-political turbulence in England had left the popular mind in a state of confusion and uncertainty. While the established ways of the old faith had been disestablished, nothing of the new was static enough to adhere to. It was this helpless vacillation among the masses that offered the exiled leaders the opportunity to devise methods aimed at seizing the unclaimed devotion of the English populace. They capitalized on the steady stream of news, reports and testimonies of martyrs coming out of England and developed an elaborate martyrology of immense influential potential. Fortunately, their task of reaching the common people was extremely simplified by the Printing Press which, incidentally was greatly instrumental in popularizing the vernacular and amazingly, by the middle years of Queen Elizabeth's reign, Latin was entirely replaced by English. As Haller explains

> This was the language into which Tyndale and Coverdale translated the Bible, in which Cranmer fashioned the Prayer Book, in which Latimer preached, in which the

> Marian martyrs told their stories, and in which preachers, writers of tracts, translators, chroniclers, playwrights and poets would presently be filling pulpits,
>
> book-stalls and theatres with such matter in such quantity as had never before been known in the vulgar tongue (1963:51).

Furthermore, it must be noted that the deep concern and natural inclination of the Elizabethans towards religion gave rise to a mass of religious writings in Seventeenth Century England which informed every facet of English life. Although the writers of this period were contentious and often professed varying shades of spiritual temperament and literary genre

> there was virtually no consistent division between "sacred" and "secular" matters because all experience was permeated by religion and religion included all experience. The interest rates to be charged by moneylenders was a religious question; the tenure of Kings and Magistrates was argued on theological grounds; the theatres of London were the subject of pious attack; the defeat of the Armada was attributed (by Browne among others) to direct heavenly intervention, and the imprisonment of George Fox was thought to have infected his enemies with the plague . . . . (Ferry, 1967:6).

It is obvious from the above facts that every event that transpired in this era, viewed and interpreted in religious terms, evoked a passionate devotion for religious faith, in defense of which men were prepared to take up arms, face imprisonment or even martyrdom and thus offer to alter the course of history. However, it can be argued that the Puritans' evangelical faith, the chronicles of Christian persecution, the religion of the Word, and the Word itself in English and in print,

became important factors in the shaping of the Seventeenth Century Anglo-American Puritan mind.

It is noteworthy that the sudden death of Queen Mary and the immediate accession of Queen Elizabeth in 1558 brought a complete reversal in English life. It not only facilitated the return of the Marian exiles but also infused in them the deep conviction that Providence had recalled them to commence the rebuilding of New Jerusalem in England:

> Hence the legends and prophesies of the Old Testament -- of the escape of the Chosen People out of Egypt to the promised land, of the fall of Babylon and the recovery of Zion, of a fifth and last monarchy to succeed and put an end to all that had gone before -- these and the New Testament promise of the return of the Redeemer, and St. John's vision of the casting out of Antichrist and the overthrow of the spiritual Babylon, all took on a special meaning and relevance (Haller 1963:85).

It may be observed here that English history would have taken a different course if the Marian exiles had been kept wandering indefinitely, but Queen Mary's death within four years of her accession materialized what they believed to be the providential apocalypse they had been so eagerly anticipating. And as Queen Elizabeth consolidated herself, the dissenting English Protestants became increasingly drawn towards the Scriptures which soon became the source of all moral and spiritual authority for them. The Puritans, in particular, laid great emphasis on the Bible, and its Calvinist interpretation moulded every aspect of their lives. The returned exiles exulted in the firm conviction that Elizabeth had everything in her power to restitute the English Church to the purity of the apostolic age. They hastened to impress upon her, her government and her subjects their conception of what God

expected her to do. They not only proclaimed the imminence of a new epoch in the history of the Church and the nation with Queen Elizabeth as the divinely anointed leader to inaugurate it but also urged their countrymen to gratefully acknowledge her authority and offer prayers and blessings for her well being.

> Let us daily call to God with lifted up hearts and hands for her preservation and long life, that she may many years carry the sword of our defence, and therewith cut off the Head of that Hydra, the Anti-Christ of Rome in such sort as it may never grow again in this realm of England (Ibid:88).

But while Queen Elizabeth's accession had kindled sanguine hopes, her moderate policies failed to satisfy the religious aspirations of the Puritans. Her reluctance to marry and ensure a Protestant successor disquieted them, especially, when the Queen of Scots returned to Scotland and when Elizabeth, smitten with small pox, narrowly escaped death. Amidst such unpredictable circumstances portending cataclysmic events, a singularly unique historical work, pertaining to the Marian period, emerged not only to leave a lasting impression on the turn of the Seventeenth Century Puritan mind but also to give a whole new direction to the Puritan movement.

II

John Foxe, an English Protestant refugee in Strasbourg, and a contemporary of bloody' Mary's reign, took to the task of recording the stories of the Marian persecutions and became the most influential writer in Elizabethan England. His stories, commonly known as the Book of Martyrs, first published in Latin in 1554, had circulated no less than 10,000 copies by the end of the Seventeenth Century and

was acknowledged second only to the Bible in its popularity. As William Mailer remarks:

> The **Book of Martyrs** set moving in English life a body of legends which was thought to make clear how and why the situation in which the nation presently found itself had come about, and so to justify whatever course the nation, as represented by the Queen might take in its own defence and for the accomplishment of its destiny (Ibid: 14).

It is instructive to note that the **Book of Martyrs or Actes and Monuments of these latter and perillous dayes, touching matters of the Church, wherein are comprehended and described the great persecutions and horrible troubles, that have been wrought and practised by the Romishe Prelates, speciallye in their Realms of England and Scotlande, from the yeare of our Lorde a Thousande, unto the tyme now present. Gathered and collected according to the true copies and wry tinges certificatorie** as **wel of the parties them selves that suffered, as also out of the Bishops Registers which were the doers thereof** by John Foxe (1554) was not only a description of the Marian persecutions in England but it was also an extended expostion of the apocalyptic anticipation of the returned exiles. Furthermore, its English publication in 1563 indicated Queen Elizabeth's providential role in the ongoing religious controversy, and with special encomiums to her, the book was appropriately dedicated to her. But contrary to the Puritans' expectations, the Queen refrained from initiating any significant measures in purifying the Church further. Endowed with an exceptional genius for statecraft, she was not only quick in recognizing the devotion and loyalty of the Puritans but was also cautious in realizing that favouring one group would antagonize another and plunge the nation into civil strife. She deliberately wrought a middle way, called "the Elizabethan Settlement" in 1559, which cleverly "drew together Reformed or Calvinistic doctrine,

the continuation of a liturgical and (in the eyes of the Puritans) Catholic form of worship, and an episcopal Church government" (Ryken 1986:7). In other words, the Church of England under the rule of Queen Elizabeth emerged as a sort of half-way house between Protestantism and Catholicism. This new official State Church, was supported by tax monies that once were sent to Rome, the English sovereign replaced the Pope as head of the Church, and Bishops sat in the House of Lords.

Sacvan Bercovitch argues that the disappointed Puritans accused the Anglicans of having

> violated the communal cause by raising national institutions above the rights of the nations elect. They rallied -- Quakers, Baptists, Seekers, Shakers, Levellers, Diggers, and Fifth Monarchists with the moderate and conservative factions -- to restore the proper balance, on behalf of their common vision of England (**P O,** p.79).

The subsequent debate over the spiritual value of Elizabeth's religious settlement created three distinct groups in opposition to each other but all eager to overturn or to modify the Church of England and failing which, to emigrate.

While the Presbyterians subscribed to a State Church established by law and constituted according to Presbyterian standard, the others, comprising Brownists, Barrowists, Baptists, Millenarians, Seekers, Ranters, Diggers and Quakers professed an inflexible separation from the established Church. But, between these two divergent groups emerged a third group of independents or congregationalists who wished to free existing Churches from episcopal control and, without separating,

transform them into totally autonomous bodies. This distinct feature of the independent or non-separating congregationalist Puritans gained great significance during the Great Migration of the 1630s and became the foundation on which was built the independent theocracy of New England.

The *miracula apocalypsis*, as foretold in Foxe's Book which the Puritans believed would transform England into a holy nation consecrated by God, did not materialize as expected. Finally, as Haller explains

> What followed was not the new dawn and the last age envisioned by Bale, Foxe, Aylmer, Jewel and other survivors of the reign of Mary, who hailed the accession of Elizabeth, but a new age none the less, not the New Jerusalem but a new England, not a visible communion of elected saints awaiting the millenium but a people with a strong sense of their destiny as a nation set apart from all others, aware of what they took to be a common past, and intent on what they took to be their appointed place and destiny in the world (1963:249).

Sacvan Bercovitch argues that the generation of the first settlers of New England "had grown up in Foxe's England, they professed allegiance to the English Reformation" and "had inherited the mantle of national election" (P O, p.89). But when their efforts at transforming England into a holy commonwealth of visible saints and fulfilling England's role as the vanguard of the Protestant Reformation did not materialize, the Puritans "fled England as from a second Babylon" (Ibid:89).

Thus, Bercovitch asserts,that the Seventeenth Century Puritan immigrants derived their sense of sacred mission from Foxe's portrayal of England as Elect Nation' in his **Book**.It is interesting to note that Cotton Mather, author of **Magnalia Christi Americana** (1702) acknowledges the **Book of Martyrs** as a

precedent to his own ecclesiastical history of New England. This leads Bercovitch to compare the biographical technique of the Englishmen with that of Mather to find a great deal of commonality between their works. Both of them show the strong influence of eccleciastical hagiography, a typological view of history combined with intense millennial anticipation and the concept of hero as an embodiment of the community's cause (PO, p.73).

Bercovitch argues that in the **Book of Martyrs** "the two genres" of "martyrology of God's people" and "Chronicle of English Kings" "held together by the pervasive import (at once national and universal) of these latter and perillous days'" lend a dual meaning to English identity and depict England as "a metaphor for the confluence of redemptive and providential history" (A **J**, p.78). To distinguish the uniqueness of the immigrant Puritans' conception of national election, Bercovitch undertakes an examination of reformed soteriology and the standards of national election as laid down during the period of Foxe and which continued upto the end of Cromwell's Protectorate. He points out that for Foxe, national election denoted "the Coalition of separate historic movements, secular and redemptive at a climactic point of Inter-sabbatical time" (Ibid:74). Just as Luther had exhorted his fellow Germans to "take advantage because our moment has come", Foxe also emphasizes that

> the spiritual realm and the earthly each had its separate duties, each separately it punishments and reward. Only now, as never before, in England above all other countries, the two realms stood in conjunction, like planets revolving "about each other in Orbits complementary but independent[1]', attracted by the force of the approaching apocalypse (Ibid:74).

To explain this concept, Bercovitch takes Foxe's biographies of John Wycliffe (1320-84) and Edward III (1312-77) whose lives, as Foxe interpreted from his reading of Revelation, set into motion the final course of redemptive history. While Edward III was the first to restrict the Pope's illegal power, Wycliffe was the first to recognize the dangers of Papal doctrine. Together, the King and the cleric: one, representing temporal power; the other, defending spiritual doctrine, directed their anger at a common enemy —the Roman Anti-Christ.

Bercovitch asserts that Foxe presents Wycliffe as a true Christian contending against the corrupt policies perpetrated by the Catholic Church. Since the issues concerned the basic tenets of the Christian faith, Wycliffe's life transcends temporal and national restraints and is transformed into the life of an exemplary saint -- a microchristus. Edward III, on the other hand, is presented as a Good Magistrate, displaying a combination of royalty and Calvin's concept of divine ordination. The first, an instance of spiritual biography, and the second, of chronicle biography - two aspects which constitute English identity -- are brought together to fit into the structure of English history. Thus, Foxe illustrates his concept of national election by metaphorically equating England to the conjunction of the two types of history: eccleciastical/spiritual/redemptive and chronicle/providential/ secular. Such a rehetorical formula as Bercovitch puts it became the primary source for subsequent literature of national election.

Bercovitch points out that the English soon discovered that the constitutent parts of national election, whose conjunction assured not only political success but also spiritual blessings, became increasingly divergent. As the difference between the secular and the ecclesiastical components of national election grew wider it became apparent that "reality had betrayed the rhetoric, or given it the lie" (P O,

p.79). Thus, Bercovitch argues that Foxe's rhetorical construct of Elect Nation in England collapsed and a split emerged between the Church and State, between redemption and nature, between vision and fact.

It is interesting to note that the publication of Foxe's **Book of Martyrs** received instant attention in England and helped in unifying the country at least temporarily by glossing over its religio-political disparities, while the **Magnalia,** on the other hand, was published at a time when Mather, considered as an embodiment of Puritan bigotry and self-denial, was being subjected to intense critical slander. However, within a decade of its first American printing in 1820, the hitherto unknown **Magnalia,** gained gradual popularity among the American masses, whose appreciation of the book increased in proportion to growing fascination for their national origins and development. Bercovitch reveals their fascination for the **Magnalia** in the representative words of Harriet Beecher Stowe:

> What wonderful stones those! stories too, about my own country, stories that made me feel the very ground I trod on to be consecrated by some special dealing of God's providence . . . . The Heroic element was strong in me, having come down by ordinary generation from a long line of Puritan ancestor/ (Wilson 1962:8-9).

Bercovitch points out that while Foxe's **Book of Martyrs** served to aggrandize England's national destiny temporarily, during a particular period of the country's history, Mather's **Magnalia** as an epitome of the Puritan Vision of America and its redemptive meaning, has exerted the most enduring influence on American imagination and history. Bercovitch states that throughout the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries increasing number of Americans, who may not even have heard of the **Magnalia,** joined in celebrating the Puritan view of America:

> The glorious future of the United Stales of America . . . commissioned to bear the light of liberty and religion through all the earth and to bring in the great millenial day when wars should cease and the whole world released from the thralldom of evil, should rejoice in the light of the Lord. The Millennium was ever the star of hope in the eyes of New England Clergy; their faces were cheerfulness of those anticipations illuminated the hard tenets of their theology with a rosy glow. They were the children of the morning (Ibid:85).

Bercovitch asserts that this rhetorical mode persisted throughout American history and every emergent crisis that beset the growing nation occasioned the reaffirmation of the Puritan vision, and the rhetoric of American cxceptionalist errand helped resolve every socio-political and cultural disparity in successive epochs of American history.

Through an analysis of the term 'American' in *Nehemias Americanus* (title of John Winthrop's biography in the Magnalia) Bercovitch concludes that Mather's usage of the term not only highlights the uniqueness of his rhetorical design but also distinguishes him for being the first to invest the term with immense imaginative power which continues undiminished through more than two centuries of the country's history. While, for Fox,

> `Englishman' was a metaphor for the temporary conjunction of sainthood and nationality, *Americanus* was, and has remained, a symbol of their fusion: a federal identity not merely associated with the work of redemption, but intrinsic to the unfolding pattern of types and anti-types, itself a prophesy to be fulfilled (**P O**, p.89).

Bercovitch declares that the early emigrants, as non-separating congregationalists fled England as the true heirs of national election. They transformed the adverse implications of their flight - "exile, powerlessness, intrasectarian acrimony" -- into an agenda for theocracy (Ibid:90). They took recourse to the covenant of grace to establish temporal well-being and the covenant of works to guide the saints to heaven which together formed a unique federal eschatology, The state and Church became mutually dependent with the result that affluence and salvation, theism and moralism went hand in hand consolidating the New England way. Thus, the New England Orthodoxy firmly rooted their identity in the rhetoric of national election and proclaimed: "God's Name hath been written upon us in Capital Letters from the beginning of time" (Stoughton 1670:17).

Bercovitch explains that the New England way gained its strength from two sources: one, from a federal eschatology based on the doctrine of covenants, and the other from geographical eschatology which included not only Massachusetts but encompassed the entire continent. The Puritans interpreted the meaning of America in prophetic terms by claiming that its destiny had already been recorded in the Scriptures by prophets such as Isaiah, Zachariah, Daniel and John. In Puritan sense the geography of America was sanctified from eternity for the New England Way giving it the status of New Canaan or the true type of heaven. This led them to conclude that the New World was a part of the history of salvation and the Puritan errand itself became a symbol of the final step towards this end.

While the preceding chapter strengthens the opinion that Puritanism as a historical event had its origins in Christic times, it can be argued that Puritan theology itself was no less than a revival of apostolic religious faith in its pristine form. Cotton Mather's recognition that the "the first Age was a golden Age: to return unto

that, will make a man a Protestant, and, I may add, a Puritan" gains significance in this context (1967, I:27). It is instructive to note that at the heart of Puritan theology was first, the awful sense of the majesty and omnipotence of God; second, the conviction that man is saved not by personal merit but by the free grace of God; and third, God, in His infinite wisdom selects a few, called the elect', who are predestined to salvation even before they are born while the rest of the mankind stand condemned for their sins. These profound theological convictions and congregational polity which attracted persecution at home were systematized and transplanted to the New World by the pioneering efforts of a group of dedicated Puritans who envisioned their enterprise as nothing less than a sacred mission the end of which was, as John Winthrop declared, "to serve the Lord and worke out our salvacion under the power and purity of his holy ordinances" (Winthrop 1971, 11:293).

III

It is important at this stage to delineate the conceptual design of the founding of the New England theocracy. If history constitutes biography and if biography reflects contemporary ideas, then the life and writings of John Winthrop (1588-1649), the first Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, deserves to be admitted as a singularly vivid exposition of the uniqueness of the Seventeenth Century Puritan mind and the sense of sacred mission it entailed. Winthrop's thought not only epitomizes contemporary religious temper preceding the Great Migration but also provides an insight into Puritan psyche and its attendant apocalypticism. Furthermore, it reveals the religious ideology and method adopted by him in conceiving and executing the establishment of the New England theocracy. Bercovitch devotes great deal of attention to Winthrop and therefore it becomes imperative to take a closer look at his career.

John Winthrop was born on January 22, during the historic year of the Great Armada. Although very little is known of his childhood, his entry into the Trinity College, Cambridge in 1603, was the beginning of a growing spiritual maturity tempered with fortitude that came from suffering prolonged ill-health.

Winthrop's initiation into the Puritan faith commenced with a mystical experience that not only transformed his life but also his theological perceptions. He recorded in his personal diary that

> About fourteen years of age, being in Cambridge, 1 fell into a lingering fever, which took away the comforts of my life for being there neglected and despised, I went up and down mourning with myself; and being deprived of my youthful joys, I betook myself to God, whom I did believe to be very good and merciful, and would welcome any that would come to him, especially such a young soul, and so well qualified as 1 took myself to be; so as 1 took pleasure in drawing near to him (Winthrop 1971, 1:57).

The emanation of thoughts such as these can only be attributed to the contemporary Puritan preaching of the five-pronged theological system of Calvin which sharply focused on the omnipotence of an inscrutable God and the comparative nothingness of man. The spiritual metamorphosis that Winthrop underwent gained its strength from the Christian conviction that salvation comes by God's grace which is wholly undeserved, and entirely free. The profundity of this doctrine overwhelmed him to confess: "I could only mourn, and weep to think of free mercy to such a vile wretch as I was" (Ibid:77). But the assurance of strength that came from grace transformed the deep sense of loss and personal pessimism into a religious tenacity that not only induced in him a sense of sacred purpose but also led him into a pivotal involvement with the

Puritan movement. Winthrop discovered that the inward quest for personal salvation must also include social redemption through active resistance against the forces of Satan. He believed that

> He which would have suer peace and joye in Christianity, must not ayme at a condition retyred from the world and free from temptations, but to know that the life which is most exercised with tryalls and temptations is the sweetest, and will prove the safeste. For such tryalls as fall within compasse of our calling it is better to arme and withstandc them than to avoide and shunne them (Ibid:l 14).

It is obvious that Winthrop's thought was greatly influenced by contemporary religious afflictions and the Puritans[1] intensifying struggle to restore England to the purity of Christ's own spiritual estate. He was quick to realize that the eventuality of transforming England into a biblical commonwealth according to Puritan prescription was becoming increasingly difficult. Furthermore, he felt convinced that prevailing conditions in England presaged the occurrence of terrible calamities. He recognized the need for new strategies not only to save themselves but also to continue the battle against their adversaries. He along with the other members of the Bay Company, believed that the only recourse left to them was to remove themselves to the New World no matter how hazardous it might turn out to be. He argued that

> It is like that this consideration made the Churches beyonde the Seas ... to sitt still at home, and not look out for shelter while they might have founde it: but the woeful spectacle of their ruine, may teache us more wisdome, to avoide the plague when it is foreseene and not to tarry, as they did, till it overtakes us (Ibid:313).

It must be noted here that the members of the Bay Company, including Winthrop himself, were prosperous Englishmen untouched by the hand of persecution; and that the decision to migrate was not an impulsive act of desperate men but one of solemn deliberation.Moreover, the urgency of their action was underlined by the Puritans' unshakeable belief in their mother country's historic role as the divinely ordained leader and champion of the international Protestant cause. Winthrop's immense faith in Protestantism and his single-minded commitment to Puritan philosophy prompted him to develop an elaborate theory not only to justify the righteousness of their course but also to infuse a sense of sacred purpose into the prospective emigrants.

It is instructive to note that Winthrop as the leader and spokesman of the west-ward looking Puritans took upon himself the task of rationalising the entire Puritan venture and elucidating in great detail the propriety of their transatlantic claims.

In *Reasons to be Considered and Objections with Answers,* (1629), Winthrop set forth the "Reasons to be considered for justfienge the undertakeres of the intended Plantation in New England, and for incouraging such hartes God shall move to joyne with them in it"(Winthrop1971, I:309). He reasoned that the transatlantic enterprise gained paramount importance and immediacy because of the following inescapable truths: first, not only to "carry the Gospell into those parts of the world" but also to "raise a Bulworke against the Kingdom of Ante-Christ which the Jesuits labour to reare up in those parts"; second, while the sinful churches of Europe had incurred the wrath of God, He had mercifully "provided this place to be refuge for many whome he means to save out of the generall calamity. . . . "; third, native England was unable to sustain her impoverished children; fourth, "the whole earth is the Lord's Garden and he hath given it to the sonnes of men with a general commission; Gen: 1:28 : increase and multiplie, and replenish the earth and subdue it"; fifth, contemporary social disparity in England by

which "we are growne to that height of Intemperance in all excess of Riott, as noe mans estate allmost will suffice to keepe saile with his aequalls"; sixth, religious educational institutions "are so corrupted as (besides the unsupportable charge of there education) most children (even the best wits and of faierest hopes) are perverted, corrupted and utterlie overthrowne by the multitude of evil examples and the licentious government of those Seminaries . . . "; seventh, there can be no other work of greater honour and privilege for a Christian than "to joyne his forces with such company of faithful people, as by a timely assistance may growe stronge and prosper, and for want of it may be put to great hazard; if not wholly ruined"; eighth, conscientious Christians have the opportunity to abandon material comforts and "joyne themselves with his Church and runne an Hazard with them . . . to give more life to the faith of God's people; in theire praiers for the Plantation, and to incorrage others to joyne the more willingly in it"; finally, the strong conviction that "it is likely he hath some greate worke in hand which he hath revealed to his prophets among us whom he stirred up to encourage his servants to this Plantation..." (Ibid:309-311).

Winthrop dealt with righteous authority and prophetic finality, certain "Diverse objections which have beene made against this Plantation..." He invalidated the argument that the land belonged to the native Indians, or "the other sonnes of Adam", on three counts: First the Indians had not exercised any legal rights or staked any lawful claims for its ownership and therefore "that which lies common, and hath never beene replenished or subdued is free to any that possess and improve it"; Second, there was enough land for all and "we shall come in with the good of the natives who find benefight allready by our Neighbhourhood, and learne from us to improve a parte to more use then before they could doe . .. ; and Third, that the Migration was all the more imperative because "God hath consumed the Natives with a great Plague in those partes, soe as there be few Inhabitants lefte" (Ibid: 311-312).

Furthermore, Winthrop vehemently refuted the charges that their proposed venture, like others before it, would fail by pointing out that "there vveare great and fundamental errors in the former which are like to be avoided in this; For: 1: their mayne end was carnall and not Religious: 2: They used unlltt instruments, a multitude of rude and misgoverned persons the very scumme of the land: 3: They did not establish a right forme of government" ((Ibid:314). He allayed his detractors fears that they would be surely endangering the great journey of the Israelites to the land of Canaan. He stated:

> It may be God will by this meanes bringe us to repent of our former Intemperance and soe cure us of that disease which sends many amongst us untimely to our graves and others to Hell. Soe he carried the Israelites into the wilderness and made them forgette the fleshpots of Egipt which was some pinch to them at first but he disposed it to their good in the end, Deut: 8: 3-16 (Ibid:315).

Finally, while admitting that the age of miracles was long past and none such should be anticipated, Winthrop however hoped for "a more then ordinaire blessing from God upon all lawful meanes where the worke is the Lords and he is sought in it according to his will", and asserted that "it is usuall with him to encrease or weaken the strength of the meanes as he is pleased or displeased with the Instruments and the action . . . and yet without miracle" (Ibid:316). Therefore, John Winthrop, from his understanding of the hopeless situation in England was driven by the deep personal conviction that something ought to be done to salvage and preserve the true English Church. He was convinced beyond doubt that the idea of migration that took shape in their minds was implanted there by divine intervention.

It is obvious from the above references that Winthrop's rhetoric on the eve of the Great Migration was primarily aimed at catalyzing the immigrant impulse and infusing it with sacred meaning. It not only demonstrates the power of Puritan rhetoric but also provides necessary insight into the emergent intellectual patterns of Seventeenth Century New England. Therefore, it can be concluded that John Winthrop's reading of the dire circumstances in England, his infectious personal convictions that the English Church need to be salvaged, and his faithful assertions and logical arguments regarding the rightness of their course not only encouraged and substantiated the Great Migration but also legitimized its sense of sacred mission.

Having established the propriety of their transatlantic mission, the turn of the Seventeenth Century Puritan leaders devoted themselves to the task of setting forth the prospects of the nascent New England theocracy. We must recall at this point the assertion of Sacvan Bercovitch, as that of the Founding Fathers, that theocracy' did not mean "the rule of the priesthood, but the harmony between ministers and magistrate in Church and State affairs. So considered the term seems to express the confluence of the sacred and the secular" (A J, p.31. The sense of political and religious interdependence was already ingrained in the New England mind: "God hath not given us Rulers that would fleece us, that would pull the bread out of our mouthes, that would grinde our faces and break our bones, that would undermine and rob us of our liberties, civil and Religious, to the enslaving of their people and their children" (Miller 1967, II:132). Because, as Cotton Mather explained "We came hither because we would have our posterity settled under pure and full Dispensations of the Gospel; defended by Rulers that should be of ourselves" (Ibid I:241).

IV

The ideology of mission as reflected in the representative rhetoric of John Winthrop was further consolidated by the invocation of the Old Testament concept of 'Covenant' not only to enforce order and discipline to the 'errand' into the American Wilderness but also to ensure the certainity of its immediate success. The following extract from Winthrop's personal diary indicates the Puritan obsession with biblical Covenant even in individual lives and offers a deep insight into its socio-political manifestation in Seventeenth Century New England corporate life:

> I made a Covenant with the Lord which was thus: Of my part, that 1 would reform these sins by His grace: pride, covetousness, love of this world, vanity of mind, unthankfulness, sloth, both in His service and in my calling, not preparing myself with reverence and uprightness to come to His word. Of the Lord's part, that He would give me a new heart, joy in His spirit, that He would dwell with me, that He would strengthen me against the world, the flesh and the devil, that He would forgive my sins and increase my faith (Morgan 1965:122).

A classic example of the Covenantal strategy in Puritan rhetoric is Winthrop's sermon *A Model of Christian Charity* (1630), delivered aboard the **Arabella**. It not only exemplifies the use of rhetoric as an ideological tool but also delineates the basic tenets to be adopted in the establishment of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. But before undertaking an analysis of the concept and course of the Puritan errand' and its cultural consequences in American history, it is necessary to examine the significance of the idea of Covenant in Puritan imagination and its application to the emigrant community. It is an accepted fact that the Bible was seminal to the growth of Puritanism and that the Puritans biblicism shaped every aspect of their personal and corporate lives. For although the Puritans were Christians by profession, they were essentially an Old

Testament people -- a 'People of the Book'. The unshakeable belief that the Bible has perpetual relevance and meaning formed the core of their imagination. The English Puritan William Ames stated:

> Although various parts of the Scriptures were written upon a special occasion and were directed to particular men or assemblies in God's intention they are equally for the instruction of the faithful of all ages, as if specially directed to them (Eusden 1968:187).

The Bible, as the revealed law of God, became the text of their moral, socio-economic and political code of conduct. Biblical analogues and divine Providence fonned the framework of their thought within which every contemporary historical event was seen in and interpreted in sacred terms. Their rhetoric, as seen in countless diaries, sermons and literature of the times abounded with scriptural references, Judeo-Christian theological conceptions and historical traditions. The Puritan movement itself was perceived as an extension of the eternal struggle of the 'Visible Saints' against the corrupting minions of Satan:

> Persecution confirmed them in the assurance of election conveyed by their experience; martyrdom provided a hallowed occasion for testifying to their experience; exile convinced them that only such as were able to testify to such an experience as theirs could claim to be of the true Church. For, having been turned out of the visible Church as reconstituted under Mary and turned in upon themselves by banishment, they naturally took recourse in the idea that not the body which had cast them out but they themselves were the true Church, that the true Church had always been such a company of chosen spirits as themselves, that the condition of the true Church in this world had always been to be rejected and persecuted (Haller 1963:243-44).

The severity of their desire to be pure in spirit, mind and body, without yielding to temptation and be worthy of God's Grace, endeared them to the Israelites of the Old Testament and espoused in them an awful reverence of the Hebrew God, Jehovah. More so, because of their own peculiar predicament which was similar to that of the ancient Israelites who, because of their Chosenness, suffered persecution, exile, even enslavement before being finally restored to the Promised Land of Canaan. Furthermore, the Puritans learned from the Scriptures that the crucial factor which was an over-ruling part of the Israelites' turbulent history was the holy covenant of God with His Chosen People. As Perry Miller explained: "The Covenant, its origin, its progressive unfolding, its culmination, was thus the meaning of history, that which made intelligible the whole story of mankind" (1967, I:378).

` Covenant' is generally understood as an agreement, a compact or contract between two or more persons, communities, or nations to do or refrain from doing the acts recorded therein. It remained in force as long as the terms were operative and the obligation to perform rested on one or both the parties involved. The Covenant was central to Hebrew theology and history as a reciprocal pact or understanding between Jehovah and His Chosen people -- the Israelites. Thus, the Old Testament Covenant not only evoked complete devotion of the Hebrews to God's commandments in return for temporal and spiritual favours from Him but also incurred divine retribution in case of denigration.

The Bible reveals that the first and foremost Covenant that God made was with the first man Adam who was bound to obey the moral law in return for eternal life. Since the Covenant specified obedience in conduct and good deeds, it came to be known as Covenant of Works' the substance of which reemerged in Mosaic times as the Ten Commandments.

The second and most enduring example of Covenant in Hebrew history was the one between God and Noah whereby Noah's loyalty and diligent compliance led to the preservation of life on earth and the appearance of the rainbow as a celestial sign of this everlasting Covenant (Genesis 9: 8-17).

Similarly, God's unilateral Covenant with Abraham, the desccndent of Noah, went into effect when Abram (Abraham) crossed the Euphrates on his way to Canaan and the Covenant was passed on to Abraham's posterity through Issac and Jacob (Genesis 12: 1-3; 26: 2-5 and 28: 13-15). The Covenant of law, an extension of the Adamic Covenant was made between Jehovah and the nation of Israel wherein the Israelites made a sacred promise to obey God's law given through Moses (Exodus 24: 3). Several other Covenants are recorded in the Bible between God and successive Hebrew Kings or generations of Israelites, or between individuals or communities with God as witness. However, it is the new Covenant of Jesus Christ as foretold by Jeremiah (31: 31-34) that superseded all other earlier Covenants and became operative at the beginning of the Common Era.

The Puritan perceived that since the fall of Adam, sinful man had totally failed to fulfill the conditions of the Covenant of Works and therefore God, out of His infinite mercy, had instituted a second Covenant which included not only Jews but also all the `spiritual' descendents of Abraham. The second Covenant stipulated mere faith in Christ who took upon Himself the suffering merited by men for their sins and thus invalidated the rigidity of the efficacy of good works. For just as Moses was the mediator in the Law Covenant, Christ, is the mediator in the new Covenant which is established by God, with God on one side and the Israel of God' or the spirit-begotten ones in union

with Christ — His congregation or body (Church) -- on the other side (Galations 3:26-28: Hebrews 8:10, 12:22-24;)'

Thus, for the Christian, the Covenant replaced all other Covenants and came into operation by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the value of which was presented to Jehovah after Christ's ascension to heaven. Therefore, it followed that whenever one is selected by God for salvation or redemption (Hebrews 3:1) one is brought into God's Covenant over Christ's sacrifice. This doctrine of God's grace, which is implicit in the new Covenant, permeated every aspect of Puritan thought from spiritual redemption to material prosperity. The American Puritan Samuel Willard explains:

> There are no conditions required . . . but acceptance of this gift, and acknowledgement of the kindness of the bestower. Faith is the hand that receiveth it . . . . And what is our obedience but our thankfulness to God for so unspeakable a gift? (Lowrie 1974:171-172).

However, the Puritans also believed that the regenerate Christian who is within the Covenant of Grace continued to be subject to the Covenant of Works. This subjection is not a condition of the Covenant of Grace but only a simple rule of conduct meant to ensure the redeemed soul's continued growth in sanctity. The Puritans, while accepting that no man including Adam had fully satisfied the requirements of the Covenant of Works, believed that God had extended its efficacy as the rule of conduct for regenerate Christians.

While Calvin had separated the doctrine of Grace and Works to obviate the latter, the Puritans, in their efforts at enlisting mass support for their evangelical faith, united both to develop a Hebraic concept of federal Covenant. Sacvan Bercovitch explains that the Puritans invoked the biblical Covenant from the conviction that the

prosperity or calamity of the Israelites was solely dependent on mutual obligations between themselves and God. They argued that if they could reform the English Church in accordance with His word, He would not only bless them, as He had blessed the Hebrews, but would also empower them to defeat the Roman Anti-Christ and herald the Millennium.

The Covenant or Federal' theology of the Puritans not only denoted mutual trust and obligation but also explained God's transactions with individuals and communities. Therefore, the concept of Covenant furnished the foundation for all relationships significant to the Puritans and indicated the future course of their fortunes. It formed the philosophic ground upon which the Puritans built institutions such as family, Church, and State with God as the witness and guarantor of such compacts.

In Christian thought, the term of the Covenant of Grace continues to remain in force until all of the 'Israel of God' are resurrected to immortality in heaven. To this end the Puritans struggled as `Visible Saints' or the spiritual Israelites and the chosen perpetuators of God's redemptive plan for mankind.

The centrality of the Covenant in the prophecies of Jeremiah concerning the Israelites' Babylonian Captivity acquired great significance in the English Protestant mind. Sacvan Bercovitch argues that

> Between the period of Marian exiles and the Great Migration, from Bloody Queen Mary to "persecuting", William Laud (as the Puritans dubbed the Anglicans archbishop under Charles I), English Protestants advanced the doctrines of Congregationalism and national election (A J, p.33).

Those who professed these doctrines equated Catholic Rome to Anti-Christ, perceived the reformation as part of sacred history and most importantly they identified themselves with the blessed remnant' described in the Book of Jeremiah:

> Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that 1 will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . . But this shall be the covenant that 1 will make with the house of Israel; . . . 1 will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people (31:31-33).
>
> They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, "Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten " (50:5).

There was one basic difference that separated the Congregationalists from the advocates of national election and that was their divergent perception of the two Covenants implicit in the above verses. The difference, Bercovitch argues stemmed from a problem in the Reformers interpretation of the Biblical account of the Babylonian Captivity. Calvin taught that "the Babylonian Captivity signified the bondage of Sin" and "went so far as to deny altogether the possibility of a temporal commitment on God's part, and explicated Jeremiah 50:5 and 31: 31-33 (including even 32) purely in terms of Grace" (A J,p.34). Luther, on the other hand, interpreted Jeremiah's prophecies of the captivity in temporal terms. He declared that the prophecies of Jeremiah were actually exhortations concerning end-time events which "predict through the type of Babylon the reign of the Papacy, and through the type of Israel's deliverance, the flight of the true Church from Rome, its victory over this Babylon beast', and the final descent of New Jerusalem" (Ibid:34).

The divergent views of Calvin and Luther, Bercovitch argues, led to the emergence of "two mutually opposed concepts of a visible people of God' " in

seventeenth century England (Ibid:35). Furthermore, the exponents of both these concepts drew upon the Augustinian dichotomy of history and the theory of the two cities, to substantiate, their claims of choseness. The adherents of national election, by identifying Babylon with Rome, adopted the Lutheran position to purge England of all remnants of Popery and thus focussed their attention on reforming the City of Man. Bercovitch argues that "their view of history centred upon secular affairs . . . sacred history, they acknowledged, belonged to theology, not historiography, and they focussed instead upon `mundane happenings' in the story of men and nations" to explain in Christian terms the vicissitudes of fortune (Ibid:36).

The English Congregationalists, in direct opposition to the supporters of national election, took the other extreme of associating themselves with the City of God. They too identified Babylon with Rome and accepted England's national election to combat Anti-Christian Rome, but they went one step further and "sought separation from the Kingdom of Sin . . . the earth seemed to them the sphere of uncleannes', and they gathered into small vineyards of Christ as unto Oases in the wilderness" (Ibid:37). Bercovitch argues that the English Congregationalists saw England as a nation of sinful people with only a few isolated congregations of godly men. The national Covenant itself appeared to them as another form of Captivity from which godly men were being summoned to freedom once again.

Thus, Bercovitch contends that the twin concepts of national election and Congregationalism lent an extraordinary significance to the Great Migration. The Puritan immigrants, as the true heirs of national election, conceived of themselves as

> an exclusive band of saints, called by God into a Church Covenant that separated them from the mass of humanity. In short, they were Children of an improbable mixed

> marriage -- congregationalists on a historic mission for mankind . . . Thus doubly protected by the national Covenant and the Covenant of Grace, they set out as a holy remnant to complete a predetermined historical design (A **J**, pp.38, 39).

Furthermore, Seventeenth Century Puritans firmly believed that,by establishing their evangelical Church they had already entered into a new Covenant with God. For the Puritan settlers of New England, the Covenant not only offered ecclesiastical autonomy but justified their preference for the Congregational form of Church polity which they claimed was based on scriptural authority. If the landscape of the settlement was the body then the congregation was its soul, and since the establishment of the true Church was the prime motive for migration, the newcomers' first duty on arrival was to join themselves into a Church by means of Covenant. The Pilgrims, for example, who settled Plymouth in 1620 took this solemn oath.

> We Covenant with the Lord and with one another and do bind ourselves in the presence of God to walk together in all His ways, according as He is pleased to reveal Himself unto us in His blessed word of truth (Wertenbaker 1947:58).

Winthrop's sermon on board the **Arbella** epitomizes the conditions and consequences of the Covenantal transaction governing the course of their future in the New World and the extent of the success of their mission, of establishing a City upon a Hill'. He wanted to ensure that the band of Puritans he was leading did not fall into disarray, as did their predecessors, and to instil in them a unique character strengthened by unity of purpose and godliness of conduct. In words that echo through out American history, Winthrop exhorted that, if the settlers could enter into a true Covenant with one another and form a political body they would not only enjoy peace and prosperity,but also as a consequence of such a social Covenant, "finde that the God of Israel is among

us, when tenn of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies when hee shall make us a prayse and glory, that men shall say of succeeding plantacions the Lord make it like that of New England: the eies of all people are uppon us" (Winthrop 1971, 11:295). He proclaimed that the safe and successful progress of the Arbella across the Atlantic would in itself be evidence of the beginning of the perfection of their holy Convenant with God. As he states:

> Thus stands the cause betweene God and us: we are entered into Covenant with him for this worke; have taken out a commission; the Lord hath given us leave to drawe our own Articles wee have professed to enterprise these actions upon these and these ends, wee have hereupon besought him of favour and blessing. Now if the Lord shall please to heare us,and bring us in peace to the place wee desire, then hath he ratified this Covenant and sealed our Commission. (Reinitz 1970:84).

The sermon is replete with references to events, characters passages and lessons from both the Testaments with a passionate call for the unfailing exercise of love, mercy and true worship of God. He warns that God

> Will expect a strickt performance of the Articles contained in it; but if wee shall neglect the observacion of these Articles which are the ends wee have propounded, and dissembling with our God shall fall to embrace this present world and prosecute our carnall intencions, seeking greate things for ourselves and our posterity, the Lord will surely breake out in wraithe against us, be revenged of such a perjured people and make us knowe the price of the breache of such a Covenant (Ibid:84).

Therefore, the Convenantal concept of the Old Testament with its varied potentialities was of particular significance to Seventeenth Century Puritans in its use as a means of religious and social control in the New England theocracy.

Furthermore, the invocation and application of the idea of Covenant to their own condition was coterminus to their preoccupation with the tradition of Typology.

V

Sacvan Bercovitch defines typology as "the historiographic - theological method of relating the Old Testament to the life of Christ (as "antitype") and, through Him, to the doctrine and progress of the Christian Church", and by extension to the New English Israel of Massachusetts Bay (1967:167). He argues that the Seventeenth Century Puritan immigrants used typology as a rhetorical strategy for not only deriving and estblishing the sacred meaning of their errand into the American Wilderness but also to identify the progress of the New England theocracy with the universal redemption of mankind.

Bercovitch in his effort to emphasize the centrality of typology to Puritan imagination, takes issue with Perry Miller. He refutes Miller's argument that the Puritan orthodoxy, represented by John Cotton in the Williams-Cotton controversy, renounced typology to assert that the Puritans, contrary to Miller's thought, were deeply rooted in it. They found William's allegorical typology totally unacceptable and insisted on a literal-historical typology. While Williams laid emphasis on the "spiritual progress of the Church" by arguing that " the events of the Old Testament signify a-temporal states of soul, as . . . in Bunyan's story of Christian's pilgrimage from "Egypt" through a "wilderness", Cotton, on the other hand, "proclaims the literal-spiritual continuity between the two testaments and the (Puritan) colonial venture in America" (Ibid: 175-76).

Bercovitch argues that the Seventeenth Century New England Puritans "fulfilled `the type of Israel materially' and as the remnant that would inaugurate the millennium, they fulfilled the type spiritually, in terms of the progress of sacred history". Convictions such as these, Bercovitch points out, led Cotton and subsequent generations of Americans to proclaim the divine character of New England, particularize "its moral and historical importance in God's plan," and explain "his millennial expectations, for America first and then the world". Furthermore, the conviction of the "special figural status of New England" led the settlers to develop a tradition of political sermons, or Jeremiads as ritual reminders of New England's eschatological future, which continues to influence American culture even in the twentieth century (A J, p.42).

As was mentioned earlier, the American Puritans' use of typology was coterminus with that of the Covenant. We may recall Richard Mather's exposition that

> Some passages in the Scripture were never fully, accomplished . . . so many things that literally concerned the Jews were types and figures, signifying the like things concerning the people of god in these latter days . . . (in their) ret urne . . . from Romish slavery to the true Sion . . . And this may be added further, that this seems not only to be meant of the private or personall conversion of this or that particular Christian, but it is said, they shall come, the children of Israel___their saying shall not be, Let me joyne . . . but in the plurall number, Let us joyne our selves unto the Lord, so noting joyning of a company together in holy Convenant with God (Bercovitch 1967:181).

Thus, the Seventeenth Century New England Puritans, through their literal-spiritual application of typology to their New World venture, combined the concept of the Hebrew's national Covenant with God, and the Puritan Covenant of Grace whereby God redeems whom He will, to justify the constitution and establishment of

their Church-State in America. Therefore, by drawing typological parallels between Hebrew Covenant history, and their own transatlantic errand, they not only identified themselves as the spiritual descendents of the Israelites but also projected their venture as extended Bible history: the emigrant Puritan leaders became types of Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Nehemiah and the Great Migration itself was believed to be a type of the exodus, the Red Sea crossing a type of the Atlantic voyage, England their Egypt, New England their Canaan.

But, with all their faith in an omnipotent God, the deep conviction of their Chosenness, the security of their Covenants and the firm belief in overseeing Providence, the Puritan settlers found it difficult to cope with the unforeseen adversities that beset their New World experience. The intense euphoria of settling God's own country receded in the very first decade of the Puritans' arrival at Massachusetts Bay when the theocentric edifice, so carefully conceived, began to show early cracks even before its complete erection. Indian wars, political pressures from the mother country, natural calamities, and the free wealth at hand, gave way to growing dilution of Puritan standards of life. Sensing the danger of the Saints backsliding into the life of mere colonists, Peter Bulkeley, a first generation Bay Minister, warned his congregation:

> Take heed lest . . . God remove thy candlestick out of the midst of thee, lest being now as a City upon a Hill, which many seek unto, thou be left like a beacon upon the top of a mountain, desolate and forsaken (Miller 1956 :152).

From my reading of various texts, it seems to me that the triple Covenants of Grace, Church and State or federal[1] theology which constituted the spiritual, ecclesiastical and social foundations of the Biblical commonwealth turned out to be the cause of its disintegration. The Social Covenant, in practice, was self-contradictory and,

therefore the Church Covenant had to be so drastically compromised that, by the turn of the eighteenth century, it had lost its original Calvinist identity. And within a few years of the establishment of the Bay Colony, the sermons of the New England divines underwent an agonizing change from one of cautious exhortation to one of harsh condemnation. It can be argued that these Jeremiads' or political sermons, helped shape successive epochs of American history by keeping alive Puritan ideas of Chosenness, the belief that they were the sole constitutents of a divinely ordered destiny and the conviction that the New World theocracy was the New Jerusalem to come -- the sacred site on which Christ would descend at His second coming.

As Frederick Merck stated, the sense of sacred mission and manifest destiny that pervaded the Puritans' struggle for religious liberty continued to dominate and condition the evolving American pysche to perceive every turn of American history as a test of this sense. Merck argued that the American sense of mission remained essentially unaltered although the type varied and the scope widened to enfold transatlantic interests:

> In all these enlargements of mission the Goddess of liberty holding aloft her light to the world seemed to Americans to be, in reality, themselves (1963:3).

Thus, it can be concluded that the rhetoric of sacred mission and manifest destiny, developed and perfected by the early New England immigrants, and the Jeremiads that followed, survived long after the decline of the theocracy. The Biblical concept of Covenant and the typological mode of their imagination not only facilitated the establishment of the New England theocracy but also render it an exceptionalist identity which became an indelible part of the American mind. Shorn off their religious connotations the theocentric concepts and theories of the early Bay Colonists continued

to dominate and influence American life as a lasting testament to the power of their imagination. This chapter has attempted to explain the Puritan concept of their chosenness, the sacredness of their transatlantic venture through the career of John Winthrop. It has examined Bercovitch's theory of ``elect nation'' and its centrality to the Puritan rhetoric, it has also discussed the major components of the immigrant Puritan imagination such as Covenant and Typology.

The next chapter will examine Bercovitch's construction of American identity through the rhetoric of Puritan New England.

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Chapter III

SACVAN BERCOVITCH AND THE PURITAN IMAGINATION: RHETORIC AS IDENTITY

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me...for what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Mathew 16:24-26,

Him that overcometh will 1 make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and 1 write upon him my new name.

Revelations 3:12

We Americans are the Israel of our time; we bear the Ark . . . God has given us, for a future independence, the broad dominions of the political pagans . . . we are the pioneers, the advance-guard, sent on through the wilderness . . . to break a new path in the New World that is ours.

Herman Melville
White Jacket 1849

The religio-historic exigencies and concepts delineated in the preceding chapters underline the premises of Bercovitch's approach to the study of the ideology of American exceptional ism. The Seventeenth Century Puritan immigrants derived their sense of mission from the Elizabethan concept of national election. The Judeo-Christian doctrines of covenant led them not only to identify themselves with the chosen people of the Old Testament but also to claim the status of visible saints who were predestined to herald the commencement and consummation of the millennium in the New World

Jerusalem. The congregational form of their ecclesiastical polity provided the foundation of their prospective Church-State and finally, typology cast the entire transatlantic venture into the framework of sacred history and a fulfilment of Scriptural prophesies. The rhetorical manifestations of these unique conceptions of the early immigrants, according to Bercovitch, reflected a distinct symbology which created the American exceptionalist identity. This chapter examines Bercovitch's contention that the Seventeenth Century Puritan immigrants bequeathed to the American nation a mode of rhetoric which not only embodied the idea of American identity but also fashioned the myth of America. The chapter traces the origins and development of what Bercovitch describes as the rhetorical construction of American exceptionalist identity and its continued significance throughout the American classic literary tradition.

I

It is an accepted fact that the twin doctrines of Martin Luther, *Sola Scriptura* and *Sola Fidei*, not only obviated the intermediacy of the Roman Catholic Church and brought God and man into direct communion with one another, but they also formed the basis of Reformed theology and established the central tenets of Protestantism. The exclusion of the Catholic hierarchy and the consolidation of the Protestant doctrine of the 'Priesthood of all Believers' brought the Bible and its exegesis, for the first time in Christian history, within the grasp of the laiety.

Puritanism, as an extension of Protestantism, also insisted on the right of each Christian to read and interpret the Bible in one's own native language and facilitated the dissemination of the English translation of the Scripture. Puritanism's most distinguishing characteristic stemmed from a deep veneration of the Bible as the living word of the living God conjoined by an unwavering devotion to the study and practice of everything it prescribed. Therefore, after having wrested the Holy Scriptures from the exclusive confines of Catholicism, thus obviating the role of the Church as the sole

exegete of the Scriptures, the Puritans set about the task of laying down the principles of biblical interpretation,

Sacvan Bercovitch argues that the Puritans' intense desire to mould and order their lives, both temporal and spiritual, in strict accordance with Scripture led them to seek the true rule of biblical exegesis. In Protestant tradition, they were quick to condemn the entirely allegoric exposition of the Scripture by the Catholic Church and their deliberate obscuring of the Scripture in order to make "the Pope the door keeper of Scripture and not the Holy Spirit" (Farrar 1961:296). In an effort to re-establish the true function of hermeneutics, William Tyndale had argued that "the Scripture has but one sense which is the literal sense and that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth" in the believers turbulent journey from self to Christ (Knappen 1939:357).

It is interesting that while on the one hand the Puritans did not altogether rule out allegorical exposition, on the other, they did not also insist on a liberal or plain interpretation of the Scripture. William Bridge conceded that "though the sense of the Scripture be but one entire sense, yet sometimes the Scripture is to be understood literally, sometimes figuratively and metaphorically" (Warfield 1931:252).

Furthermore, the doctrine of the Priesthood of all Believers' in the words of John White, emphasised that "every godly man hath in him a spiritual light by which he is directed in the understanding of God's mind revealed in his word" (Ibid:231). The doctrine of innate depravity' which prompted the Puritans to distrust themselves and confess their natural inability led them to invoke the assistance of the Holy Spirit in their attempts at interpreting Scripture. Thomas Goodwin argued that "the same Spirit

that guided the holy Apostles and Prophets to write it must guide the people of God to know the meaning of it; and as he first delivered it, so must he help men to understand it" (Ibid:231, 232).

Bercovitch argues that, apart from obviating the institutional authority of Catholicism, the twin doctrines *of Sola Scriptura* and *Sola Fidei* also posed the danger of total liberation of the self by facilitating a drastically voluntary, self-willed style of exegesis leading to wild speculation. Recognizing the threat of individual license, the Reformers hastened to enforce strict discipline on hermeneutical practice by limiting the possibility of self-assertion on the part of the exegete which they believed was tantamount to sin. They insisted that the exegete must first be a believer, and secondly, that the nature of exegesis should not be invention but a discovery of the inherent meaning hidden in Scripture. As William Whitaker stated: "When we proceed from the thing to the thing signified, we bring no new light but only bring to light what was before concealed in the sign" (Fitzgerald 1849:407).

Bercovitch contends that the Reformers laid great emphasis on the centrality of the exegete who, by virtue of his regeneracy was already invested with the true sense: "It is he who proceeds from sign to significance, he who brings the spirit to the fact and carries the light of meaning in himself" (P O, p. 112). The Reformers believed that the conjunction of the regenerate perceiver and biblical fact negated self-assertion because "only biblical facts yielded figural meaning and only the believer who had interpreted himself figurally as part of sacred history could discern the meaning of biblical facts" (Ibid:111). In the light of the above observations, Bercovitch argues that the Reformers were unaware of the fact that their hermeneutical theory offered the exegete who was in the process of discovery the prospect of finding "new sense" as he

moved from "thing to the thing signified." Me argues that in such an eventuality, the exegete would

> have the whole system of exegesis at his disposal; he could restructure all of sacred history to bear out his signification; he could marshal all the literal spiritual texts of the Bible to sustain his private vision (Ibid:112).

Bercovitch demonstrates the discovery of new sense in the shift in focus of the reformist exegetes from the thing to the thing signified by citing the example of Martin Luther. Luther, by identifying Catholicism with Anti-Christ, transformed ecclesiastical history by "discovering a new sense of the apocalypse in the concealed meaning of Daniel and Revelation" and proclaimed that Protestant Reformers were being called to liberate the new chosen people from their thousand-year bondage to the Romish Whore (Ibid: 112). Bercovitch argues that the same mode of perception was developed by the New England Puritans who, as visible saints and the new English Israelites, "discovered America in Scripture and had proceeded from the thing to the thing signified -- from Noah to Abraham to Moses to Nehemiah to *Americanus*. They had thus shifted the focus of traditional hermeneutics from biblical to secular history in conformity with their vision of the New World as the *Theopolis Americana* (Ibid.l 12). In other words, instead of making the meaning flow from Scripture to secular history, the New World Puritans reversed the direction, in what Bercovitch argues was "a wholesale inversion of traditional hermeneutics" or the sacralization of secular history to obtain sacred identity (Ibid: 109).

Bercovitch's analysis of New England Puritan hermeneutics, at once the subject and method of his larger thesis as set down in **The Puritan Origins of the**

American Self (1975), is based on the biography of John Winthrop, the governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, titled *Nehemias **Americanus*** in Cotton Mather's **Magnalia Christi Americana** (1702). His typological reading of John Winthrop's biography demonstrates Mather's transformation of traditional hermeneutics to express the ideology of American exceptionalism. The unique linguistic structure that emerged from such an exercise, Bercovitch argues, constituted the genre of auto-American-biography, that is,"celebration of the representative Self as America, and of the American Self as the embodiment of a prophetic universal design" (P O, p. 136). Such a mode was variously adopted by leading figures of the American cultural tradition.

Bercovitch states that the aim of **The Puritan Origins of the American Self** (1975)* is to trace the genesis and "development of a distinctive symbolic mode" in order to demonstrate the legacy and centrality of New England Puritan rhetoric to American identity. His thesis begins with a discussion of the significance of Mather's title *Nehemias **Americanus*** to the life of John Winthrop which, Bercovitch argues, is a succinct embodiment of Mather's biographical technique in the **Magnalia.**

*Nehemias **Americanus*** is a tribute to Winthrop, the first Governor of New England who is revered as a saint, ideal magistrate and the protagonist of an epic venture. Like the biblical hero Nehemiah who, in fulfilment of God's promise (Deut. 30: 1-5), rebuilds Jerusalem and restores the security, sanctity and prosperity of the holy city, Winthrop is also inspired to embark on an equally arduous and extraordinary undertaking to establish New Jerusalem for God's Chosen in the wilderness expanses of the New World. The uniqueness of the title, Bercovitch argues, lies in Mather's conjunction of the two terms which indicates a "far-reaching synthesis because Mather's

*A11 the following references to **The Puritan Origins of the American Self** are taken from the same source

hybrid American Nehemiah conforms neither to the principles of hagiography nor to those of secular biography (p. 1). He argues that Winthrop is neither like a medieval saint who is distinguished by a holy anointing nor like a Plutarchan hero whose earthly accomplishments are the source of his greatness. Moreover, Mather consciously obscures the initial identification of Winthrop with Nehemiah by comparing him with a variety of other exemplary figures from both biblical as well as pagan history' and "in effect, he transforms all these parallels and the biographical norms they imply into a distinctive concept of the representative American saint" (p.2).

II

But before proceeding to a detailed examination of Mather's biographical technique as explained by Bercovitch, it may be useful to note how Bercovitch distinguishes the **Magnalia** as chronicle history and exemplary biography from being a mere exercise in filiopietism. Bercovitch explains that the narrative's historicity emerges from the associaton of *Nehemias* with *Americanus* which emphasizes a common core between the two, i.e., the "hero's public role". In other words, while *Nehemias* distinguishes Winthrop as magistrate, *Americanus* signifies his service to the nascent state of New England. Mather's presentation of Winthrop covers the entire personality -- from his simple attire, amiable disposition, his hospitality, humour and skills of oratory to his shortcomings like excessive tolerance, serious financial obligations and disputable policies, thus giving the narrative a historical perspective. Furthermore, Bercovitch refutes the popular belief that Mather's biographies are merely expressions of filiopietism with the following observations: first, the Magnalia offers diverse and sometimes critical data in colonial medicine and its practice by providing a great source of information to later historians; second, all of the biographies in the

Magnalia reveal an impartial presentation of the individuals' weaknesses and "his descriptions of what might be called clerical melancholia — William Thomson's physchosomatic distempers, Nathaniel Mather's suicidal depressions, Ezekiel Roger's morbid sense of isolation from man and God - may well have influenced Hawthorne's portraits of the Puritan minister" (p.2). Third, Mather's accounts of the material successes of the individuals not only substantiate Puritanism's promise of both spiritual and temporal prosperity but it also negates the criticism levelled against the **Magnalia** as a collection of sacred *exempla*. Bercovitch argues that Mather's descriptions of the individuals' remarkable progress from poverty to prosperity rightly entitle him as the originator of the "rags to riches" or the "American success story". Finally, Mather's **Magnalia** is valuable as "chronicle history" in the way it connects "his heroes sequentially, in the framework of an on-going historical enterprise. Throughout the work, his selection of key events shows a marked sensitivity to the nature of New England's development" (p.3).

Bercovitch points out that Mather's historicism stems from contemporary trend in biographical technique which insisted on a close and extended examination of the person and the events.This was in sharp contrast to the biased, allegorical presentation of medieval hagiographers who showed total disregard for fact. Thus, Bercovitch asserts that successive biographies in the **Magnalia** connect the lives of the heroes with major events of the period in a manner that reflects the socio-political development of New England. Moreover, the narrative itself can be seen as a golden mean between hagiography and modern biography which Bercovitch terms as exemplary biography with a didactic function. Although Mather's narrative is full of detail his didactic intention propels the details into the structure of the ideal with the explicit purpose of teaching through example.

Bercovitch explains that Winthrop's Americanness emerges not only from his being a part of the New World venture but also because it highlights his status as Governor to disclose his individuality; and as Nehemiah, he is an individual who is also the *exempium* of good statesmanship. Thus, the implications of ***Nehemias Americanus*** as *exempium* emphasizes the unique traits of Winthrop as an individual and a good magistrate. Mather, through various biblical and classicial correspondences, thrusts him

Furthermore, Mather's concept of *exempium* gathers strength from the biblical principles relating to the exemplary magistrate "who protects the chosen people, ensures their place of refuge and exalts them by his righteousness" (p.5). Winthrop is also presented in the Reformed tradition, as one of the elect who reflects the Puritans' twin concept of calling or "the inward call to redemption and the summons to a social vocation imposed on man by God for the common good" (p.6).

Bercovitch argues that the conjunction of the spiritual with the secular calling broadens the *exempium* of the good magistrate to envelop the whole personality of the man. The source of this biographical practice is traced to the funeral orations of early Christians like Gregory Nazarianus which greatly influenced colonial biographers. The structure of the life of Winthrop conforms to the Gregorian model with "an opening encomium, a description of endowments, a list of achievements, and a rendering of the death scene, followed by a public-exhortation" (p.6). Bercovitch points out that Mather employed the form of the funeral oration to unite the concept of calling with the ideal of a just government. In this way, Mather remolds the good works of the Governor into the *visibilia* of the saint. Futhermore, by alluding to Job, the suffering servant of God, Mather attributes the trials and tribulations of New England and the vicious detractors of its

Governor to the covert machinations of Satan. The immense faith and fortitude with which the American Job-Nehemiah surmounts these afflictions is

> a lesson of our Lord, teaching us that every believer must endure conflict and temptation as Christ did. It is a lesson that not only transcends the ideal of the good governor but transmutes history itself into a drama of the soul (p. 8).

Bercovitch argues that the transmutation of history does not obviate historical facts but helps these facts to "become a higher end, a vehicle for laying bare the soul or, more accurately, the essential landmarks in the soul's journey to God. And the journey of the soul thus abstracted provides a guide for every man . . . " (p. 8).

Bercovitch points out that while the Catholic hagiographies portrayed the extraordinariness of the individual who could only be venerated as Saint and not taken as a model for emulation, the Reformed biographers universalized the individual and offered the opportunity of faithful imitation. The Reformers argued that "the Catholics were distorting the very essence of belief, barring mankind from even the prospect of hope; they were inducing Christians to expect salvation from works rather than faith" (p.9). Hence, they took recourse to Luther's doctrine of *Sola fidei* which offered a kind of *imitatio* that gave prominence to the spirit behind the Saints deed and not to the deed itself. Thus, from the doctrine of *Sola fidei* the Puritans conceived *exemplum fidei* by asserting that "behind every experience of the saint stood Jesus Himself *Exemplum Exemplorum* for both the believer and the organic body of beleivers. The way to salvation lay in an internalized,experiential reliving of His life" (p. 10).

The reformers unlike the Catholics did not acknowledge the exemplariness of any man but imitated only that man who himself imitated Christ in his

own life. The Catholics claimed themselves righteous by an inheritance of Grace acquired through good works, but the Reformers, in the words of Edward Taylor, identified the entire human race as "accursed, poisonous, ruinating, dismal, woeful, miserable, and forlorn, excrable, beyond the relief of all created help whatsoever" (p. 16), and totally incapable of meriting grace through works. Bercovitch asserts that it was the Puritans who , being the most activist of the Reformers, took upon themselves the task of investigating, explaining and regimenting the self.

It is important to note that the Puritans' understanding of the concept of Self originated in Augustine's concept of history in his **De Civitate Dei** or the **City** of **God** (426) wherein it is argued that since the first rebellion of man against God"two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self (Walker 1959:167). The development of this theory led the Puritans to identify Self with Satan and as a detriment to the soul's journey towards perfection. The Puritans felt more so because of the strong influence of Calvin's doctrine of innate depravity which emphasized human worthlessness while exploring man's sinfulness before God's holiness.

Cotton Mather echoes this rationale rather mildly:

> A Christian ought always to think humbly of himself, and be full of self-abasing and self-abhorring reflections. By loathing of himself continually, and being very sensible of what are his own loathsome circumstances, a Christian does what is very pleasing to Heaven (Greven 1977:67).

While equating self-denial with love of God and words like self and own with Satan and sin, they insisted at the same time that man's primary concern should be with nothing else but the perfection and well-being of his own soul. The dilemma of

Puritan identity thus arises from the intense struggle, on the one hand, between the Puritans' self-denial to attain Christ and on the other hand, his effort in this direction which is once again a confirmation of self-assertion. The entire corpus of the Puritan personal writing reveals this self-civil-war or, in Bercovitch's terms *Auto Machia* which gave rise to

> a relentless psychic strain; and in New England, where the theocracy insisted upon it with unusual vigor - where anxiety about election was not only normal but mandatory - hysteria, breakdowns and suicides were not uncommon (p. 23).

This state of constant perplexity, in the mind of the Puritan regarding his identity is, according to Bercovitch, resolved by recourse to exemplary or spiritual biography. When taken as a guide to the Puritans' aspiration towards godly living this not only lessened the psychological strain that the process involved but also brought into close proximity the imitable example of Christ. Thus, the biographies of exemplary figures provide a model for men's lives and bridge the chasm that separates Self from Christ by drawing imitable parallel from human precedents like Nehemiah rather than from Christ himself directly. Bercovitch argues that

> the term *Nehemias Americanus* implies that the American is like Christ because he is like Nehemiah; the same formula applies to most of Mather's biographical allusions and to those of virtually all Puritan lives (p.25).

We might recall at this point that Luther's doctrine *of Sola Scriptura* had not only facilitated every Protestant to be his own exegete but had also unleashed the danger of wilful exegesis. The reformers imposed strict control on exegetical practice by laying emphasis on a christological reading of the Scripture. They believed that

> the sum of the whole Bible, prophesied, typified, prefigured, exhibited, demonstrated, to be found in every leaf, almost in every line, the scriptures being but as it were the swaddling bands of the child Jesus (Packer, 1991:135).

In Mather's narrative, Bercovitch beholds the perfect blending of the personal and biblical with the christological: the first situates Winthrop by comparing him successively with Nehemiah, Moses, Job, Solomon and Jacob within the framework of Scriptural history. Next, he correlates the Old Testament framework with that of the New Testament or the spiritual biography of Jesus. Thus, Winthrop, the saint at one end, is linked through the long line of the biblical Patriarchs, to Christ the Saviour at the other end. The entire process of the regimentation of Self is centred on the Puritan's Christic identity and thus, Winthrop as micro-christus becomes the representative Puritan saint.

Bercovitch concludes that in ***Nehemias Americanus***:

> the process of association illuminates the intricate threefold rhetorial pattern which unites all the narrative elements of the biography, the personal and biblical tenets entwined in the christological. In that pattern, the *auto-machia* is so situated as to call forth, from experience itself, the image of the *exemplum fidei* in the final act of self-effacement (p.33).

Thus, after delineating through the biblical parallel of Nehemiah the progressive interpretation of Winthrop as *exemplum*, *exemplum fidei* and representative Puritan saint, Bercovitch examines the implications of Mather's use of typology in *Nehemias **Americanus*** It is instructive to note that Calvinisl theology gave central role to typology and much of Christian writing shows the infusion of Christian meaning into

the Old Testament. Subsequently, the use of typology came to be extended to post-biblical period. It was applied to the Church, and to the life of the devout Christian.

Bercovitch states that Mather's use of typology is an extension of the Puritan exegetical practice of interpreting *Exemplum fidei* as a type of Christ and on the premise that such a type was related to both biography and history.

> Thus Nehemiah was a "personal type" of Jesus, and the Israelites' exodus from Babylon a "national type" of his triumphant agon. . . . In this view Christ the "antitype" stood at the center of history, casting his shadow forward to the end of time as well as backward across the Old Testament (pp. 35, 36).

From this perspective, Bercovitch explains Mather's comparison of Winthrop with Nehemiah on two levels: biograhically, Winthrop and Nehemiah become correlative types of Christ; historically, the travails of the New England Saints with Christ working wonders through them in the New World become types of the ancient Israelite story. Thus, while christology identified the Saint with scriptural heroes typology incorporated, the Saint's life into Bible history.

Although Winthrop is presented as a generous, kind and suffering servant, just magistrate and a reformed Christian, Mather sums up his life as embodying a test of faith and asserts that what ultimately dominates in all the biblical allusions is the *figura*. The typological parallels of Old and New Testament show the foreshadowing of New Testament persons and events in the Old: Exodus/Jesus' wilderness temptations; Manna/Feeding of five thousand and so on. This pattern when imposed on the New England Magistrate

> in his wilderness, providentially overcoming 'his' trials, providing for 'his' often ungrateful people — *[he figura* that emerges bespeaks the furthest moral, spiritual and eschatological reach of Winthrop as *exemplum fidei* (P.39).

Again, Bercovitch argues that since typology primarily dealt with *littera-historia* the hermeneutics that universalizes Winthrop and thrusts him out of time and place retracts him and resituates him in time and place as "*Americanus*". Consequently, Winthropas *figura* continues to be a part of secular history. Bercovitch explains that the aim of Mather in his figural technique is to relate literal history to redemptive history or secular history to soteriology.

It is instructive to note that Bercovitch refutes the simplistic view that Mather was merely a providential historian. To explain the distinction between various types of providence as reflected in Puritan thought, he uses the words of John Beadle:

> Some acts of God are acts of common providence, and so he feeds us, and cloaths us, he doth as much for the creatures; so he feeds the Ravens. . . . Some acts of God are acts of special priviledge; and thus he gave Abraham a child in his old age, and made David of a Shepherd a King. Some acts of God, are acts of pattern; and thus he shewed mercy to Menasse....
>
> Some acts of God are acts of wonder:it is a wonder that any soul is saved (1656:59-60).

ft is obvious that of all the providences listed above, the last is the greatest because it directs the soul's ascending journey towards salvation. Bercovitch argues that while the "acts of God" that pertain to the welfare of temporal life constitute secular providences or providential history the "acts of special priviledge" and "mercy" that over-rule the lives of the elect -- from Abraham to David to Nehemiah to Winthrop —

based on prophesy and promise constitute the material of redemption or figural providences.

It is noteworthy that in the **City** of **God** providential history in Augustinian terms concerns the earthly saga of the "City of Man". But Augustine did not subscribe to the pagan concept of the world coming into existence through chance and asserted that the reason and cause behind everything in this world is God. Augustine's primary concern was with the "City of God" which led him to refute the pagan idea of history as cyclic — implying the repetitive ebb and flow of Man's fortune -- and taught that history unfolded as a widening spiral rising towards universal redemption. He applied the Covenant of Grace to Christianize Hebrew eschatology and described God's redemptive plan as ascending from "Ararat, Sinai, and Golgotha forever upward toward the Holy Mount of New Jerusalem" (p.42).

Against this background of the Augustinian concept of history, Bercovitch distinguishes providential and redemptive history as secular history and soteriology where secular history remains essentially providential pertaining to the here and now, while soteriology is otherworldly and a "mode of identifying the individual, the community or the event in question, within the scheme of salvation" (p. 43). Therefore, in Winthrop, *Americanus* unites providential history and soteriology, earthly and heavenly, and "as representative American, he stands at once for citizen and saint, state and church," history of New England and history of the Church (p.44).

Bercovitch points out that Mather's synthesis of providential history with soteriology gains greater clarity and significance when the **Magnalia** is compared to the separatist historian William Bradford's **Of Plymouth Plantation** (1650). Bercovitch argues that while Bradford envisaged the Separatist settlement at Plymouth as a secular

act overruled by providence, Mather, on the contrary, perceived the congregationalists' New England venture as an extension of eccleciastical history and the attendant providences as part of a predetermined, divinely ordained plan moving towards universal redemption. Therefore, just as christology merged the personal with the divine in *exemplum fidei,* historically, the Governor and colony conjoined to facilitate God's redemptive work.

The entire narrative of ***Nehemias*** *Americanus* consolidates the confluence of personal and communal redemption because, as Bercovitch contends, Winthrops's

> genealogy establishes New England's ties to the reformation; at the end, his death predicates the glories in store for New Israel; the experiences which bring him from one point to the other, from sacred past to promised future, illuminate the progress of the colony (p.48).

Bercovitch emphasizes that Mather's main reason for laying stress on figural providence, or soteriology, was to exact a sacred telos on the Great Migration. It was this mode of perception which inspired Mather to write the ecclesiastical history of New England as ***Magnalia Christi*** *Americana,* - the wonderous acts of Christ in America -- constituting decisive stages in the redemptive scheme of God. Furthermore, the untoward incidents, trials and calamities that beset the New England Puritans, were accepted by them as divine chastisement which, they believed, all the more confirmed their role in redemptive history:

> The dealings of God with our Nation . . . and with the Nations of the world is very different: for other Nations ... God doth not punish . . . until they have filled up the Measure of their sins, and then he utterly destroyeth them; but if our Nation forsake the God of their Fathers ever so little, God presently cometh up on us with one judgement or other that so he may prevent our destruction. (Increase Mather 1674:26-28).

Therefore God's retribution of the Puritans' shortcomings in New England were considered as corrective afflictions which indicated His unfailing commitment to world-wide redemption through the sole agency of their community. Bercovitch argues that the teleology of Mather imposed on New England is based on the Reformers' interpretation of biblical prophecy (Book of Daniel). They justified themselves as divinely commissioned deliverers of the new chosen people from the Romish whore just as Nehemiah had called out the ancient Israelites from Babylonian captivity:

> Prophecies in the Old Testament . . . help in the belief of New Testament prophesies, many of them being already accomplisht, others also of them agreeing with those in Revelation (ie: they remain yet to be accomplished). . . . Prophecie is Historie antedated and Historie is post dated Prophecie: the same thing is told in both ... Therefore the Historie of Old Testament is example to us. . . . Such accomodations will be easy to New England; seeing there is such considerable similitude and agreement in the circumstances (Noyes 1698:43-45).

Thus, the New England Puritans, Bercovitch argues, appropriated biblical prophecies to not only justify their own New World experience but also to proclaim themselves as the spiritual descendents of ancient Israel and the harbingers of universal redemption who would soon rock the foundations of Christendom. They, therefore, found Nehemiah particularly appealing because he typified a number of exoduses which were not only successive but also progressive -- going even beyond history itself into the realm of soteriology. Bercovitch points out that Mather, in his identification of Winthrop with a long line of biblical prophets, ending with himself, was extremely conscious of the inescapable current of sacred time and so:

> As the public and private meanings of his biographical parallels converge, they form a soteriological *exemplum* of astonishing breadth and coherence. Mather's Winthrop is a man representative of his profession, of his society of sainthood, of his biographer,and, as *Americanus*, of the

> conjunction of all of these with the providential wonders, the *miracula apocalypsis* that demarcates the forward sweep of redemptive history (p.71),

Furthermore, Bercovitch analyzes Mather's unique use of the term American in ***Americanus*** by tracing the source and development of the English concept of national election and explains its significance to the New England Orthodoxy.

III

The preceding chapter has explained that the concept of national election denoted in Foxe's **Book of Martyrs** was seminal not only to the Puritan immigrants' sense of sacred mission but also to their identity as God's elect who were predestined to consummate the final act of redemptive history. It was also noted that Foxe's narrative was a combination of spiritual and chronicle biographies which, together, constituted English identity. Thus, Foxe developed the idea of England as the elect nation by metaphorically equating England with the conjunction of the two types of history: spiritual/redemptive/ ecclesiastical and chronicle/secular/providential.

Bercovitch argues that Cotton Mather appropriated and applied Foxe's rhetorical formula of national election in his **Magnalia,** but, unlike Foxe, for whom " 'Englishman' was a metaphor for the temporary conjunction of sainthood and nationality" Mather perceived " 'Americanus' as an enduring' symbol of their fusion: a federal identity not merely associated with the work of redemption, but intrinsic to the unfolding pattern of types and anti-types, itself a prophesy to be fulfilled"(p.89).

Therefore, according to Bercovitch, the New England Puritan "discovered his personal identity as Puritan by recourse to Christology; now he overcame the problem of his American identity by recourse to soteriology by imposing upon the communal effort the prophetic type (at once fulfillment and *figura*) of the Messiah's advancing millennial army". (p. 103).

Furthermore, all the trials and environmental hazards of the New England Puritans were seen as merely corrective afflictions of God visited upon them to prepare them to be better instruments in the realization of His redemptive promise. Bercovitch explains that after lifting America out of its secular context and placing it within the framework of sacred history, Mather applies to it the standards of spiritual biography. And so, just as the saint constituted the elect community, America constituted the elect community's inner call to redemption with its inherent tests and trials.

Bercovitch asserts that the idea of national election -- which had led Luther to urge fellow Germans to transform their kingdom into a model evangelical domain and had convinced Foxe's generation that England would spearhead the battle against the Roman Antichrist - now led the New England Puritans to accord America

> the status of visible sainthood . . . it contributes significantly to the link between New England and the American Way, to the usurpation of American identity by the United States and to the anthropomorphic nationalism that characterizes our literature - not the secular anthropomorphism of parenthood (British homeland, German fatherland), but the eschatological anthropomorphism of spiritual biography: American dream, manifest destiny, redeemer nation, and, fundamentally, the American self as representative of universal rebirth. (p. 108).

Thus, the New England Puritans' concept of national election gained strength from Christology which made the Puritans visible saints; and soteriology which defined their errand as the last step towards universal redemption and the rhetorical confluence of these two modes of thought consolidated the Puritan vision of the New World as the American City of God.

Mather's inversion of traditional hermeneutics bespeaks the substitution of secular history for scriptural text as the source of meaning for his exegesis and the

rhetoric. This was commensurate with his sense of sacred mission and destiny which, Bercovitch argues, developed into a "symbolic mode" and persisted as an indelible part of American imagination.

We need to note that Roger Williams (1604-1683) arrived in New England in 1631 and became a severe critic of the Puritan establishment at Massachusetts Bay. He launched a scathing attack against colonial rhetoric **and** the Puritans' identification of the New England theocracy with New Israel. He endorsed the immigrants' theocratic claims which were based on a federal covenant with the implicit anticipation of secular rewards. But what he found utterly unacceptable was their claim to spiritual blessings too. He argued that Israel, in its spiritual sense was a unique *figura* of the spiritual state, while America not unlike other nations, was steeped in sin. To him, equating the New World to New Israel was an unpardonable sin and to insist prophesies were being fulfilled through the New Englanders meant a terrible degradation of the Trinity by subjecting it to the essentially sinful nature of man. Thus, Roger William, Thomas Morton and others were bitterly opposed to the unorthodox and unholy hermeneutics of the New England Puritans which enabled them to discover new meaning in scripture and apply it to their own New World situation. Therefore, the New England theocrats, after discovering America in scripture moved the focus of their hermeneutics from the thing to the thing signified from Noah to Abraham to Moses to Nehemiah to Americanus — from biblical to secular history.

Bercovitch asserts that the shift in focus stemmed from the prerogatives they assumed

> as American exegetes . . . and when they announced that "America" was a figural sign, *historia* and *allegoria* entwined, they broke free of the restrictions of exegesis. Instead of subsuming themselves in the sensus spiritualis, they enlisted hermeneutics in support of what amounted to a private typology of current affairs (p. 113).

As Puritans they first conceived of themselves as the spiritual heirs of the ancient Israelites and then as "American Israelities", they claimed themselves to be "the sole reliable exegetes of a new last book of scripture" (p.113). Further, they conceived their transatlantic voyage as the antitype of the biblical exodus narratives i.e., their defiance of godless Kings, unholy institutions, denigrating fellows; their migration from oppression to the freedom of a second promised land; their braving the travails of another exodus with God's over-ruling providence and so on. To reiterate their sacred identity and prove it to the world at large they took recourse to a symbolic interpretation of their venture: Atlantic crossing as spiritual baptism,Old World as second Babylon; New World as a second New Canaan; wilderness to Edenic paradise and so on.

The New England Puritans used symbology to not only prove the eschatological significance of the New World but also to recast the New World locale into a desert -- garden *allegoria*. Bercovitch argues that the very basis of New England's justification rested on the interpretation of these symbolic accounts as typological truths and not as simple spiritualization or extravagant exaggeration. The colonists insisted that the Observer, in order to comprehend the true nature of his surroundings, must first recognize the sacred implications of the New World and then as an American he must harmonize personal and communal salvation within the context of American destiny. They adopted this method for transforming secular into sacred identity and to project the New World as America *microchrista* or, in other words, they founded their colony in the form of a saint. Through their rhetoric of inversion they transformed the concept of *exemplum fidei*,which denoted the elect community, not only to widen and encompass the entire Church-State of New England but also elevate the landscape of the New World to the status of visible sainthood - as can be seen in numerous histories of the Colony which take on the meaning of spiritual biography.

Bercovitch points out that "Mather's use of personal experiences to impute grace to state and country alike mirrors the inverted figural pattern of the narratives upon

which he draws" (p. 118). He dilates this assertion by explaining with examples a few representative works of New England Puritans which transform the New World's secular entity into sacred identity: For example, Edward Johnson's ***Wonder-working Providence of Sion'sSaviour*** (1654) portrays the geographical features and developing stages of the New England settlement as the physical features of a saint advancing like a Christian **soldier and Joshua Scottow in his *Narrative of the Planting of the Massachusetts*** *Colony* (1694) traces the development of the colony as the gradual growth and maturation of a regenerate adult from his embryonic stale. Thus, the Colonists' rhetoric of inversion prompted them not only to consider the advancement of the colony as the pilgrimage of a saint but also transform their exposition of the doctrine of grace into an expression of corporate welfare. Significantly the histories, Jeremiads and personal literature of colonial divines like Thomas Hooker, John Norton, Thomas Shepherd, John Cotton, Peter Bulkeley, Mary Rowlandson and others signify this mode of inversion in their efforts at presenting contemporary problems of the saints as an indication of God's displeasure with them.

Bercovitch argues that a singularly explicit example of Mather's mode of inversion is the transformation of the traditional standards of the conversion-experience. The popular belief that conversion checked degeneration and facilitated man's salvation was replaced with the literal experience of the Atlantic Ocean - crossing

> The swelling waves have dashed, and raged, and roared; the rude billows have been going over us, and we have been ready to sink. But just then our compassionate Lord Jesus Christ has awaked for our safety and marvellously calmed our circumstances ! Oh thou land, strangely saved by the Lord, say now as in Psal.CXXXVI,23,"O give thanks unto the ... because his mercy endureth for ever'. (Mather 1967, 11:674-75).

The pattern of treating the Atlantic as a more perilous Red sea, the voyage as baptism, and the New World as new life informs all the autobiographical writings of the Puritan immigrants. Therefore, the Puritan immigrant is in a state of progressing

transition from Old world sinfulness and temptation to New World rededication, from promise of paradise to paradise regained. Their identification with such a sacred venture not only fructified but also confirmed their sainthood.

Similarly, Bercovitch argues that the treatment of death in the **Magnalia** exemplifies yet another aspect of the New England Puritans' pattern of inversion i.e., the transformation of bereavement into an assertion of the community's uninterrupted progression. The colonial elegies, by moving from personal to communal concerns translate the significance of the protagonists' elevation to eternal glory into an affirmation of the community's triumphant future. This persistent stress on community, as a constituent part of federal hagiography, helped create the legend of the Founding Fathers which reveals the immense potential of the New England Puritan imagination. Bercovitch asserts that

> Less than thirty years after the Arbella landed, before all the leaders of the Great Migration had died, there evolved the Legend of a goldern age, one that effectually transported all the archetypes of biblical and classical antiquity to the Massachusetts Bay shores. Its sustained intensity, its coherence, and the rapidity with which it grew, amounts to an astonishing, possibly unrivalled cultural maturation (p. 122).

Bercovitch points out that in theory, the New England Puritan rhetoric, by transforming secular into sacred identity had excluded the "anxiety of process" but it could do little to alleviate the uncertainities of practical life like "planting and reaping, suppressing schismatics, raising children, fighting Indians, maintaining order in an increasingly complex and heterogenous society"(p. 120). The discrepancies that crept between rhetoric and fact, and the prospect of the theocracy's declension, led the Puritans to conceive strategies that would preserve and consolidate the discovered sense of their hermeneutics. They were quick to recognize that only their rhetoric could address the threat of their theocracy's deterioration. Therefore, instead of looking for new meanings they attributed the emergent inconsistencies to a flaw in their hermeneutical

understanding. They attuned their rhetoric to turn condemnations of the disquieting situation into a reaffirmation of their vision by recalling the legends of the past and the promise of a glorious future. Bercovitch declares that the strategy surprisingly did succeed and flourish "not because the facts conform but because the rhetoric compels. What remains, finally, is the vision of the errand as it had been ingested, spiritualized and made manifest in the mind and art of the regenerate *Americanus*" (p. 125).

Bercovitch argues that although Edward Johnson's biographical poems in **Wonder-Working Providence,** written half a century before the **Magnalia,** illustrate the same method of inversion as that of Mather, his protrayal of the American reveals an attempt to synthesize two different points of view. "one is allegorical: the colony as saint, advancing by `scripture light' to `lasting blisse'; the other is historical: the saint as colonist, poor, despised'; burdened by anxiety, nostalgia, and doubt . .. and always in need of rhetoric to goad him on" (p. 128). The Lives of Johnson, Bercovitch argues, assert that the exegesis of America relied on the saints' future accomplishments, Mather's biographies, on the other hand, significantly preclude such reliance by inverting the corporate progress of the long line of saints to symbolize the history of America. Mather, declares that "whether New-England may live anywhere else or no, it must live in our History" (1967, I:27). Bercovitch asserts that Mather's affirmation of representative identity, which marks the farthest stretch of New England Puritan hermeneutics, renders "American identity a rhetorical (rather than a historical) issue, make Mather's proofs our monument, his vision our history, and to perceive anywhere else as a synonym for meaninglessness" (p. 132).

Mather's major intention was to immortalize the sacred beginnings of America and the heroism of the Founding Fathers. The epic presentation of the Lives in the **Magnalia** converge into an exclusive mythical mode, with himself being cast in the role of the communal spokesman by an act of self-asertion. Bercovitch argues that "traditionally the epic hero culminates the myth-making process . . . Mather's heroes, on the contrary delineate the myth in process. Considered in this context, they are the

successive harbingers of the *Theopolis Americana* at hand. Each of them, in his distinct historical situation, emerges an emblem of destiny manifest" (p. 134).

Bercovitch claims that the Puritan myth of America, quite successful in its attempts to eliminate the contradictions between vision and untoward history, was "the invention of expatriate idealists who declared themselves the party of the future, and then proceeded, in an implicit denial of secular history, to impose prophecy upon experience" (p. 133). He states that the Puritan myth eventually projected the United States of America, as foreshadowed in the New England Way, and perpetuated New England Puritan rhetoric as a constant source of strength for subsequent American spokesmen and writers in its ability to control and resolve grave national conflicts.

The presentation of the protagonist in Mather's biographies follows the same pattern as that of mythography wherein the community arrogates the "superindividual" image of the hero and through ritual reenactment of his legendary feats converts biography into "a form of history of a higher power than itself. But in the **Magnalia,** Mather's "superindividual" is "America itself, microcosm of the worldwide work of redemption, and macrocosm of the redemptive work underway in each of its chosen people". Thus, he obviates history by inverting it into a still higher form of personal narrative, which Bercovitch terms as "auto-American-biography, where the central term ` American', referring as it does to a futuristic ideal, transform the tribal ritual from a social mode of personal fulfilment, into a personal mode of social fulfilment. In sum it reconstitutes national prophecy and spiritual biography as prophetic autobiography" and concludes that "American Puritan hermeneutics begins by asserting the unique status of the community; it finds its amplest expression, at the end of the theocratic experiment, in the unique powers it confers upon the solitary true perceiver'" (p. 134).

The Puritan myth of the New World, Bercovitch explains, continued to survive even after the decline of the theocracy to become a dominant part of American

imagination. It "prepared the re-vision of God's country from the `New England of the type' into the United States of America" (p. 136). The New England Puritans' vision of themselves and of the New World not only offered but also directed the development of a unique linguistic mode. Bercovitch argues that this mode of expression, exemplified in the **Magnalia** as auto-American-biography, was variously adopted by successive custodians of American culture, from Edwards to Emerson, in their efforts to address ongoing adversities in contemporary society.

Bercovitch asserts that the impetus behind the New England Puritans' rhetoric, as opposed to that of other New World colonists, lay in their vision of America as the land of apocalypse The continent was generally considered by the emigrants as an Edenic paradise and a perfect place offering immense opportunity to establish ideal human institutions unlike the corrupt ones left behind. But the New England Puritans' approach was sacred not secular, their vision was millennial and not Utopian. They devised a hermeneutics which enabled them to not only appropriate the land as their own inheritance but also claim visible sainthood by according to it the status of New Cannan and a fulfilment of scriptural prophesy. On the whole, they cast their venture as part of extended Bible history and considered themselves, as the New English Israelites, to be the decisive instruments in realizing God's redemptive plan for mankind.

The non-Puritan colonists, on the other hand, with their pledged allegiance to their respective monarchies occupied the New World from largely political or missionary motivations. But when these colonies gained independence they experienced a sudden disruption in their historical - cultural connections with their mother countries. Citing the example of the Spanish colonists, Bercovitch argues that the Creoles could never begin an American literary tradition like the Puritan Colonists because the cessation of their dependence on Spain evoked a deep identity crisis in the successors of the colonisers. Bercovitch states that the Southern American also, after the Civil War, was left, in a similar predicament of being helplessly isolated between past and the future, between a dream that was defeated and a future that was unacceptable. But for

the post-revolutionary North American, the intermediacy was gainfully bridged by the myth of America created by the New England Way. Because

> there it entailed a mythical mode of cultural continuity : Hawthorne's Endicott, the iron-breasted harbinger of the Revolution; the hero of Franklin's *Autobiography,* whose success story at once recapitulates the nation's past and predicates its future; Natty Bumpo on the prairie transcending all contradictions of race and culture because, as our representative American, he synthesizes the values of nature and civilization (p. 143).

Bercovitch argues that even though these examples are far from identical they still attest to the concept of "American selfhood as an identity in progress advancing from prophesies performed towards paradise to be regained" (p. 143). It is interesting to note that the same mode of hermeneutics and federal eschatology, as seen in the Magnalia that elevated America from secular to sacred history as *Theopolis Americana* also inform Sylvester Judd's Margaret (1843), Edward Johnson's *Wonder-Working* ***Providence of Sion's Saviour in New England,*** (1654), Jonathan Edward's ***Some thoughts concerning the present Revival of Religion in New England*** (1742). Numerous other celebrations of America as "The Great Nation of Futurity" echoed upto the end of the Nineteenth Century and foretold the imminence of "the American Way spreading over the face of the earth" (p. 144).

In order, to buttress his argument of the persistence of millennial anticipation and the unflagging rhetoric and method of the New England Puritans, Bercovitch offers representative extracts of the Revolutionary era one such example is Samuel Sherwood's *The Church's Flight into the Wilderness,* wherein he conveys the Puritans' firm belief that America's triumph would herald the beginning of the millennium:

> Let your fatih be strong in the divine promises. Although the daughter of Zion may be in a wilderness state, yet the

> Lord himself is her Light. The time is coming when Jehovah will dry up the rivers of her persecuting enemies, and the Ransomed of the Lord shall come with singing into Zion, and Everlasting joy (1776:49).

Similarly, the statement of George Ripley, the founder of Brook Farm, that "the heavenly Jerusalem was in the clouds, waiting to descend . . . the [American] disciples were gathered; the iniquity of the world was full; the angel had put the trumpet to his lips" not only brings to mind the apocalyptic scenario of the Revelation but also the sense that Ripley did not see his farm as just a trial in Romantic socialism but something much more than that (Frothingham 1882:111)•

Significantly, the apocalypse myth also helped in precluding the threat of the cyclical view of history, which presaged that sooner or later corruption would overtake America also. The New England Puritans had already replaced secular with sacred history and had interpreted America eschatologically as the final step leading towards world-wide redemption. Bercovitch argues that the Utopian literature that flooded the Nineteenth Century differed from the European genre in three basic ways: the site is at once America and not some unspecified place, the community does not attempt to materialize some philosophical theory but actually effects the forward sweep of history, and the rhetoric is essentially biblical.

IV

According to Bercovitch, Edward Bellamy's Postscript' in **Looking Backward: 2000 - 1887** (1926) which sets forth the author's prophetic proclamation of the imminent dawning of a new age, offers a new consideration of Utopian imagination. From this point of view, the concept of Utopia redefines itself to signify an expanding redemptive scheme which became a persistent theme in American culture. According to Bercovitch, this theme is extensively argued by not only Mather in the **Magnalia** and

The Wonders of the Invisible World (1693) but also by Thoreau, Emerson, J. Sullivan Cox, David A.Moore and others who as self-proclaimed latter-day Nehemiahs urge the nation onwards to its ultimate destination of New Jerusalem. Bercovitch asserts that for all these writers Utopia signified America and to be Utopian was to be a model of

> the United States of America - bounded on the north by the North Pole; on the south by the Antartic Region; on the east by the first chapter of the Book of Genesis and the west by the Day of judgement....
>
> The Supreme Ruler of Universe ... has marked out the line this nation must follow and our duty must be done.
>
> America is destined to become the Light of the World (Bird 1899:7-8,234).

Bercovitch argues that the tradition of national biography evolved from the Puritan view of intermediate American identity in auto-American-biography. Beginning with the Revolutionary era, the Lives of popular leaders conjoined to portray America as an advancing spiritual biography, The Biographers were far less engaged with moral disposition or historical narrative than with the ideal American who personified the true spirit of the people and the country as a whole. This point of view pervaded every form of biographical writing from folk narratives to the campaign biographies of political aspirants. The same method was practised by the Romantic historians who depicted the hero as "an idealization of American motives" reflecting "all that is noble in the American character" (Levin 1959:52, 73). Thus, as in Mather's concept of ***Americanus***,the American hero emerges as a prophetic model of the country embodying the perfect blending of universal virtues with exceptional qualities of national leadership.

Bercovitch asserts that when the ***Magnalia*** was printed in America in 1820, it appeared, to its readers, as though American history was unfolding itself according to the spiritual design of scripture, In 1834, when Jared Sparks began to prepare a Library of American Biography he declared that the lives of leading

Americans, from Winthrop to Washington, not only reflected a comprehensive history of America but also revealed Christian virtues of the highest order and thus, offered an agenda for the future course of mankind. Sparks' method, Bercovitch claims, can be considered as the American form of Romantic biography: for example, by drawing parallels between Moses and Washington, the biographers projected Washington not only as the successor of the ancient patriarch but also as the greater "hero of America" who is annointed to deliver his people from the "worse than Egyptian bondage of Great Britain" through a "sea of blood" (Hay 1969:784-91). Similarly, the Lives of other national leaders like Adams, Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Jackson, Monroe, Fisher Ames can also be cast in the same heroic mould to substantiate the Puritans' concept of hero as representative of national mission.

Bercovitch argues that another interesting feature of the emerging tradition of national biography is exemplified in James Russell Lowell's projection of Abraham Lincoln as the creation of the New World nature and the paragon of subsequent generations of Americans:

> And, choosing sweet clay from the breast
> Of the unexhausted West,
> With snuff untainted shaped a hero new,
>
> New birth of a new soil, the first American . (Wilson 1962:472-474).

Bercovitch contends that in calling Lincoln the "first" American, the poet did not mean either "earliest" "greatest" or "most Christ-like" but "most like America" because nature had created him in the country's own image. Lincoln appeared as an embodiment of the "supreme climax in the history of civilisation ... heralding the close of a dispensation ... from which is emerging the mystical dawn of a new day" (Ibid:85-86) and the martyr-chiefs "new birth of a new soil" not only connected him to the long procession of representative Americans reaching back to the Great Migration but also presented him as both antitype of the Patriarchs and the forerunner of future Americans.

In addition, Bercovitch asserts that

> Nowhere is the Puritan vision more clearly in evidence than in the hermeneutics of the American landscape, and nowhere else is the Puritan concept of intermediate identity more strongly affirmed than where intermediacy, we recall, indicates not a historical limitation but a comprehensive prophetic selfhood. (p. 157).

In keeping with the Christian tradition that knowledge of God can not only be derived from the revealed word of God, i.e., the Bible but also from the study of Creation, the Romantics considered nature as the temple of God. As adherents of natural theology, Bercovitch explains, they perceived America as the temple of nature, where temple, contrary to its tropological sense took on the exegetical meaning of the conjunction of Christology and sacred history. It is interesting to note that the Lutheran doctrine of *Sola Scriptura,* which, had spearheaded the Protestant cause, was gradually replaced by *Sola natura* in the post-Renaissance, New Science period. While *Sola Scriptura* facilitated the Reformers to confirm the inferences of natural theology with Scripture, Newton's law of gravitation oriented the Deists to perceive the Universe as the mind of God and for the Romantics, imagination in consonance with nature became the touchstone to accept or reject the teaching of scripture.

Bercovitch situates New England in this tradition to highlight the method of American writers in aligning their natural theology to a reaffirmation of the Puritan vision of America as promise and fulfilment of paradise regained. Me cites Cotton Mather's **Christian Philosopher** (1720) which, he argues, appears as a treatise on Ptolemaic natural theology: The regenerate perceiver is placed at the centre of a complex structure that unites "the processes of personal salvation, scientific understanding, and sacred history" which actually contextualized Mather himself and the colonial undertaking he represented (p. 153). In "Biblia Americana", Mather, according to Bercovitch, portrays the redemptive process in twelve successive discussions: The first part gives a historical account of Jerusalem during Nehemiah's period and the second

recalls the end-time, already consummated, occurrences. But the middle section is devoted to correspondences between scriptural prophesies and the New Science discoveries. Bercovitch argues that Mather accorded this central section to natural theology to illustrate "the blessings of Christ on the Labours of an American" (Mather 1710:163). Thus, the Puritans' conception of their errand led them to relate natural theology to federal teleology, more so because of their belief that "Right perception is a measure of personal regeneration, and personal regeneration a measure of one's commitment to the establishment of the New World Kingdom" (p. 153).

Similarly, Jonathan Edwards, in *Personal Narrative* (1736), attributes his growing love of nature and deep interest in end time prophesies to the beginnings of the experience of grace. Edwards also like Mather, was not only convinced that he alone could comprehend the future of the New World but also ascribed the exercise "to the labours of the blessed self-reliant American Observer" (p. 153). A good example of Edward's method is his exegesis of the phrase "new heavens and new earth" from Revelation which not only indicated conversion and the apocalypse but also provided the norms for comprehending nature as a representation of heaven.

Bercovitch points out that Edwards' imagery: "this New World is probably now discovered that the new and most glorious state of God's Church on earth might commence there" and "When God is about to turn the earth into a paradise, he does not begin his work where there is good growth already, but in a wilderness" reflect his millennial soteriology and Christology. The conjunctionofthese concepts in the parallels between the development of mind, soul and Church, not only indicate the revelation of a renewed nature but also reassert Edwards' fundamental exegesis of "new heaven and new earth", as the wilderness-to-become paradise is America (Miller 1948:53-54).

Furthermore, it must be noted that the first week in the first chapter of Genesis was conceived as *figura*, i.e., God's creation of the Universe out of a void typifying the appearance of the New World after much Old World chaos, and the invocation of this figure is indicative of the Puritans' federal eschatology. Edwards

proclaims the Great Awakening with an evangelical clarion call indicating "the morning of the glorious times____God shall say, Behold, 1 make all things new, and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth", and the exulatation of the Angels will far exceed the one at creation, when the Son of God,"the Sun of Righteousness, the sun of the new heavens and new earth, ... shall rise in the west, contrary to the course of ... things in the Old heavens and earth, . . . until it shines through the World" disclosing America "a brighter type of heaven" (Heimert 1966:236). Bercovitch asserts that not only Mather and Edwards but also William Hubbard, Samuel Sewall and many others directed their natural theology in the reaffirmation and celebration of the Puritan vision of America.

Bercovitch argues that the conviction of the colonial Puritans that New England had a central part in the execution of God's redemptive plan led them to the assumption that nature perceived in super-natural terms would reveal the wonders of Christ in America. Edwards explained that

> when God redeemed his people from their Babylonian captivity, and they rebuilt Jerusalem, it was . . . a remarkable type of the spiritual redemption that is to ... take its rise from this new world, fto] wonderfully alter ... the course of nature [and] the first fruits ... the progress and issue of it shall renew the world (1742, IV:368,356,357).

Further Edwards, as the representative exegete, interprets America as a type of Leah to set forth the temporal and redemptive benefits of the millenium :

> the changing of the course of trade, and the supplying of the world with its treasures from America is a type and forerunner of what is approaching in spiritual things when the world shall be supplied with spiritual treasures from America (Miller, 1948: 102).

Edwards' depiction of spiritual abundance nestled in the embrace of nature is a foreshadowing of Emersonian thought ie., a new man in an Edenic paradise of the New World. Bercovitch argues that Edwards as well as Emerson shared the same conviction that the vision of the New World infused the regenerate observer with the

wonder of a rising millennial splendour and that the observer by changing himself into the image of the New World must demonstrate proof of his regeneration.

Just as Luther had raised the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* to defeat the evils of Popery, Emerson, according to Bercovitch announces his doctrine of *Sola natura* which he believed not only negated Old World corruptions but also assured regeneration for an incomplete people:

> The land is the appointed remedy for whatever is false and fantastic in our culture, the continent we inhabit is to be physic and food for our mind as well as our body. The land with its tranquilizing sanative influences, is to repair the errors of a scholastic and traditional education and bring us into just relations with men and things (1888:627).
>
> . . . we must regard the land as a commanding and increasing power on the citizen, the sanative influence, which promises to disclose new virtues for ages to come . . . The Genius or Destiny of America is . . . a man incessantly advancing, as the shadow on the dial's face, or the heavenly body by whose light it is marked . . . Let us realize that this country, the last found, is the great charity of God to the human race (Ibid: 628 and 1904 xi:537, 540).

Emerson's concept of national mission evolved from the Puritans's image of America and Bercovitch points out that just as in Mather's *Christian Philosopher* and Edwards' *Images or Shadows*, the image in *Nature* is also veiled, but leaving enough scope, as in other works, for deducing the American context. Bercovitch points out that Emerson's optimism, stemming from the "living, prospective, titanic American nature" and the august "feeling which the geography of America inevitably inspires" reappears through out his writings, providing a sharp contrast to the obseleteness of the old world (Porte 1973:97-98).

Likewise, Bercovitch argues that

> For Puritan and Transcendentalists alike, etymology is a form of exegesis, a clue to sacred signs, self-discovery and higher laws, the literal yields the spiritual meaning by linked analogies that are inherent in the divine text (p.238, 34)

The section on language in *Nature* provided an insight into Emerson's delineation of American natural theology wherein he points that "Words are signs of natural facts" and "particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts" and together they constitute "the symbol of the spirit" (1888:552). The perceivers negation of his subjectivity enables him to comprehend the true meaning. Nature itself must not only become the medium of his thought but the natural fact must also confirm the manifestation of the spirit and the perceiver's adaptation to nature identifies him with divinity. In other words, the perceiver's response towards nature commensurates with his personalization of its spirit and his symbolizing of nature depends on the extent to which he adapts himself to it. "The same symbols are found to make the original elements of all languages ... This immediate dependence of language upon nature, this conversion of an outward phenomenon into a type" expresses "perpetual allegories" and the "axioms of physics translate the law of ethics" to transform men into models of virtue par excellence (Ibid: 552-554).

Emerson's method is evocative of the standards of New England Puritan hermeneutics and it reflects his teleology of American nature: "The fundamental law of criticism" is that "every scripture is to be interpreted by the same spirit which gave it forth", and "a life in harmony with nature, the love of truth and virtue, will purge the eyes to understand her text. By degrees we may come to know the primitive objects of nature, so that the world shall be to us an open book, and every form significant of its hidden life and final cause" (Ibid: 554).

Reminiscent of the colonial Fathers, Emerson reiterates that Americans could never aspire to build their New World Jerusalem until and unless they had crossed the moral wasteland before them. He conjoins the Puritan and Romantic principles of

salvation to proclaim that the millennium was already underway thereby dismissing the tensions arising out of the divergence of fact from vision. Bercovitch contends that Emerson is convinced that the American had only to submit himself in

> Obedience . . . to the guiding of . . . great rivers and prairies ... Never country had such a fortune ... as this, in its geography . . . Resources of America! Why, "the Golden Age is not behind but before you". Here is ... the Genesis and the Exodus ... America should speak for the human race. It is the country of Future. ... sublime and friendly Destiny by which the human race is guided . . . has infused itself into Nature. . . . to prepare new individuals and new races.... The population of the world is a conditional population; . . . there shall yet be a better, please God . . . which should lead that movement, if not New England? who should lead the leaders but the young Americans?(Quoted in P (), p. 160)

Bercovitch points out that Emerson's vision of America reasserts that of the Puritans in the way that he relates American landscape to redemptive history. It is emphatically representative of Edwards' portrayal of the redeeming potential of the material and spiritual "treasures" of America. Emerson's method is also reminiscent of Mather's transformation of "geography" into "christianography" in his description of the transatlantic voyage of the Ark of "the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, was compared unto a ship, that is now victoriously sailing" to its New Jerusalem (Mather 1967, I:42, 43).

V

Erich Auerbach distinguishes type from symbol in the following terms: "figural prophecy relates to an interpretation of history . . . while the symbol is a direct interpretation of life" (quoted in P O, p.57). While the symbolist derives meaning from the reciprocity between experience and imagination, the figuralist finds it in a sacred plan that is not only free of, but also antecedant to the self. Bercovitch argues that the American opposition to this distinction led to typological symbolism, as Ursula Brumm

calls it, and that "peculiar self-consciousness which makes the symbolic process itself the center of attention", which, according to Bercovitch, became the mainstream of American literary tradition (Lynen 1969: 45).

Bercovitch contends that for Thoreau, Walden Pond as symbol or type, is significant of both the redemptive nature of the baptismal font and the Lethean quality of the Atlantic which erases all remembrance of the Old World. Similarly, he asserts that Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass (1855) evolved from his belief that the New World offered Americans the potentialities of a new verbal expression. This belief led Whitman, according to Bercovitch, to display his self conscious symbolizing as a prototype of national self-fulfilment. Thus, Bercovitch argues, Leaves of Grass along with **Walden** (1854) and **Moby Dick** (1851) became the most exemplary works of American symbolism in the middle of the Nineteenth Century. Furthermore, Bercovitch argues that in Hawthorne's **The Scarlet Letter,** (1850) the letter `A' emblazoned across the nightsky is an example par excellence of the typological symbol in the literature of the times which

> prefigures both personal and historical redemption, lending "another moral interpretation to the things of this world than they had ever borne before. . . . as if it were the light that is to reveal all secrets, and the daybreak that shall unite all who belong to one another" (p. 162).

Bercovitch concludes that Whitman, Melville, and Hawthorne, however different they may be one from another, followed Emersonian thought in its ability to use Romantic natural theology as an expression of the national hopes and millennial aspirations. Bercovitch argues that Emerson not only widened but also transformed the tenets of colonial hermeneutics into the tenets of modern symbolism. He contends that while the Puritans combined orthodoxy with secularism, Edwards laid emphasis on the secular side of their rhetoric by identifying colonial progress with post millenialism - and finally Emerson not only maintained but also strengthened Puritan hermeneutics with the Romantic doctrine *of sola natura.*

According to Bercovitch, American Romantic symbolism, as represented by Emerson, did not merely depart from Puritan exegesis in its substitution of nature for the Bible but went so far as to recast the Puritan concept of personal identity. It may be recalled that the Reformers used *sola fides* to free the individual from doctrinal constraints but at the same time they curbed the danger of subjection with the concept of *exemplum fidei.* The Romantics differed from the Reformers in their reversal of the reformed terms of personal identity by subsuming the concept of *exemplum fidei* in the doctrine of *sola fides.* Thus, according to Bercovitch, the Romantics not only facilitated the individual to select his identity but also to exact his personal models upon experience. In other words, the Romantics conceived of the inspired perceiver as their model of selfhood.

Bercovitch says that Emerson adapts the doctrines of Romanticism to those of early New England rhetoric which, in terms of identity, meant that "the self sought was not only his but America's, or rather his as America's, and therefore America's as his." (p. 165). Emerson, as a true American, carelessly acknowledged and celebrated the sense of sacred mission and manifest destiny as set forth in the writings of the Founding Fathers of New England. Bercovitch delineates Emerson's teleology, first, in his consideration of the Migration of 1630 as a model of the biblical exodus with its implicit equation of the Old World past to the enormity of the Egyptian captivity. The second aspect of Emerson's teleology, according to Bercovitch, is his desire to cast himself in the role of a latter-day John the Baptist heralding the advent of an American genius who would bring to fruition the delayed hope of the world.

In Bercovitch's analysis Emerson transforms Romantic autobiography into auto-American biography by identifying himself with his hero in order to establish himself as the symbol of a corporate teleology. He argues that Emerson, like Whitman, "vindicates himself by expecting the main things' from future Americans like Thorean, he confirms his rebirth by considering it to be only a morning-star, herald of the

ascendent western sun that `all the nations follow'" (p. 170). Emerson follows Mather's technique of interpreting the national past as both prophesies fulfilled and prophesies in the process of fulfilment. Bercovitch contends that as the inheritor of the rhetorical tradition of Puritan New England, Emerson attempted to overcome the disparities between history and the self in all its civic, natural and prophetic multi-dimensionality by projecting himself as the representative American. It is instructive to note that Emerson's most significant writings on nature, the scholar and the religious teacher were written during, what he perceived to be, the most depraved period of the Jacksonian era. He discovered, in the Puritan tradition, that his rhetoric flourished in the face of misfortune. He was similar to Mather in formulating the method of self-renewal by arrogating to himself the meaning of America. Bercovitch argues that while the Romantics perceived all history to be biography, Emerson went further to declare that there was no biography but only auto-biography, that America was the only true idea and belonged to the best minds only.

Bercovitch contends that the American Romantics, including the most antinationalistic writers, adopt from Emerson the Puritan method of blending the personal with the national dream. For example:

> Mather's Winthrop is an American who has made himself a cornerstone of the New World Jerusalem, and therefore part of the author's exemplary auto-biography. **Walden** is the archetypal Romantic autobiography of the self as "the only true America". The bridge between these works is Emerson's Scholar-Teacher-Natural philosopher, who compensates for political failure by collapsing nature and society, history, biography, and auto-biography, into the eschatological Now which is Emerson as the representative American (p. 174).

Bercovitch refutes the common but false notion that American Literature, upto Emerson, is Antinomian. He recalls that Anne Hutchinson was banished by the New England Puritans because she devalued the corporate mission and gave primacy to personal revelation. Bercovitch argues that even though Emerson did not condemn

Antinomianism as strongly as Winthrop, Mather or Edwards, his idea of representative heroism however precluded the principles of antinomianism. Emerson, according to Bercovitch, not unlike Mather, projected his hero as one who acquired his distinctiveness exclusively by virtue of the venture he represented. Emerson's call to greatness addresses the inherent ambiguity of American literature which, while on the one hand celebrates individualism, yet on the other seeks an ideal community. Bercovitch argues that Emerson's concept of self-reliance gains strength from both these extremities only to emerge as the best expression of a culture which exalts independence and rejects any kind of self-centred abnormality or exclusivism. This rejection, according to Bercovitch indicates Emerson's disinclination towards Antinomianism. No matter how fanciful the claims of the self-reliant American, he would firmly continue to be the leader and benefactor of the community.

Furthermore, Bercovitch cites Hawthorne's Hester Prynne as an ideal example of the representative American woman. He contends that Hester, in consonance with the biblical significance of her name, emerges from obscurity to shine forth as the symbol of the hopes and aspirations of a forthcoming new era. Bercovitch argues that The Scarlet Letter is an essentially American romance simply by virtue of its conflation of personal and federal eschatology:

> Christologically, the A' she wears expands from "Adulteress" to "Angelic". Historically, as "the A for America", it leads forward from the Puritan Utopia to that "brighter period" when the country will fulfil its "high and glorious destiny" (p. 177).

According to Bercovitch, Hawthorne's heroine is an "intermediary prophetess" who is neither a completely "doomed Romantic dark lady" nor an entirely "world-redeeming Romantic saviour", but a "figura medietatis" holding forth the promise that future generations of New Englanders would more than justify their forbears and ensure the cultural continuities of legendary past to transcend to greater glory. Thus, Bercovitch points out, this representative characteristic of American Romantic heroism

shows the farthest extent of Mather's audacious auto-American-biographical techniques as seen manifest in the Magnalia.

Indeed, Bercovitch, contends that the concept of ***Americanus***, as discerned by him in Mather, persisted throughout successive generations of the American literary tradition upto Hmerson as a compensatory substitute to the untoward course of American history. He recalls Emerson's proclamation that "in this age of seeming, nothing can be more important than the opening and promulgation of the gospel of compensations to save the land" (Sealts 1965:46) and asserts that the leading figures of every generation made use of this compensatory mode of identity. Mather provided compensation for the deceptiveness of contemporary life by anticipating the redemptive promises of the Theopolis Americana. Edwards did it by announcing that American destiny consisted in consummating the doctrine of the New heavens and the New earth, Whitman offered compensation for his times by investing his faith in the very idea of the New World.

Bercovitch perceives Whitman's Democratic Vistas (1871) as a profound expression of the New England Puritan Vision. He argues that Whitman's rhetorical strategy is similar to that of Mather in *Nehemias Americanus* and Emerson in *American Scholar*. He begins his Democratic Vistas with a review of ancient cultures which incrementally converge on America and its destiny of embodying the moral and political meditations of past ages. His representative poet like the American Scholar is presented as a descendant of the unique "birthstock" of the New World. He follows Mather in offering a pictorial promise of the New Jerusalem emerging out of the wilderness condition of the present. Bercovitch argues that the pattern Whitman adopted was conceived by Mather in the Magnalia and consolidated by Emerson. He states that "the American future which Mather proclaimed at the end of the Magnalia finds its fullest expession in the transcendental vistas, the democratic *Magnalia Americana* heralded in Emerson's essays of 1830" (p. 184). Both Mather and Emerson attempted to revive the nation in its most adverse moments through a strategy of compensation based

on the redemptive promise of America. Bercovitch opines that for the Puritans as well as the transcendentalists the act of writing the history of the New World involved a combination of autobiography and spiritual biography. Thus Bercovitch defines auto-American-biography as a triadic composition which functioned simultaneously as an assertion of the self, a Jeremiad against a contemporary' socio-moral waywardness, a prophetic proclamation of a glorious future and a celebration of the regenerate ***Americanus.***

Bercovitch concludes that the rhetoric of auto-American-biography, from Mather to Emerson helped in resolving countless conflicts inherent in the "free-enterprise" economy: "Spiritual versus material freedom, private versus corporate enterprise, the cultural `idea', expressed by the country's purest-minds" versus the cultural fact embodied in a vast economic-political undertaking" (p 185).

In the final analysis, it can be concluded that Bercovitch's evaluation of ***Nehemias*** *Americanus* leads him to distinguish a symbolic mode in Mather's rhetoric which not only invested the term *Americanus* with immense redemptive potential but also created the myth of America which has ever since remained an inseparable part of the American Mind. As he himself admits, Bercovitch does not offer a reinterpretation of American Literature but only traces the origins, development and continuities of Puritan rhetoric in order to show the power of the New England Puritan Imagination in shaping the American exceptionalist Identity and its persistence in the nation's literary tradition.

In the next chapter I shall examine Bercovitch's argument that the Seventeenth Century New England Puritan imagination, through rhetoric, shaped the ideology of American consensus. The chapter will also analyze how the American ideology of consensus influenced the course of the country's history, the development of its culture and literary tradition by sustaining the national myth.

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Chapter IV

THE AMERICAN JEREMIAD: THE DIALECTICS OF REGENERATION

For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgement between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fat herless, and the widow, ana shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk afer other gods to your hurt; then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.

Jeremiah 7: 5-7

If wee shall deale falsely with our God in this worke wee have undertaken and soe cause him to withdrawe his present help from us, wee shall be made a story and a by-word throughout the world, wee shall open the mouthes of the enemies to speake evil l of the wayes oj God and all professours for Gods sake; wee shall shame the faces of many of Gods worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into Curses upon us, till wee be consumed out of the land whether wee are going,

John Winthrop
A Model of Christian Charity (1630)

Take heed lest . . . God remove the candlestick out of (he midst of thee; lest being now as a city upon a hill which many seek unto, thou be left like a beacon upon the top of the mountain, desolate and forsaken.

Peter Bulkeley
The Gospel Covenant (1651)

The American exceptionalist identity and the myth of America is the typological creation of colonial Puritan hermeneutics. The rhetorical mode of this conceptual design is, according to Bercovitch, the most significant legacy of Puritan

New England to American life and culture. It persisted throughout American history to ensure its ascendancy to World Power. After having discovered the Puritan origins of American identity, and the myth it espoused in the religious rhetoric of Puritan New England, Bercovitch traces the continuity and "the changing relations between myth and society in America" (P O, p. 186). He examines the Jeremiad form of the American Puritan rhetoric which, he argues, was an integral part of the Seventeenth Century New England Puritan imagination.

This chapter will evaluate Bercovitch's assertion that the ideology of American exceptionalism and the myth of America owed much to the rhetoric of the Seventeenth Century New England Puritans. He argues that the American Jeremiad, which had its genesis in the rhetoric of the first generation of New England Puritans, became a ritual renewal of the concept of Seventeenth Century New England sacred mission in subsequent American history. He states that, unlike the European model, the American Jeremiad was not just a condemnation of a prodigal society but a call to return to Covenantal obligations and the reclaimation of their mission as a people chosen to execute a unique role in the divine economy. Thus, the American Jeremiad conjoined lamentation over the present with celebration of a glorious vision of the future. The chapter also examines the American Jeremiad's inherent capacity to forge an ideological consensus which, according to Bercovitch, transformed every emergent crisis in the long and turbulent history of America into a triumphant reaffirmation of the national myth. It was an ideological consensus which Bercovitch argues, emerged out of successive "rituals of socialization, and a comprehensive officially endorsed myth that became entrenched in New England" and spread across the entire nation (A J, p.xii). Furthermore, as Bercovitch suggests, the entire corpus of Classic American Writing belongs to the tradition of the Puritan American Jeremiad and the major American Writers, from Jonathan Edwards through Emerson, take on the role of "latter-day Jeremiahs" and the "keepers of the American myth".

Bercovitch's **The American Jeremiad** (1978) is both an extension and a re-examination of the typological construction of the myth of America of his earlier work. He explains that the "additions and revisions amount to a new version of the argument, but the argument itself -- concerning the richness, complexity, and the continuing vitality, for good and ill, of American Puritan rhetoric -- remains essentially the same" (Ibid:xii).The **Puritan Origins of the American Self** (1975) defined Puritanism and the American myth in purely religious rhetoric isolated from contemporary social situation, **The American Jeremiad*** relates the myth to its socio-political origin and functions. Bercovitch contends that the Jeremiad or the Political Sermon, as the Puritans called it, was an essential constitutent of the myth of America. He traces its roots to the sermons of the early emigrant fathers. The following sections will examine Bercovitch's analysis of the rhetorical functions and continuities of the New England Puritan imagination from the Great Migration through the Revolutionary era upto the Romantic period of the Nineteenth Century.

I

Sacvan Bercovitch, through Biblical references, asserts that God, beginning from the creation of Man, had insisted on a strict adherence to His commandments and an abhorrence of carnal desires. He argues that

> the Lord required them to walk in righteousness, not to glory in the self. . . . so it had been in Eden, when Adam fell. So it had been in Jeremiah's time, when the most eloquent of the Old Testament prophets, railed against the stiff-necked Hebrews. So in Christ's time, when He denounced a generation of vipers. . . . All of history proved it: humanity was naturally depraved (p.7).

*A11 the following references to **The American Jeremiad** are taken from the same source

Jeremiah, in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E., was one of the major prophets of the Old Testament who embodied Jehovah's commission of declaring His complaints against Israel and revealing to them the dangers of their apostasy. His uniqueness lay in the nature of his prophesies which expressed a deep pessimism of the present and foretold the horrors of a cataclysmic future. This mode of public condemnation and fiery judgement initiated by Jeremiah as a prophetic medium between God and Man, became a lamentation over the sinfulness of Man and was passed down through successive generations of medieval Europe and the Protestant era. Therefore, Christian preachers, as ministers of God, continued to denounce ungodly living by using excerpts from the Book of Jeremiah not only to chasten human morality but also to revive true piety. However, as Bercovitch points out, these preachers, by taking recourse to the Hebrew text could only impart moral admonishment because they perceived that the texts themselves conveyed little hope of mercy. Therefore, the Jeremiad, as a way of denunciation and lamentation

> was an ancient formulaic refrain, a ritual form imported to Massachusetts in 1630 from the Old World. Insofar as the Puritan clergy were castigating the evils of the time, they were drawing directly upon the fifteenth - and sixteenth - century England which in turn derived from the medieval Pulpit (p.6).

The Puritan immigrant clergy continued the relentless tirade against the growing iniquities of their community but qualified it with an equally unshakeable faith in the imminent fruition of their sacred mission. Bercovitch argues that the early American Puritans' transformation of the Old World Jeremiad "inverts the doctrine of vengeance into a promise of ultimate success, affirming to the world and despite the world, the inviolability of the colonial cause" (p.7). Therefore, to prove the crucial significance of the transformation and its centrality to American culture, Bercovitch takes issue with Perry Miller. He refutes Miller's claim that the Puritans' concept of errand, which in itself was self-defeating, eventuated the failure of the errand and that the American Jeremiad took shape in the face of a disintegrating theocracy to facilitate the

process of Americanization. The Millerian interpretation of the Puritan Jeremiad, Bercovitch argues, "seems to have fostered a series of misrepresentations both of the Jeremiad and of the Puritan concept of errand" (p.5).

Bercovitch begins his reevaluation of the Puritan Jeremiad by pointing out that, contrary to Miller's assertion, the New England Puritan Jeremiad was imported by the first immigrants and was not the creation of later-generation colonists. He strengthens his argument by recalling Winthrop's **Arbella** Sermon (1630) wherein Winthrop evoked a deep sense of awe and anxiety among the passengers by emphasizing their obligations to God and their responsibilities towards one another. He warned them that they were entering into a covenant with God for the accomplishment of a divine mission and should therefore be wary of God's constant and jealous watch over the way they conducted themselves. He recounts the cataclysmic events of Hebrew history to remind the immigrants that God, who had chosen them -- the new English Israel -- to inherit the New Canaan, could also annihilate them should they renege from the terms of their covenant and descend into spiritual degeneration. A few weeks earlier, on the eve of the Great Migration, in his sermon entitled **God's Promise to His Plantations** (1630), John Cotton had expressed similar words of caution. In prophetic tradition, he warned the prospective immigrants that they should guard themselves from the evils of falsehood, disobedience and carnal indulgences lest they invoke the wrath of God and get consumed in it. Thus, according to Bercovitch, the significance of these two representative, pre-colonial sermons lies in the fact that

> they foreshadow the major themes of the colonial pulpit, False dealing with God, betrayal of Covenant promises, the degeneracy of the young, the lure of profits and pleasures, the prospect of God's just, swift and total revenge (p.4).

Bercovitch shows that within years of the settlement of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the rhetoric of denunciation had already become a commonplace colonial life. Six years after their arrival in the New World, Thomas Shepard, a leading divine of

Puritan New England, reacting to the growing iniquities of the colony, lamented that "we never looked for such dayes in New England .... Are all [God's] kindnesses forgotten ? all your promises forgotten ?" (1636:159). Two years later, he forewarned the settlers against nourishing any kind of sinfulness which would eventually lead them into the danger of electing "a captain back for Egypt" (1638:363). Many other first-generation leaders like John Norton, Richard Mather, Peter Bulkeley and John Davenport, in their treatises and sermons,began berating the backsliding community. Thus, after disproving Miller's argument that the American Jeremiad was the belated product of later-generation Puritan colonists, Bercovitch launches into a re-evaluation of the premises of the Puritan Jeremiad. Bercovitch's analysis leads him to contest the very basis of Miller's theory which, he argues, was entirely limited to the tragic and hopelessly ominous side of the traditional Jeremiad.

Miller's selection of the representative Jeremiad form of the New England Puritan rhetoric and the Proof-text of his interpretation of the Puritan errand was Samuel Danforth's *A Brief Recognition of New England's* ***Errand into the*** *wilderness* (1671) Bercovitch suggests that Miller built his argument on what he perceived to be the innate ambiguity of the term "errand". Errand, according to Miller, meant work either undertaken on another's behalf or for one's self and considered thus, the Puritan errand, Miller concluded shifted from one meaning to another to finally end in the tragic collapse of the New England theocracy.

The Puritan errand, Miller argued began in the former sense of the term when the Puritans conceived of themselves as the forerunners of a reformed England and their New England Way as a model out-post which, through example, would hasten the consummation of the Reformation in England first and then the rest of the world. Therefore, errand, as perceived in the first sense of the term, was a venture undertaken by the Puritans on behalf of the Reformation to set up a City upon a Hill. But with the Collapse of Cromwell's protectorate in 1660, Miller argued, the errand of the first sense also came to an end and the Puritans embarked on another errand. The second errand

took on the later meaning and was directed inwards -- of discovering themselves -- forcing them "to fill it with meaning by themselves and out of themselves." (1956:16). Therefore, after the premature end of their errand in the first sense and "having failed to rivet the eyes of the world upon their city on a hill, they were left alone with America" which, they discovered with revulsion, was "nothing but a sink of iniquity" (Ibid).

The sudden loss of identity, the deep sense of isolation and the shocking discovery that their city on a hill was no better than Sodom enraged the Puritans. What followed, according to Miller, was a flood of self-condemning rhetoric expressing deep anguish that apart from losing the singularly paramount cause of the Reformation, New England had degenerated into a cesspool of sin and corruption. Miller concluded that "under the guise of this mounting wail of sinfulness, this incessant and never successful cry for repentance, the Puritans launched themselves upon the process of Americanization" (Ibid:9)

The European Jeremiad, Bercovitch argues, gained its distinctive American form through the immigrant Puritans' inversion of traditional hermeneuties to transform denunciation into an affirmation of the promise of a glorious fulfilment of their sacred mission. Bercovitch, while endorsing Miller's assertion that "the New England Jeremiad was America's first distinctive literary genre" insists that the New England Jeremiad's "distinctiveness, however, lies not in the vehemence of its complaints but in precisely the reverse" (p. 6). And more importantly, Bercovitch states that the process of Americanization was set in motion "not with the decline of Puritanism but with the Great Migration, and that the Jeremiad, accordingly, played a significant role in the development of what was to become modern middle-class American culture" (p. 18).

Hebrew history reveals that Israel, the nation of God's chosen people, bound to him by Holy Covenant, was always violating the laws that governed their covenantal obligations. But the prophetic denunciations conveyed not only God's increasing wrath at the mounting sinfulness of the Israelites but also His readiness to

forgive them and rescind His judgements of their destruction if they repented and returned to their covenantal responsibilities. Bercovitch contends that while the Hebraic Jeremiah's rhetoric of damnation gained popular currency, a very significant aspect of Jeremiah's divine commission remained unrecognized. Jeremiah was not just a messenger of divine retribution but he was also an ambassador of hope, peace and prosperity, as can be seen from the following: "1 have this day set thee over the nations and over the Kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, to destory and to throw down, to build and to plant"(Jer. 1:10). It is this element of hope and prosperity, "to build" and "to plant", that the immigrant Puritans, according to Bercovitch, identified, appropriated and adapted to their own contemporary siutation in order to establish the central tenets of their ideological consensus as the new chosen people of God. In sharp contrast to Miller's study which, by overlooking the significantly positive aspect of the Jeremiad, had laid singular emphasis on the darker side of it, Bercovitch declares that the "pervasive theme" of the early New England Jeremiads was "affirmation and exultation" (p. 6).

It may be recalled from the second chapter of this thesis that the Puritans conceived of themselves as an exclusive band of saints who were chosen to fulfill the providential mission of establishing an evangelical theocracy which would serve as a model and a forerunner of New Jerusalem to come. This conception, Bercovitch argues, prompted the Puritan immigrants not only to develop and sustain a rhetoric that was commensurate with their sense of chosenness but also to consolidate the high purpose of their errand and "to this end, they revised the message of the Jeremiad" (p. 8). They did not discount the imminence of divine retribution, but as Bercovitch argues, emphasized it all the more relentlessly only to distinguish it in a manner that inverted cries of impending doom into the sanguine hope of prophetic fulfilment. By using the analogy of a father chastising a wayward child, the Puritans interpreted the meaning of God's punishments not only to signify the confirmation of their chosenness and the propriety of their errand but also as constant assurance of the certain materialization of God's promise to them. Thus, the process of transformation, already at work in the early sermons of John Cotton and Winthrop, recast the European Jeremiad not only to conform to but also

to sustain the Puritans' vision of themselves, the New World and the future of their epic venture.

The nature and extent of Puritan transformation of the traditional Jeremiad gains greater distinction when the two forms are viewed in terms of the Augustinian concept of the two cities. Bercovitch contends that the European Jeremiahs, in sharp contrast to the immigrant Puritans, paid little attention to the spiritual city of God and engaged themselves entirely with the secular affairs of the city of Man. Instead of laying emphasis on evangelical faith and spiritual regeneration leading to salvation, they insisted on moral discipline and virtuous living which, they held, promised temporal well-being and material prosperity. But the Puritans, as opposed to the traditionalists, perceived their errand as being invested with the combined blessings of both the cities promising sacred as well as secular rewards to all those who conformed. The Puritan Jeremiad, Bercovitch argues, was especially meant "to direct an imperiled people of God toward the fulfilment of their destiny, to guide them individually toward salvation, and collectively toward the American City of God" (p. 9).

The element of hope that formed the dominant part of the New England Puritan Jeremiad, according to Bercovitch, negates the Millerian concept of the ambiguity of the Puritan errand. Miller's analysis had led him to explain the terms of ambiguity as oppositional and self defeating: the errand was either undertaken for the Reformation, as in the first sense of the term or away from it as in the second. Danforlh's rhetoric, Bercovitch points out, may have been ambiguous but the ambiguity was not meant to be contradiction but a reconciliation between the two meanings of the term. To prove his point Bercovitch re-evaluates the basis of Danforth's sermon contained in Mathew 11:7-10. It is obvious that Christ's statement not only praises John the Baptist for his holy being but also reveals his divine commission.

Dan forth embodied the Puritan concept of errand with the sacred import of the life and ministry of John, which Bercovitch explains, obviates Miller's dichotomy

and delineates three complementary tenets that consolidated the Puritan ideology of consensus. Firstly, Errand defined as migration was more than a common shifting of place. It was a flight from a corrupt old world to the purity of the New. New Canaan, the Puritans Proclaimed, had its roots in Biblical promises: "others take the land by his providence, but God's people take the land by promise: and threfore the land of Canaan is called a land of promise" (Cotton 1630:77). The uniqueness of the new land, prepared by God for the long-awaited advent of the New English Israelites, signified the prophetic promise of the millennium -- where piety would flourish with prosperity. Considered thus, Bercovitch contends, migration became "a function of prophecy and prophecy as an unlimited license to expand" (R A, p.33). Secondly, errand meant pilgrimage where the movement became internalized and personal. The Puritan Venture signified the journey of the soul from self to Christ, where the believers progressed from the wilderness of the World toward heavenly salvation by constantly rededicating themselves to the errand within. It was an act of will and determination sustained by the continuity of unrestricted, spontaneous commitment of the individual to his spiritual journey. But it was also a collective effort because every individual's spiritual progress was incremental to the larger communal venture. The Puritans invested the objectives of their enterprise with both sacred as well as secular meaning: "Every sign of an individual's success, moral or material, made New England's destiny visible" (Ibid). Bercovitch explains that while migration justified the Puritans' "expansive and acquisitive aspects of settlement," errand as pilgrimage "provided for internal control by rooting personal identity in social enterprise" (Ibid:33-34).

Finally, errand meant progress to indicate a teleology beginning with Genesis and extending upto the Apocalypse. In keeping with the Puritans' conception of themselves as the chosen people of God, the errand was perceived as a crucial chapter in sacred history and a transition from the Biblical past to millennial future. While "the Old World ideal of society was vertical, a model of class harmony", the New England ideal, Bercovitch argues, was "a `way', a road into the future. Virtually all its rituals of control - its doctrine of calling and preparation, its covenants of Church, State and Grace -

were directed to that ideal" (lbid:34). To this end, the New England Puritan Jeremiahs directed their energies not only to decry apostasy and warn of the dangers of failure but also to invoke a sense of anxiety as a means of ensuring the successful materialization of that ideal: "The errand, after all, was by definition a state of unfulfilment, and only a series of crisis properly directed, could guarantee the outcome" (lbid).

To emphasize the affirmative thrust of the Seventeenth Century New England Jeremiad, Bercovitch draws attention to the title of Danforth's sermon which, he argues, is evocative of the essence of Moses' prophetical song as seen in Deuteronomy 32:1-43. He explains that the title is an exhortation to the New England Puritans to recognize God's benevolence towards them by recalling how, when "Israel was apostasized and fallen, the Lord, to convince them of their ingratitutde and folly, brings to their remembrance. His deliverance of them out of Egypt, His leading them through the Wilderness ... [which] were great and obliging mercies" (1671:64). It follows that, apart from condemning the degeneracy of his contemporaries and vindicating the punishment they justly deserved, Danforth like Moses, offers the solution to all their problems. He reminds them that "the chief remedy which he [Moses] prescribes for the prevention and healing of their [Israelites] apostasy is their calling to remembrance God's great and signal love" (Ibid).

Cotton Mather, in his introduction to the Magnalia echoes similar convictions in stating the aim of his history:

> I shall count my country lost, in the loss of the primitive principles and the primitive practices upon which it was at first established; but certainly one good way to save that loss, would be to do something that the memory of the great things done for us by our God, may not be lost, and that the story of the circumstances attending the foundation and formation of this country and of its preservation hitherto, may be impartially handed unto posterity. (Mather 1967, I:40).

The Seventeenth Century New England Clergy appropriated the essence of the Prophetical song of Moses to transform their Jeremiads into ritual incantations of the wonderful ways of God in dealing with His people for reviving obedience and eliciting the anticipation of greater wonders. On the other hand, Danforth's Jeremiad, Bercovitch argues, uses the biblical analogue to "not only obviate the threat but transform self-doubt into consolation. Apostasy' itself serves as the prelude to deliverance" (p. 16),

Further, Danforth's interpretation of Mathew 11:7-10, according to Bercovitch, goes beyond the terms "errand" and "wilderness". In Danforth's estimate, Bercovitch opines, just as all the believers were one in Christ, the Puritans' errand was no different from that of any other saintly group and the American wilderness was similar to the one of Moses or John the Baptist. But the crucial difference lay in the way sacred history unfolded in a series of increasingly revealing dispensations. To Danforth, John the Baptist as "A Prophet. . . . and more than a Prophet[1] meant that John was not only similar to earlier prophets but was also greater than them. While the ancient prophets foretold of Christ's coming from afar, John was not only the immediate forerunner but also the witness to the fulfilment of the prophetic event. Considered thus, Bercovitch argues:

> All the Old Testament is an errand to the New, and all of history after the Incarnation, an errand to Christ's Second coming. It leads from promise to fulfilment: from Moses to John the Baptist to Samuel Danforth; from the Old World to the New; from Israel in Canaan to New Israel in America; from Adam to Christ to the Second Adam of the Apocalypse (p. 14).

Therefore, the similarity between the errand of Moses, John the Baptist and Danforth, Bercovitch asserts, was that "the story of all three errands was one of ingratitude, folly, backsliding, but the progression itself, from one errand to next, attested to a process of fulfilment (p. 16).

Danforth's rhetorical design in his *Errand* Bercovitch argues, is representative of the Seventeenth Century New England Jeremiads. It begins with a biblical precedent, followed by condemnations and threats underscored with the relative prosperity guaranteed by covenantal transaction, to culminate with a glorious vision of the future when all the prophetic promises would be fulfilled. Therefore, contrary to Miller's interpretation of Danforth's sermon as a lamentation over a lost vision, Bercovitch contends, it actually reaffirmed the New England Orthodoxy's commitment to, and tenacity in, retaining the Puritan vision which amazingly persisted throughout the transition of Colony to Province and Province to World Power. He asserts that

> it survived through a mode of ambiguity that denied contradiction between history and rhetoric - or rather translated this into a discrepany between appearance and promise that nourished the imagination, inspired even grander flights of self-justification, and so continued to provide a source of social cohesion and continuity (p. 17).

The New England Puritans did not fail in their unique errand into the American Wilderness but succeeded in keeping it alive and operative through their Jeremiads to bequeath to succesive generations of Americans "a myth that remained central to the culture long after the theocracy had faded and New England itself had lost its national significance" (p. 17).

The Jeremiads of the Seventeenth Century Puritan immigrants, Bercovitch asserts, not only consolidated and perpetuated the Puritan vision but it was also instrumental in the shaping of the modern American culture. He contends that the Jeremiad not only elicited the immigrants' consensus regarding the inherent meaning and purpose of their errand but it also obivated Old World social stratification to forge a cohesive middle class society in America. Bercovitch attributes the emergence of the

fluid, homogeneous society in Seventeenth Century New England to the Puritan doctrine of calling which, it can be argued, had its roots in the Puritan attitude towards work.

It is instructive to note in this connection that Roman Catholicism, in consonance with Hebrew tradition, had divided work into two major categories: Sacred and secular. Eusebius, a Fourth Century Church historian C.E., explained it as follows:

> Two ways of life were given by the law of Christ to his Church. The one is above nature, and beyond common human living. ... Wholly and permanently separate from the customary life of mankind, it devotes itself to the service of God alone. . . . Such then is the perfect form of the Christian life. And the other, more humble, more human, permits men to ... have minds for farming, for trade, and the other more secular interests as well for religion. . . . And a kind of secondary grade of piety is attributed to them (Forrester 1953:42).

This theory prevailed as a salient feature of medieval Roman Catholicism till the dawn of the Reformation when the traditional notions of work were reviewed and the sacred-secular dichotomy wholly obviated.

Beginning with Luther and Calvin, subsequent Protestant leaders rejected the Roman Catholic concept that only those in the Church, Monasteries and Nunneries were engaged in an exceptionally holy work far above the mundane pursuits of ordinary people in secular areas of life. The English Reformer William Perkins declared that

> hereby is overthrown the condition of monks and friars who challenge to themselves that they live in a state of perfection, because that they live apart from the societies of men in fasting and prayer: but contrariwise, this monkish kind of living is damnable; for besides the general duties of fasting and prayer, which appertain to all Christians, every man must have a particular and personal calling that he may be a good and profitable member of some society and body (Morgan 1965:52).

Therefore, the Puritans, while sanctifying all types of work, took recourse to the doctrines of Election and Providence to assert that every Christian was endowed with a divine calling. Thus, the Puritan doctrine of calling emerged as a twin-concept involving a special application of God's Providence to a Christian's personal life. While the general calling was a summons to seek personal salvation and live the life of a redeemed soul, the particular calling signified God's direction of the Christian Life into a particular career. The Puritan divine William Perkins explained that "a vocation or calling is a certain kind of life, ordained and imposed on man by God, for the common good. . . . Every person of every degree, state, sex, or condition without exception must have some personal and particular calling to walk in" (Ibid:36,51). Richard Steele wrote in similar terms: "God doth call every man and woman . . . to serve him in some peculiar employment in this world, both for their own and the common good . . . The Governor of the World hath appointed to everyman his proper post and province" (Tawney 1926:204, 321). Cotton Mather reiterated that "every Christian ordinarily should have a calling. . . . here should be some special business . . . wherein a Christian should for the most part spend the most of his time; and this, that so he may glorify God" (1701:123).

The doctrine of calling acquired greater significance in American Puritanism. John Cotton, in *God's **Promise***, on the eve of the great Migration, not only justified the Puritans' transatlantic venture as a fulfilment of God's promise but also, by implication, disclosed the prospect of commercial opportunities for personal benefit. He explained that

> God alloweth a man to remove, when he may employ his talents and gifts better elsewhere, especially when where he is, he is not bound by any special engagement. Thus, God sent Joseph before to preserve the Church. Joseph's wisdom and spirit was not fit for a shepherd, but for a counseller of state, and therefore sent him to Egypt . . . (Cotton 1630:78).

Similarly, in the **Arbella** sermon, Winthrop took recourse to the doctrine of calling and through his emphasis on self-discipline and self-sufficiency, expressed his conception of a socially cohesive community. Danforth's *Errand* provides a later example of the emigrant Jeremiads in its reassertion of the essence of Cotton's biblical analogies and Winthrop's conception of Christian charity to reiterate that "the values of piety, frugality and diligence in one's worldly calling" were crucial to the consummation of prophetic promises (Cawclti, 1965, p.4). This exposition of the doctrine of calling initiated by Cotton and Winthrop, with its modernistic implications, Bercovitch argues, persisted as an integral part of latter-day American Jeremiads to enforce and maintain social control on a group of buoyant, non-conformist settlers, who were "militant, apocalyptic [and] radically particularistic" (Battis 1962:255).

Another use of the doctrine of calling which distinguishes the emigrant and latter-day American Jeremiads, Bercovitch points out, is that it not only obviated Old World forms of class deference but it also foreshadowed New England's subsequent inclination towards capitalism. In the Old World, "Capitalism was an economic system which evolved dialectically, through conflict with earlier and persistent ways of life and belief, but in Puritan New England, Bercovitch contends, even though the rise of the commercial revolution met initial resistance, "it signified not a contest between an established and an enduring system, but a troubled period of maturation" (p.20). Thus the American Puritan Jeremiad not only functioned as a strategy to invest the errand with the double import of temporal prosperity and spiritual redemption, but also to evoke a sense of continued anxiety and insecurity to ensure the desired outcome of their Puritan errand.

The emigrant Jeremiahs' attempt to blend the sacred with the secular according to Bercovitch, gave shape to the American Jeremiad. It was developed by subsequent generations to materialize their vision of a society where "the fact could be made one with the ideal" (Miller 1967, I:462). Bercovitch buttresses his argument through a consideration of Melville's novel Pierre which is generally understood as a

scathing critique of the development of the American Jeremiad as a vehicle of cultural hegemony. Bercovitch singularizes the central section of the novel entitled "Chronometricals and Horologicals" wherein Plotinus Plinlimmon compares man's defective horological' time with the "chronometrical" time of heaven which is God's everlasting and omnipresent truth. Plinlimmon, according to Bercovitch, insists that man should desist from imposing the ideal upon experience lest he deceive himself into destruction. He explains that "Christ was a chronometer; and the least afffected by all terrestrial jarrings, of any that have ever come to us" (Melville 1957:295). He asserts that while "Christ encountered woe in both the precept and practice of his chronometricals, yet did he remain throughout entirely without folly or sin. ... however with inferior beings the absolute effort to live in this world, according to the strict letter of the chronometricals is, somehow, apt to involve those inferior beings eventually in strange, unique follies, and sins" (Ibid:296).

Bercovitch contends that while Plinlimmon persistently emphasizes the dissimilarities between man's time and heaven's, there is an implicit resolution suggested in the very title of his lecture which is "conjunctive, not divisive: ` Chronometricals and [not or] Horologicals[1]. Plinlimmon, according to Bercovitch, offers the solution to this dilemma: "and yet, it follows not from this, that God's truth is one thing and man's truth another; but . . . by their very contradictions they are made to correspond" (Ibid). Bercovitch concludes that the Seventeenth Century New England Jeremiads chose to disregard the discrepancy between the real and the ideal by remaining rooted in "the realm of the experience, while giving priority in rhetoric and imagination, to the realm of the ideal" (p.30).

To substantiate their chosenness with its implicit promises of sacred and temporal rewards, the Puritans took recourse to Jeremiah who, served as both "a historian of horologicals and a chronometer of the future" (p.31). Bercovitch contends that Jeremiah, apart from his fiery denunciations and firm insistence on repentence also, with equal vehemence, foretold of the imminent spiritual regeneration of Israel:

> Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that 1 will make a new covenant with the house of Israel ... not according to the covenant that 1 made with their fathers, in the day that 1 took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of
>
> Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although 1 was a husband unto them ... but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days ... I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God and they shall be my people (Jer. 31:31-33).

The Christian interpretation of this prophecy, according to Bercovitch, was that although Jeremiah was speaking to contemporary Israelites in a temporal sense, he was also addressing the spiritual Israel or, in Puritan terms, the elect community, to reveal the promise of "Christ the Messaiah ... and their eternal deliverance ... Typicall from Babylon" (Cotton 1659:18). They perceived that Jeremiah's rhetoric not only established the central tenets of the traditional Jeremiad but also revealed the unceasing operation of God's Covenant of grace from the beginning of horological time. It extended to the elect community "from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to David to Christ, and from Christ to the end of the world" (Bulkeley 1651:113). Thus, the New England Puritan Jeremiad, Bercovitch contends, obviated the contradictions between the conditional convenant of the Hebrews and God and the Christian convenant of unmerited grace to seize to themselves , as the elect community or the New English Israel, the blessings of time and eternity.

Thus the ritual of the Jeremiad established by the immigrant Puritans, invested their New World venture with an identity that was both progressive as well as representative. It conferred the immigrant community with an identity based not on their English origins, but on the nature of their transatlantic exodus. It obviated the immigrant genealogy and Old-World tradition to forge an ideology of consensus that was derived from the twin concept of calling. It blended the Hebrew concept of national convenant

with the Christian doctrine of grace to perpetuate the Puritan Vision and establish a mode of social cohesion and cultural continuity in America.

II

The unflagging vitality of the Seventeenth Century New England Puritan imagination and the power of its rhetoric can be seen in the way the American Jeremiad was constantly modified to sustain the Puritan Vision amidst growing socio-religious and political turbulence. According to Bercovitch the firm conviction of the New England Puritan Jeremiahs that reality could be made to conform to their vision led them to use lamentation and anxiety as strategies in order to urge the community forward. Their unswerving faith and commitment to the New England Way inspired them to develop their rhetoric, in accordance with the demands of the changing times, and transform the Jeremiad into an agent of cultural continuity.

It has been argued in the introductory chapter of this dissertation that Puritanism was the cumulative legacy of the religious ideology of successive reformist movements beginning with Montanism in the Second Century C.E. It evolved from an intense desire of conscientious Christians to attain and maintain Christ-like Purity in every aspect of their earthly sojourn. The tradition of protest' which progressively distanced the dissenting minority from the Roman Church developed into a distinctive religious concept during the Reformation which categorized evangelical Christians as visible saints of the invisibe or spiritual Church of Christ. Edmund S Morgan, in **Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea** (1963), traces the development of this concept and contends that the idea of visible sainthood was not puritan in its origin but the institutionalization of the "impulse" which had moved Donatists, Montanists, Albigensians and many other Christians over the centuries" (p.113). He asserts that the immigrant Puritans were the first in ecclesiastical history to lay down rigid religious norms to restrict and govern the admission of members into their churches to only those

who fulfilled their specific requirements of true piety. The Visible Church, according to John Davenport, was perceived as

> a company of faithful and holy people, or persons called out of the world to fellowship with Jesus Christ, and united in one congregation to him as members to their head, and one with another, by a holy covenant of mutual fellowship in all such ways of holy worship of God, and of edification of one towards another (Smith 1960:112).

Bercovitch argues that the ecclesiastical concept of Congregationalism brought to New England by the immigrant Puritans allowed civil and ecclesiastical authority to visible saints, that is, only to those who had undergone the mystical experience of conversion. The claim to the status of visible sainthood entailed a public confession of one's faith in Christ and a life lived as a testimony of that solemn profession. Therefore, the New England theocracy, according to Bercovitch, was founded on the belief that the immigrant Puritans were the elect body of visible saints, the holy remnant of Old Testament prophecies and the New English Israel who were destined to prepare the way for Christ's Second Coming.

But in the first decade of the second half of the Seventeenth Century, New England witnessed internal conflicts which threatened to destroy the theocratic constitution of the Bay Colony. The doctrinal controversy of baptism which, Bercovitch argues, led to the decline of orthodox Puritanism, wrought the first major shift in the rhetoric of the New England Puritan Jeremiad. It is instructive to note that the colonists' efforts at purifying themselves to the utmost degree and bring themselves as close to God as possible, led them to withdraw their Churches so far from the world that they no longer corresponded to the biological realities of life. It was found that the baptized children of visible saints were not only attaining physical maturity without the accompanying spiritual experience required for Church membership but were also having

children who could not qualify for baptism because of unregenerate parentage. Morgan asserts **that**

> by the late 1650s, the preaching of the word was generating few conversions and with the end of the Great Migration, the overseas supply of saints had been cut off. As the first generation Puritans died, the Chruches declined rapidly in membership and it appeared that a majority of the population would soon be unbaptized (1963:129).

Bercovitch contends that in order to curb the depleting membership which foreboded the dissipation of the New English Church-State and threatened to obviate the very purpose of their errand, the Puritan saint compromised their ecclesiastical theory to promulgate what its opponents called the Halfway Covenant. Apart from affirming infant baptism and the constitution of the Church of visible saints, the Halfway Covenant "granted provisional Church status to the still unregenerate children on the grounds that, in their case, baptism alone conferred certain inalienable covenant rights" (p.63). In other words, the baptized infants who grew up without receiving faith and experiencing the saving grace of Christ remained as Halfway members who could neither exercise their franchise in Church matters nor partake of the Lord's Supper but only submit themselves to the discipline of the Church.

The Puritan Clergy, according to Bercovitch, refused to concede that the Halfway Covenant signified discontinutity with the Fathers and asserted that baptism was a sufficient guarantee of the Childrens' eventual conversion. This "genetics of salvation" as Bercovitch calls it:

> may be seen as the doctrinal counterpart of the concept of errand. It confirms the Puritan Mission from within -- adds to the assurance of Scripture prophesy the internal evidence' of generational succession. And like the errand into the wilderness, the genetics of salvation is a distinctive product of American Puritanism. It blends the

> heterogeneous covenants of community and grace; and it adapts the rhetoric to new conditions" (p.64).

The primary aim of the Puritan Clergy, according to Bercovitch in instituting the Halfway Covenant was to sustain social cohesiveness and cultural continuity without forsaking the vision of the Founding Fathers. They justified it by taking recourse to God's covenant with Abraham and adapting it to their own situation: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger" (Genesis 17: 7-8).

As the spiritual descendents of the ancient Israelites the Puritans claimed that God's promises to Abraham and his posterity were also applicable to them, and their children, as the English Israel and the New Chosen People of God:' "Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me. . . . " (Jeremiah 30: 20). Furthermore, the New England Puritan clergy argued that the God who had granted mercy to their fathers would also do the same to their unregenerate children: "Even so have these also now not believed that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy" (Romans 11:31). Accordingly, to prove that the convenant of grace continued to operate through generational succession, Mather argued that the saints and the baptized but unregenerate offspring belonged either to the visible Church or to the world, but by virtue of scriptural prophesies the covenant of grace was extendable to all. As he explaines:

> The scripture speaketh of these two terms, Church and the World', as opposite and contradistinct . . . [and since our] Visible Church is gods house of which the Israelites' temple was a Type . . . [therefore all those] within the pale of the visible Church have the right to Baptism, and consequently may transmit the right to their children. The Lord promised to give grace to our children that he should extend his

> covenant, not only to Parents, but also their Offspring (Increase Mather 1675:7-8, 26).

The legislators of the Halfway covenant, according to Bercovitch, contended that as a people chosen by God to fulfill His divine purpose, the spiritual legacy of the Fathers would continue through succeeding generations till the ultimate triumph of their sacred mission was accomplished. They not only admonished those who castigated them for diluting religious standards by asserting that "the line of Election doth for the most part run through the loyns of their godly parents" but also reaffirned the Founders' Vision by appealing for communal solidarity based on the conviction of their chosenness (Increase Mather 1678:14-15).

The Puritan Jeremiahs denounced the Halfway generation for their ingratitude and disloyalty to the God of their fathers and their negligence in honouring filial obligations. They, according to Bercovitch, asserted that "the children were obliged to demand grace by virtue of the uniqueness of their parents' mission. And "to sustain their case, they proceeded to elevate the emigrants into mythic tribal heroes -- a race of giants in an age of miracles — imposing on the tiny, barren American strand of three decades before the archetypes of scriptural and classical antiquity" (p.67). Their rhetoric turned increasingly grandiose as they recalled the magnificence of their predecessors: "Our Fathers were clothed with the Sun . . . the Moon was under their Feet . . . God Rode upon the Heavens for their help . . . to fall on their necks and kiss them" (Scottow 1694:311, 305). John Higginson declared that "if my weakness was able to show you, what the cause of God and his people in New England is, according to its divine Original and Native beautie, it would dazzle the eyes of Angels, daunt the hearts of devils, ravish and chain fast the Affections of all the Saints" (1663:12). William Stoughton in *New **England's True Interest*** (1670), James Fitch in *An Holy connexion* (1674), Cotton Mather in ***The Wonders of the Invisible World*** (1693) and others declared, in similar terms, that their City on a Hill was a unique place of temporal and spiritual perfection a paradise on earth which made mainfest the hopes and aspirations of the entire human

race. In all this, Bercovitch argues, the Puritan Jeremiahs intention was not merely to exhort the Halfway generation "to emulate the Fathers, but to assert progress through continuity" (p.71).

While the mid-century Puritans' genetics of salvation facilitated the first step in the transfonnation of the Seventeenth Century Jeremiad, the Puritan conception of the national conversion of the Jews provided the second. Christian tradition, Bercovitch explains, had always maintained that immediately before the Second coming of Christ, Israel would regain its sacred anointing and be reclaimed by God as His own people. The Christian reformers argued that Israel's apostasy was not an invalidation of their national covenant with God but it was only a temporary breach in the covenant of grace - "a sort of unhappy horological interlude between two divine acts - their call through Abraham at the start of Jewish history and their salvation through Christ at the close of the history of mankind" (p.73). Although this concept of the conversion of the Jews was quite contentious, it derived its strength in Christian thought from Jewish apocalyptic literature.

It can be argued that isolated appropriations of apocalyptic themes vying with one another for recognition gradually figured in Hebrew literature between the Seventh and Tenth Centuries C.E. **Sefer Zerabbel** or **Book of Zerubabbel** marked the beginning of medieval Jewish apocalyptic literature, and acted as a harbinger in influencing many such texts that were to follow. Again, in the Sixteenth Century, the Mediterranean regions experienced a renewed spate of Messianic writings with strong apocalyptic overtones. The unstable, vicious politics of the power-mongering Kingdoms buffeting the Jews by restricting their freedom and curbing their religious activities, even **to the** extent of exterminating them gave rise to an increasing significance of Messianism in the apocalyptic writings of the day. The suffering and desperation of the Chosen people, beginning with the first *Galut*, and spreading later beyond the Diaspora **have** created innumerable situations "where the End, perceived in the immediate future, was thought about to break in abruptly at any moment" (Scholem 1971:7) Specific

historical experience drove them repeatedly to reexamine the prophetic promises "of a better humanity at the end of Days . . . " and the "restitution of an ideally conceived Davidic Kingdom" (Ibid).

Gershom Scholem, one of the greatest scholars of Jewish mysticism points out that redemption in Judaism has always been conceived as that which takes place visibly and publicly on the platform of history and within the community. To the Talmudists as seen in the tenth chapter of tractate Sanhedrin, redemption meant a "colossal uprooting, destruction, revolution, disaster with nothing of development or progress about it: `the son of David (the Messaiah) will come only in a generation wholly guilty or a generation wholly innocent -- a condition beyond the realm of human possibility" (Ibid:41). For the Kabbalists redemption meant a complete reversal of the existing order" for their faces were turned not to the end of days but to the primal days of creation" (Ibid.). The expulsion from Spain in 1492 confirmed the belief in the Kabbalists, like their fellow Jews, that "the beginnings of those disasters and frightful afflictions which would terminate history and usher in the redemption" were close at hand (Ibid). The Zohar envisaged redemption as "a supernatural miracle involving the gradual illumination of the world by the light of the Messaiah (Ibid).

Bercovitch contends that the dawn of the Reformation had a tremendous effect on the rabbis of the day who perceived in it "proof of the hastening fulfilment of the Zohar, the Hebrew Book of Mysteries', they fixed upon the year 1648 as the `*annus mirabilis*" (p.74). The apocalyptic intensity that the Reformation fostered among the Jews of the period, according to Bercovitch, greatly influenced the leaders of the Reformation in not only inspiring millennial anticipation but also revealing the prospect of the Christian conversion of the Jews. The Seventeenth Century New England Puritans found the doctrine of National Conversion particularly suitable for substantiating their genetics of salvation. The legislators of the Halfway convenant, Bercovitch argues, deviated from the traditional concept to apply the doctrine of National Conversion to their own unregenerated children and assert that all they needed to do was to exercise

forbearance. Therefore, just as the scriptural pattern of the Israel's exodus shaped the Puritan concept of their errand into the Wilderness, the doctrine of National Conversion helped sustain the errand's continuity by not only justifying the Halfway covenant but also neutralizing the threat of the errand's failure. Thus, the "total identification -- literal, spiritual, and figural -- of old Israel and New," according to Bercovitch, "is a distinguishing trait of the Jeremiads in the last decade of the Seventeenth Century" (p.76). To further substantiate his argument that the development and transformation of the New England Puritan Jeremiad was coterminus to the growth of the Colony, Bercovitch examines the rhetoric of the last quarter of the Seventeenth Century and, as the Puritans called it, King Philip's War.

In 1674, recognizing the danger posed by the expanding settlements, the Indian King Philip gathered all the tribes around the Bay, and launched a War against the immigrants which threatened to destroy New England. The initial complacence of the settlers who felt secure in recalling the wondrous acts of God in providing a safe habitation for the early emigrants, soon gave way to intense fear. And accordingly, the rhetoric of this period was transformed by the colonial leaders to not only meet the demands of the turbulent course of history but also to simultaneously ensure the sustenance of the Founders' vision and the continuity of their mission. While the rhetoric of the emigrant leaders had emphasized on the sacredness of their errand and the covenantal responsibilities it entailed as a mode of social control, the mid-Century Jeremiahs urged them forward, despite their failure to fulfill their sacred obligations, by insisting that defection was only a prelude to the final triumph and thus ensured the continuity of their concept of errand.

In the last quarter of the Seventeenth Century, amidst the terrors of War, Bercovitch argues, the New England Jeremiahs transformed their earlier rhetoric of denunciation to convey consolation and assurance of the eventual completion of their errand. The change in their rhetorical strategy, as can be seen in the covenant-renewal ceremonies they instituted, according to Bercovitch, involved a celebration of the golden

past and the promise of a far more glorious future. Bercovitch contends that the Puritan clergy explained the need for rededication by likening themselves to the Israelites who were the first in not only initiating the ritual but also in practising it through out their own tempestuous history. Apart from the historical dimension of their covenant-renewal rituals, they also insisted, according to Bercovitch, on a spiritual rededication. They argued that it became incumbent on every believer to renew the spiritual experience of Christ's saving grace in his life which alone, they maintained, could compensate for human helplessness in the face of calamity. For example, in Samuel Torrey's sermon ***Man's Eternity, God's*** *Opportunity* (1695), Bercovitch explains that "extremity means helplessness in the face of trial and opportunity, a reliance on promises to be performed" (p.85).

Bercovitch contends that the "twin reasons for covenant-renewal, historical and mystical, made it the duty of every believer to join in open profession[1] with the community in time of distress. They also served dramatically to strengthen the bond between the personal and the social covenant" (p.81). He asserts that the most important constituent of the covenant renewals was the Puritans' "Proto-revivalist call for prayer" which extended well into the Edwardsian era of the Eighteenth Century. The Puritans' prayers during the war, according to Bercovitch, were aimed at pleading and eliciting Gods intervention against King Philip as a fulfilment of this divine plan. Increase Mather, in *Renewal of Covenant* (1676) argued that

> As the Lord hath made promises of great Blessings to his People; so he will be enquired of them. . . . in the way of Prayer and Supplication in order to the performance of that which he hath promised, that he may do it for them (p.7).

Furthermore, the Jeremiads of this period turned into exhortations in order to anticipate the sure operation of God's grace in saving and preserving the community; "We have not only hope, but a sure Foundation of Faith and Confidence in God for Salvation. He will magnifie New England before the World. God will save us from our

sins and apostasy, by the Power of his Spirit, and when this comes that great promise to the Church will be fulfilled" (Noyes 1698:63-64). In the last two decades of the Seventeenth Century, Bercovitch argues, the Puritan clergy were greatly influenced by a rising tide of apocalyptic fervour in New England. They turned their attention from the problems of contemporary life and dwelt more on their memory of the golden past and on the expectation of a far more glorious future. Mather's **Magnalia**, according to Bercovitch, is the most representative example of the American Jeremiad in two major respects. Firstly, it heralded the imminence of the millennium: "Behold, ye European Churches, there are golden candlesticks (more than twice times seven !) in the midst of this outer darkness': unto the upright children of Abraham, here hath arisen light in darkness" (1967, 1:27). While Winthrop had announced that "the eyes of the World are upon us," Mather proclaimed that the prophesies and promises of the emigrant era were now fulfilled and that the city on a hill had now become the light of the world. Secondly, it revealed a growing sense of the ministers' alienation from society.

Bercovitch argues that the more tenaciously the ministers clung to their ideals the more heightened their sense of alienation became. By tracing the changing roles of the Puritan leaders during successive stages of the colony's growth, Bercovitch shows how, through the power of their rhetoric, the Puritans succeeded in sustaining the vision of the Fathers and ensured the continuity of their errand.

The immigrant clergy, Bercovitch contends, as builders of the **Biblical** commonwealth, assumed the responsibility of founding and protecting the nascent colony. In mid-century they recast their roles from being sentinels of the New England theocracy to the more serious connotations of wary shepherds who constantly admonished their errant flocks about the dangers of straying. The demands of the last quarter of the century, according to Bercovitch, warranted yet another change. The clergy perceived themselves as guardians who were traumatized by the tide of impiety and calamity on the one hand and, on the other, the vituperations of those they strove to defend. Mather, according to Bercovitch, impervious to the waywardness of the

colonists and refusing to abandon the Puritan dream, valiantly proclaimed his solitary vision in his colossal Church history that

> the more stones they throw at this book, there will not only be the more proofs that it is a tree which hath good fruits growing upon it, but I will build my self a monument with them. . . . whether New England may live any where else or no, it must live in our History! (1967, I:36, 27).

The practical measures aimed at retaining the theocratic character of New England became less effective and the clergy, according to Bercovitch, had to increasingly devise and depend on rhetorical strategy. The American Jeremiad, which began as an architect of Puritan history, in the course of the Seventeenth Century, struggled to sustain the Puritan vision in a fast declining theocracy through varying emotional strategies ranging from denunciation, consolation, affirmation, filiopietism and intense millenarian anticipation. The deep desire of the latter-day Jeremiahs, Bercovitch argues, to perpetuate the Founders' dream compelled them "to enlarge their ideal of New Israel into a vision that was so broad in its implications and so specifically American in its application" that it encompassed the entire Protestant continent (p.92). While the Seventeenth Century immigrants used typology to interpret the Great Migration in terms of the Israelites' exodus, the Eighteenth Century Jeremiads "established the typology of America's mission" by subtituting "a regional for a biblical past, consecrated the American present as a movement from promise to fulfilment, and translated fulfilment from its meaning within the closed system of sacred history into a metaphor for limitless secular improvement" (pp.93-94). The resultant effect, Bercovitch asserts, was a depletion in the religious content of their rhetoric and the rendition of the basic tenets of the New England way to become so plaint that the sacred and secular became indistinguishable. Bercovitch explains that in the Puritans' obsession in

> preserving the past, they transformed it (as legend) into a malleable guide to the future. Seeking to defend the Good Old Way, they abstracted from its antiquated social forms the larger, vaguer, and more flexible forms of symbol and

> metaphor (new chosen people, city on a hill, promised land, destined progress, New Eden, New Jerusalem) and so facilitated the movement from visible saint to American patriot, sacred errand to manifest destiny, colony to republic to imperial power. In spite of themselves, as it were, the latter-day orthodoxy freed their rhetoric for the use and abuse of subsequent generations of Americans (P.92).

Bercovitch traces the continuities of Seventeenth Century Puritan rhetoric into the Edwardsian era of the Eighteenth Century' by analyzing the revivalist thought of Edwards (1703-1758), which, he argues, was an extension of the emigrant Puritan imagination and their hermeneutical mode. Like the first immigrants, Bercovitch points out, Edwards also discovered America in the Scriptures. His proof text was the biblical prophecy:

> And 1 will send those that escape of them . . . to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations. . . . to my holy mountain Jerusalem. . . . For as the new heavens and the new earth, which 1 will make, shall remain before me . . . so shall your seed and your name remain (Isaiah 66: 19-22).

In consonance with the Puritan vision, Edwards declared that the New World was discovered not only to facilitate "the way for the future, glorious times (so) that the new and most glorious state of God's Church on earth might commence there" but also that "this great work of God . . . will begin in America" and furthermore, in the tradition of the Puritan Jeremiahs, he euologizes the "golden age" of the Founding fathers of New England as "the dawn of the glorious day" (Goen IV :353).

As has been mentioned earlier, the last quarter of the Seventeenth Century witnessed intense apocalyptic fervour and an unprecedented interest in the Book of Revelation. It was largely inspired by the endless conflicts plaguing the New England

Saints and the consequent psychological tensions arising out of the growing disparity between vision and history. They conceived of the cataclysmic events of their age as the realization of those recorded in the apocalypse of John, which were believed to precede the routing out of Satan's Kingdom and the commencement of the Millennium. Bercovitch argues that while the Puritan immigrants had regarded their errand as a prelude to the Millennium, the Eighteenth Century New Englanders believed that the Millennium had begun with the Great Migration itself.

Edward's major contribution to the American effort at adapting and sustaining the Puritan vision in order to fill the changing needs of the expanding colonies, lay in his unique application of the millennarian doctrine to the Puritan notion of the errand. The Seventeenth Century Puritans' conception of the process of prophetic fulfilment as a gradual unfolding of history from Eden to Canaan to New Canaan in America to New Eden, according to Bercovitch, was "undermined and to an extent contradicted by its reliance on an entirely extraterrestrial agency -- some superhuman shattering of the order of nature" (RA, p. 151). Edwards, on the other hand, transformed the Puritan view "by changing the scenario for this last act of the errand [and] welded the whole progression into an organic human-divine whole" (Ibid). He described the Millennium as, in Bercovitch's words, "a final golden age within history, and thereby freed humanity so to speak, to participate in the revolutions of the apocalypse" (Ibid: 148).

Bercovitch asserts that Edwards "abandoned the Puritan belief in theocracy" only to reaffirm the Puritan concept that the development of redemptive history entailed the combined impetus of personal salvation and communal progress (p. 106). This equation of the ascending mobility of redemptive history to the forward march of humanity, according to Cushing Strout released American Puritanism from the harsh confines of "Calvinism [and] expounded and paved the way for ... new Arminian theologies of belief in the free will and moral strivings" (1975:113).

Edwards echoed the exhortations and consolations of the latter-day Jeremiahs by joyfully accepting contemporary trials and tribulations. This he argued, not only proved their chosenness but also the imminence of New England's transformation into New Jerusalem. He declared that only grace obtained through prayer, not human strength or intellect, could not only redeem them from their afflictions but also consummate the fulfillment of God's promises. Because, it is the will of God, wrote Edwards,

> through his wonderful grace, that the prayers of his saints be one great and principal means of carrying on the designs of Christ's kingdom in the world. When god has something very great to accomplish for his Church, it is his will that there should precede it the extraordinary prayers of his people, as is manifest by Ezek. xxxvi.37, 'I will yet, for this, be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.' And it is revealed that, when God is about to accomplish great things for his Church, he will begin by remarkably pouring out the spirit of grace and supplications, Zech. xii.10 (Goen 1972:516).

Bercovitch contends that while the Puritan rituals of covenant-renewals had exhorted the latter-day generations to honour their filial obligations, Edwardsian calls for communal prayer aroused the American saints at large, to critically evaluate themselves, their community and the destiny of their New English Canaan. It was up to them now, he declared, as the New English Israel of the New World to realize "the designs of Christ's Kingdom" on earth because, the Old World, by crucifying Christ, had forfeited its right. The most awesome example of the Eighteenth Century Jeremiad is Edwards' *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (1741) wherein the vengeful wrath of God towards "unconverted persons" is described as the utter abhorrence of "one [who] holds a spider, or loathsome insect [ready] to be cast into the fire [of hell]" (Baritz 1964:83, 85). But again in the tradition of the American Jeremiad, he provides the solution to his "awful subject" by affirming that "Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands in calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners" . . . "God

seems now to be hastily gathering in his elect . . . it will be as it was on the great out-pouring of the spirit upon the Jews in the apostle's days" (Ibid:83, 90).

In all this, Bercovitch argues, the Great Awakening facilitated the transition of the fundamental tenets of American Puritanism into the Eighteenth Century and Edwards, as the heir of the Seventeenth Century New England Puritan ideology of errand

> inherited the concept of a new chosen people and enlarged its constituency from saintly New England theocrats to new born American saints. . . . [and the] Revivalist conversion open [through prayer] opened the ranks of the American army of Christ to every white Protestant believer (pp. 106).

Edwards, according to Bercovitch, paved the way for the Puritan past to converge as the American Way and the golden age of the Founding Fathers as the true inheritance of the Yankee Protestants; and "by freeing the Jeremiad from the confines of theocracy, he harnessed the Puritan vision to the conditions of a new age" (Ibid.). While the Halfway covenant, as a forerunner of the open-church policy, initiated the process of secularization, the Great Awakening freed the Puritan vision from its regional and sectarian theological framework. In fact, as Bushman asserted, it offered a providential plan that augmented economic opportunities, acquisitive aspirations, opposition to traditional forms of authority and the need for a democratic self-government which facilitated the rise of the middle class (1967:259).

To demonstrate further the powerful influence of the New England Puritan imagination and the vision it perpetuated on the American mind, Bercovitch undertakes a study of the Post-Edwardsian era of American history. He traces the rhetorical continuities of the American Jeremiad in its capacity to transform every emergent crisis into a trimphant reassertion of America's mission by not only forging an

ideological consensus which sustained social cohesion but also in establishing a cultural hegemony unsurpassed by any other modern nation in the world.

While the immigrant Puritans, according to Bercovitch, perceived their errand as the transatlantic migration of Christian saints from Old World Babylon to New World Canaan, the Eighteenth Century Anglo-Protestants, like the Puritans of the later half of the Seventeenth Century, envisaged it as a continuing struggle against the minions of Satan in the New World. The King Philips War of the preceding century reappeared in the form of a battle between New World Anglo-Protestantism and French Canadian Catholicism aided by Indian paganism. Bercovitch argues that these wars, 1745 - 1763, extended the secular reach of the Jeremiad which not only included but also actively involved the entire English Protestant Community in their errand, as holy war, into the North American Babylon. Throughout the eighteen-year period of the French and Indian wars, the clergy, according to Bercovitch, indulged in rhetorical exultations reflecting their belief that their protestant triumph over the Canadian beast would be "the accomplishment of the scripture-prophesies relative to the Millennial state" (Chauncy 1745:21).

The solidarity that the Jeremiad helped forge between the colonies,Bercovitch argues, was based on their common claims to evangelical Protestantism and English libertarianism which enhanced their combined allegiance to the mother country. The Eighteenth Century Jeremiads invoked the legend of the Founding Fathers, as the common legacy of Protestant America, to reaffirm that religious and civil "liberty [was] the noble errand of our fathers across the Atlantic" (Cooper 1759:48). The end of war and the establishment of peace witnessed a resurgence of the hitherto subdued lamentations of the mid-Eighteenth Century Protestant Jeremiahs over the socio-moral degeneracy of an ungrateful people. The traditional intensity of the early Jeremiad as an agent of harsh condemnations and threats of divine retribution returned with a vengeance in the Revolutionary era. The call this time was not for a return to sacred covenantal responsibilities or the fulfillment of filial obligations,

> the cause now was independence, not British American Protestantism; the social ideal a republic, not a theocracy or an enlightened monarchy. . . . the enemy assumed another subtler, and more perfidious form. The English King, rather than the French, was now the instrument of the Scarlet Whore; England rather than French Canada was the modern Babylon; the danger within came from European fashions and royal agents rather than from Indians, Jesuits, or heretics (p. 119).

Bercovitich argues that from the 1760s onwards, ministers as well as lay leaders increasingly repeated the denunciatory rhetoric of the Edwardsian Jeremiahs. They castigated an evil generation and recalled them to the rituals of covenant renewal and collective prayers. Drawing from Biblical precedents they reproclaimed a state of emergency - a period of trial and national probation — for the people of New Israel whose afflictions, they conceded with pride, were no less greater than their chosenness. Thus, the strategies of the immigrant Jeremiahs, Bercovitch argues, of interpreting the perils of the world as confirmations of providential deliverance and catastrophe as a prelude to revival not only regained crucial significance in the struggle for independence but also elicited mass suport for the new cause. The dominance of

> vice and corruption that many Americans saw in their midst . . . became a stimulus, perhaps in fact the most important stimulus, to revolution. . . . The calls for independence thus took on a tone of imperativeness. . . . only this mingling of urgency and anxiety during their introspective probings at the height of the crisis could have given their revolutionary language the frenzied quality it acquired. Only profound doubt could have created their idealized expectation that "on the morrow" there would be a "new thing under the sun, that hath not been already of old time" (Wood 1969:107-8,414).

The fearful anticipation of deprivation, impoverishment and general misfortune due to the oppressive measure of taxation led to the customary result of

critical introspection and an upsurge in morality. In this connection, Edmund Morgan explained that

> As their Puritan forefathers had met providential disasters with a renewal of the virtue that would restore God's favour, the Revolutionary generation met taxation with a self-denial and industry that would hopefully restore their accustomed freedom, and simultaneously enable them to identify with their virtuous ancestors. . . . Parliamentary taxation, like an Indian attack in earlier years, was thus both a danger to be resisted and an act of providence to recall Americans from declension (1967:8-9).

The Revolutionary leaders, Bercovitch argues, once again took recourse to the Puritan image of a chosen people delivered from an Old World Egypt to possess the promised land of the New World Canaan. They repeatedly invoked the Founders' flight from oppression as a legacy of freedom to envision the war of independence as an apocalyptic event which, they assured, would culminate with the destruction of the British beast and the establishment of God's Kingdom. And in accordance with their belief in the biblical precedent, Bercovitch argues, the picture of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt was the first consideration for the national seal of the United States of America. But the emblem of the eagle that was subsequently chosen, Bercovitch asserts was equally significant in its meaning. The image of the eagle, first used by John Cotton on the eve of the Great Migration once again became the over-riding symbol in the American Revolutionary rhetoric. The sacred symbol, according to Bercovitch, is reclaimed and most clearly explained in the contemporary context by Samuel Sherwood in hs election-day address of 1776 entitled *The Church's* ***Flight into*** *the* ***Wilderness:***

> When that God to whom the earth belongs, and the fulness thereof, brought his Church into this wilderness, as on eagles' wings by his kind protective providence, he gave this good land to her.... drove out the Heathen before her. ... tenderly cherished her in her infant state, and protected her amidst innumerable dangers. . . . in this American quarter of the globe. . . . He has wrought out a very

> glorious deliverance for them, and set them free from the cruel rod of tyrranny and oppression . . . leading them to the good land of Canaan, while he gave them for an everlasting inheritance (Ibid:22-24).

Bercovitch contends that Sherwood's sermon embodies crucial historio-literary similarities to Cotton's *God's* ***Promise to His Plantations***, delivered almost a century and a half ago, particularly in its treatment of the concept of the Puritan errand. Cotton, according to Bercovitch, to bring order and cohesion to the Puritan venture, accorded the prospective immigrants a whole new identity based on biblical precedent. He likened their situation to the plight of the ancient Hebrews and argued that the dissenting Puritans like the Israelites of Old, had transformed rebellion into migration and rededication. They were now a new chosen people of God called out of Romish bondage to inherit the promised land of Canaan. While biblical tradition, according to Bercovitch, offered Cotton the prerogative of vindicating the Puritans' transatlantic errand, his justification not the tradition that facilitated it - became the source of Sherwood's authority. Bercovitch contends that Sherwood inverted Cotton's hermeneutical mode to substitute biblical precedent with the American experience. The Puritan past took the place of biblical tradition, the country's progress provided the source of his authority, the eagle symbolized the spirit of liberty and the Revolution emerged as the antitype of exodus, errand and revival. Bercovitch asserts that the Patriot Whigs reaffirmed the typology of America's mission which they argued, had begun with the Great Migration "as the opening of a grand scheme and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant, and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth" (Adams 1856, I:66). And quite significantly "a major reason for the triumph of the republic according to Bercovitch was that the need for a social ideal was filled by the typology of America's mission" (p. 140).

The Jeremiad, according to Bercovitch, played a crucial role in not only reiterating that the American struggle for independence was the cause of Heaven but also

in conceiving a unique, national genealogy to justify their collective cause. It helped in rebutting the indictments of the Tories that the English colonists' demand for independence was a transgression of a sacred filial bond which, they argued, amounted to patricide. The Jeremiad was used to redefine and consolidate the source of their colonial genealogy which the Whigs asserted, was not English but exclusively American in its constitution. The distinction, they argued, lay in their status as immigrants who like Aenea's band or the Israelites of Old, had departed, and thereby severed their connections, from the decadence of the Old World to claim the promises of the New. Bercovitch argues that by combining the Puritan concept of errand, as embodied in Danforth's ***Errand***, and the contemporary rhetoric of liberty, the Revolutionaries insisted that

> in fleeing the Old World, the emigrants were abandoning a bankrupt monarchical order to establish a new way of life,civic and economic as well as religious. It was to their cause of liberty, rather to some Old World despot, that filial allegiance was due. In effect the Whig leaders, in what was clearly an extension of earlier techniques, turned the Jeremiad into a lesson in national genealogy (p. 123).

Another important factor that attests to the persistent yet flexible form of the American Jeremiad is the way the Seventeenth Century New England Puritan concept of representative selfhood was redefined to include all Eighteenth Century Protestant America. The Great Awakening and the French war, Bercovitch argues, widened the idea of New English Canaan to accommodate every loyal colonist. By the beginning of the Revolutionary era every White American Protestant became the representative self, of God's long prophesied New Israel. From its very conception, the idea of representative selfhood, according to Bercovitch, was formulated to limit self-assertion and subordinate it to cultural dictates. The revivalist Clergy's insistence on the conversion of the self, initiated the rituals of inter-colonial Protestant solidarity. Similarly, during the French and Indian wars, the emphasis on conscience and self-interest facilitated Protestant patriotism and finally in the Revolutionary era independence signified a free and glorious America.

III

In the process of adapting itself to the demands of the changing times, the American Jeremiad had come full circle. In the course of a century and a half of turbulent American history, it underwent a gradual transformation from being the architect of a unique theocracy to that of the builder of a modern democracy. By the last decade of the Eighteenth Century the Jeremiad had completely freed itself from the theocentric and regional moorings of Seventeenth Century New England Puritanism to become firmly established as a rite of passage for the transition of colony into a unified Republic. According to Bercovitch, the American Jeremiad's "capacity to accommodate change is proof of vitality, in symbolic no less than in social systems; and through the Eighteenth Century the rhetoric of errand remained a vehicle of social continuity" (R A, p.35).

The Seventeenth Century Puritan concept of the errand into the New World Wilderness, Bercovitch contends, established the basic tenets of American consensus. The Puritan errand, in the biblical sense of exodus was primarily considered as the migration of visible saints from Old World depravity to New World purity. During the Great Awakening, the emphasis on personal conversion and rededication widened the epic of the exodus. It forecast the errand as pilgrimage which included not just a band of visible saints but the entire Anglo-Protestant community. Again in the French and Indian wars, the errand was not just a sacred mission in the cause of Protestantism but was also a defence against oppression and the preservation of liberty. Finally, in the Revolutionary era, the errand took on the meaning of progress embodied by the loyal colonists who, in their struggle for indpendence, considered themselves as the advancing army of Christ moving from sacred past to the Millennial future. Thus, Bercovitch contends, the rhetoric of errand, through the long course of its undiminished influence on the colonial mind, evolved into an exclusive ideological mode. Furthermore, when the Revolutionry leaders used the concept of errand to substantiate and defend their cause of

independence "they gave full and final sanction to the ideology of consensus. Once and for all, the errand took on a special self-enclosed American form (R A, p.36).

In order to accentuate the uniqueness of their revolutionary movement, Bercovitch argues, the patriot Whigs took recourse to the traditional Puritan dichotomy of the Old World from the New. In the Old World, the Whigs argued revolution was secular and meant "hiatus, discord, the dysfunction of class structure" (R A, p.37). It was a rebellious, mass uprising that was contradictory, violent and destructive. But in America, revolution was not secular but providential, it signified "a mighty spontaneous turning forward, both regenerative and organic, confirming the prophecies of Scripture as well as the laws of nature and history" (p. 134). It was perceived as a gradual spreading forth of a grand, redemptive plan which held the promise of progress only through communal conformity to established cultural norms.

The Whigs, according to Bercovitch, portrayed the Revolution as a form of socialization which geared the very forces of radicalism into a confirmation of communal order. For them, revolution in the American context meant progress and increasing revolution, they argued, required a regulation of the radical energies. These revisions of meanings, Bercovitch argues, empowered the Jeremiad with new strategies of control which were particularly suited to the turbulence of post-Revolutionary America.

Bercovitch asserts that the dynamics that burgeoned the Revolutionary movement evolved from a quickening spirit of liberty. But in post-Revolutionary America, the libertarian spirit that had overcome monarchical oppression turned into unrestrained license bordering on anarchy. The triumph of their militant errand in the cause of independence and the fervour of the patriotic rhetoric of freedom encouraged the Revolutionaries to question the authority of government control. The ruling minority, who were privileged with wealth and property, felt threatened at the growing popularity of egalitarian times, according to Bercovitch, revealed the emergent dangers "in nervous

satires of an egalitarian world-turned-upside-down; in Gothic novels, and tales of violated taboos (parricide, incest, idolatory); and Federalist Jeremiads, warning against unbridled ambition and denouncing a long series of local insurrections": (p. 134).

The rhetoric of the Jeremiad, according to Bercovitch, once again rose to the demands of history by exercising its power to establish social control and cultural conformity. The ritual of condemnations and reaffirmation were once again brought to bear on the apostasizing community. The Jeremiads of this period once again declared a period of probation and deployed the familiar, twin-strategy of invoking fearful anxiety and reasserting the promise of future glories. Henry Cummings in *A Sermon Preached before Thomas Cushing* (1783) lamented "to what an alarming situation are we reduced, that Congress must say to us, as Joshua did Israel, Behold I set before you life and death" (Ibid:44). John Adams in 1787-88 declared that

> the people of America have now the best opportunity and the greatest trust in their hands that Providence ever committed to so small a number since the transgression of the first pair; if they betray their trust their guilt will merit even greater punishment than other nations have suffered and the indignation of Heaven (Koch 1965:257).

The aim of the Federalist Jeremiahs, Bercovitch contends, was not only to restrain excessive self-assertion and contain the demand for self-determination by subjecting it to the rule of law but also establish and consolidate the representative authority of the elite minority. And to this end, they revised and offered the New England Puritan alternatives of "apocalyptic disaster" and "millennial glory earned through a process of taming, binding, curbing, restraint. . . . In ritual terms they were asserting consensus through anxiety, using promise and threat alike to inspire (or enforce) generational rededication" (p. 136). Through an exposition of the representative Jeremiads of David Ramsay, George Washington, Samuel Adams and Timothy Dwight, Bercovitch traces the persistent and successful use of the "catastrophic alternative" as "a strategy for channeling revolution into the service of society" (p. 150). From the

declaration of independence to the middle period of the nineteenth century, the American Jeremiahs, according to Bercovitch, perpetuated the rituals of crisis to present contemporary events as continuing revolution in order to elicit national consensus.

Bercovitch demonstrates the power of this consensual mode through a consideration of the American conception of the 'frontier'. The ritual of consensus, he argues, was the cummulative outcome of the rhetoric of errand. From the beginning, according to Bercovitch, America was a culture on an errand based on biblical precedents and prophetic promises. The emigrant Puritan concept of errand as exodus obivated the secular roots of American genealogy to give them a sacred identity as the New Chosen People. And since New Canaan was God's own country, the frontier was perceived not as a boundary or the common ground between Christian and pagan civilizations but as the periphery of the advancing kingdom of God. Bercovitch contends that the myth of America eliminated the very issue of transgression: "From being a dividing line 'frontier' became a synonym for progres. And as New Israel progressed across the continent the Westward Movement came to provide a sort of serial enactment of the ritual of consensus" (R A, p.53)

The Seventeenth Century Puritan ideology of errand, Bercovitch maintains, remained central to American consensus and the rhetoric "reflected and shaped a broad ideological movement which, for a variety of reasons, issued in civil war" (R A, p.56). Bercovitch builds his argument with the words of John Higham in his *Hanging Together: Divergent Unities in American History (1974)*. Puritanism, according to Higham, came to the New World "not as a subversive or divisive force, but as a bedrock of order, purpose, and cohesion." While the emigrant Puritans had a great need for the "discipline of ideology" to prevent disintegration, subsequent generations "put their ideological inheritance to expanded uses" by transforming the "discipline" into a stimulus for a collective, communal cause. For example, independence combined "Protestant ideology" with "American nationalism" to strengthen American solidarity in the Nineteenth Century. But when "the desire for ideological unity increased, slavery - a

flat denial of the American ideology - became less and less tolerable" to finally burst into open conflict (Higham 1974:10-18).

The prospect of the civil war which threatened to split the young Republic drove the leaders of the northern states to revive the ritual of the Jeremiad. The familar condemnations of a defecting community, the declaration of a divine probation and the prediction of a glorious future rose to a frenzied new pitch. The catastrophy that enveloped the country was once again construed as the divine retribution of a benevolent God who wished to reclaim them as His chosen people and remind them of the sacredness of their world-redeeming mission. On a national day of fasting in 1863, Abraham Lincoln announced that the bloody ravages of war were a chastizing "punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins" in order to consummate the redemption of the entire people (Nicolay 1905:215-16). Danial Aaron describing the popular temper of the north, wrote

> In Heaven, a disgruntled Jehovah decides to rebuke the American people . . . Repudiating the commandments of their fathers, they have become stiff-necked and luxury-loving. . . . After repeated warnings . . . God finally speaks through the pens and voices of the prophets,... blasts the nation. . . . but solitious always, frustrates the Satanic plotters . . . and preserves the union (1973: xiii - xiv).

Bercovitch argues that in all these rhetorical continuities of the Seventeenth Century New England Puritan imagination, the ritual of the Jeremiad increasingly confirmed an ideological consensus which subsumed dissent, and precluded all other alternatives, to transform every major crisis in the country's history into a reaffirmati on of the world-redeeming vision of America. The all-pervading Power of the ideological consensus the Jeremiads espoused, according to Bercovitch, invested the term "America' with an exceptional, symbolic meaning. It was a symbol which was "the triumphant issue of early New England rhetoric and a long-ripened ritual of socialization" (p. 176). Through more than two centuries of turbulent history, Bercovitch

contends, the leaders of the self-proclaimed New Israel had subordinated pluralism in all its religious, social, political and economic multiplicity to an integrating, over-arching national ideal. In the process of consolidation, they had relocated the emergent conflicts from history to the realm of rhetoric and ensured the success of that rhetoric, in its capacity to obviate dissent, by relating it to their concept of the representative American self.

The triumph of the Unionists, according to Bercovitch, completed the process of ideological consensus and established it, once and for all, as a dominant part of the American national psyche. The rhetoric of the Jeremiad, which forged the consensus and fashioned the symbol of America, permeated every facet of American culture. Bercovitch traces the rhetorical continuities of the Jeremiad into the period of the American Renaissance and the area of classic literature which, he argues, depicted the writers as latter-day American Jeremiahs. In the tradition of the Puritan Jeremiad, "the classic writers were American prophets at once lamenting a declension and celebrating a national dream. Directly or indirectly, their works formed part of the same ritual that enveloped [and transmuted] all forms of antebellum dissent" (R A, P.57).

Furthermore, a significant element of the Seventeenth Century New England Puritan rhetoric, which the Nineteenth Century Jeremiahs inherited, was the figural use of John the Baptist to signify the different meanings of their errand. Thomas Hooker, to emphasize the importance of the social covenant declared that "John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way that all the crooked things might be made straight. This is nothing else but the taking away of the knotty knarliness of the heart, that the King of Glory may come in" (1637:2). Similarly, Edward Johnson had explained the Great Migration as a conversion experience through an emigrant's statement: "I am now prest for the service of our Lord Christ to rebuild the most glorious Edifice of Mount Sion in a wilderness, and as John the Baptist, 1 must cry, Prepare yee the way of the Lord, make his paths straight, for behold hee is comming againe, hee is comming to destroy Antichrist" (1654:51-52). This tradition continued well into the Nineteenth Century

when Emerson hailed "the new voices in the [American] Wilderness crying Repent[1]" (Emerson 1904, I:272).

The classic writers, Bercovitch contends, conceived of themselves as self-exiled prophets crying in the wilderness of a degenerate society. And like the latter-day Puritan Jeremiahs they adopted rhetorical strategies to enforce cultural norms, re-effect social control and establish cultural cohesiveness. To them, the growing inconsistencies of the day and the divergence of contemporary society from the established cultural ideals "were aberrations, like the backsliding of a defacto saint or the stiff-necked recalcitrance of a chosen people. Their denunciations, were part of a ritual attempt to wake their countrymen upto the potential of their common culture" (R A, p.61). In consonance with the requirements of the Jeremiad, the classic writers placed before the community, the twin prospects of imminent catastrophe on the one hand and a millenial future on the other.

But, unlike the writers of other cultures whose isolation meant either "an aesthetic withdrawal" or "a romantic-antinomian declaration of superiority to history and `the mass'", the solitariness of the American writer identified him with the Seventeenth Century Puritan Jeremiah in his "refusal to abandon the national covenant" (p. 181). Cotton Mather, the self-proclaimed latter-day Puritan Jeremiah, in the face of the persistent apostasy of New England and the growing disparity between tradition and history, overcame his sense of alienation by forcing his image of America into the realm of rhetoric and imagination. And accordingly his **Magnalia Christi Americana** — the mighty acts of Christ in America — or, the **Ecclesiastical History of New England** remained "as the supereme colonial expression of what we have come to term the myth of America" (P O, p. 132). Mather, by an act of self-assertion had declared himself the keeper of the Puritan dream and initiated a rhetorical tradition which, according to Bercovitch, became a major source of inspiration to successive custodians of American culture. The classic writer, in his castigations of a deviant society was also forced -- by

virtue of his isolation and more so out of the fear of failure -- to assume the role of the latter-day keeper of the dream, and therefore, as the keepers of the dream

> they could internalize the myth like the latter-day Puritan Jeremiahs, they could offer themselves as the symbol incarnate and so relocate America -- transplant the entire national enterprise, en masse -- into the mind and imagination of the exemplary American (p. 180).

In other words, as Bercovitch explains, the artist-hero attempts to surmount his alienation by creating an "ideal world", a "mythic anti-history" in order "to halt, to stem the tide of the on-going process itself" (Susman 1968:93). The invocation of the Doomsday or Millennium strategy only served to strengthen the classic writers' conviction that America was the only hope and redemption of mankind. Therefore, given the option of choosing between failure and renewal, Emerson responded in a representative way by embracing hope. He proclaimed "my estimate of America is all or nothing" (1904, VII:417). He exhorted his countrymen that "Good men desire and the great cause of human nature, that this abundant and overflowing richness wherewith God has blessed this country may not be misapplied and made a curse. .. ." (Oilman 1960: II:116). His celebration of the redemptive potential of American nature made him exclaim: "My quarrel with America, of course, was that the geography is sublime, but the men are not" (Plumstead 1975 XI:284). The classic writers' quarrel with America, according to Bercovitch, developed as

> intracultural dialogues — as in Thoreau's **Walden**, where "the only true America" beckons to us as a timeless image of the country's time bound ideals (minimal government, extravagant economics, endless mobility, unlimited self-aggrandizement); or in Whitman's Leaves of **Grass,** which offers the highest Romantic tribute, the process of poetic self-creation, as text-proof of America's errand into the future (**R** A, p.58).

Bercovitch argues that in most of the classic writings, the work of the self-contained writer emerged not as a prospective alternative but as the very imitation of the models of culture. An example of such an instance is Walden which, Bercovitch explains, through "the act of mimesis enables Thoreau simultaneously [in the Jeremiad tradition] to berate his neighbours and to safeguard the values that undergird their way of lie" (p. 186). In other words, Thoreau's condemnation, like that of Emerson, is part of the ritual of the Jeremiad which entreats the community to conform to the tenets of American destiny. Emerson stated that those "who complain about the flatness of American life have no perception of its destiny. They are not Americans", because to him America "is a garden of plenty . . . a magazine of power. . . . Here is man in the Garden of Eden; here the Genesis. . . . Here the Exodus" (1904, VIII:142).

The doomsday strategy is more pronounced in Whitman's "American Futurity" wherein he declared

> that the time will surely come — that holy millennium of liberty — when the "victory of endurance born" shall lift the masses . . . and make them achieve something of that destiny which we may suppose God intends eligible for mankind. And this problem is to be worked out through the people, territory, and government of the United States. If it should fail! 0, dark were the hour and dreary beyond description the horror of such a failure -- which we anticipate not at all! (1846 I:27-28).

Although Whitman's work, according to Bercovitch, sounds an ominous note in the beginning of his career, it ultimately changes into an outright affirmation of the culture. The prevailing exuberance in America, "this . . . maniacal appetite for wealth . . . are parts of amelioration and progress, indispensably needed to prepare the very results I demand. . . . [to] raise the edifice designed in these Vistas" (Cawelti 1965:81-82).

Furthermore, by expanding the culture to universal proportions, the symbol of America, according to Bercovitch, released a heightened sense of exhilaration in mid-

Nineteenth Century. But "the very process of magnification carried a dangerous correlation: if America failed, then the cosmos itself -- the laws of man, nature, and hope -- had failed as well" (p. 190). The prospect of hazard, Bercovitch argues, had a disquieting effect on the classic writers. Their adherence to the symbol of America was not always out of contentment because, their grandiloquent optimism betrayed their deep inner despair. This distinction of the American writers gains greater significance when they are compared with the writers of other societies. Their contemporaries in Europe who regarded democratic capitalism as one more tradition could remain disenchanted in society without plunging themselves into despondency. They could, as easily, champion the cause of the middle class and with equal casuality point out the inadequacies of its ideals. But in America, Bercovitch asserts, the radicalism of the writers compelled them to defend those ideals and also attack society with the same intensity because they had already identified the ideals of the self and art with the symbol of America. And when they gave up their faith in America they had no alternative except to express their anguish, through desperate condemnations in, what Bercovitch calls, the anti-Jeremiad -- "the denunciation of all ideals sacred, secular, on the grounds that America is a lie" (p. 191). Bercovitch justifies this usage of the term anti-Jeremiad which, he argues, is meant to denote the all-pervading power of the symbol of America. Therefore, the anti-Jeremiad, according to Bercovitch, "is not so much a reflection of the culture as it is a variation on a central cultural theme. . . . it reverses all the effects of the Jeremiad while retaining intact the Jeremiad's figural-symbolic outlook" (p. 194). While the Jeremiad invested the symbol of America with the hope of universal redemption, the anti-Jeremiad reversed it to interpret America as a hopeless, ineffectual deception -- but their uniqueness, according to Bercovitch, lay in their power of precluding all other alternatives.

In moments of extreme dejection, the classic writers expressed their deep pessimism through the rhetoric of the anti-Jeremiad as in Emerson's lamentation: "Ah my country! In thee is the reasonable hope of mankind not fulfilled; when I see how false is...[all] heroism seems our dream and our insight a delusion" (Plumstead 1969:24 and

Emerson 1904, II:346). Melville, according to Bercovitch, was the most representative in his vacillation between the extremities of the Jeremiad. His "options . . . were either progress towards the millenium or regression towards the doomsday. He simply could not envision a different set of ideals . . . beyond that which his culture imposed" (p. 193).

The symbol of America that the New England Puritans bequeathed to the classic American writers, according to Bercovitch, served as a traditional taboo that prevented them from crossing the fixed parameters of their culture. It delineated their freedom to the permissible extent of the American myth by harnessing their creative talents to a vision which was primarily devised to control self-assertion. The restriction was not meant to neutralize the radical energies of the writer but to enlist them in the service of the myth. Bercovitch argues that writers like

> Henry Adams, grimly settled for the doomsday option, others like Mark Twain, seem to have slid into it, against their will and with unresolved ambivalence. Still others like Melville, vacillated between options ("the political Messiah has come in us", "Columbus ended earth's romance") (**R A**, 63)

The classic writers were so captivated by the overpowering ideology of American consensus and the myth of America that none of them could conceive of alternative prospects other than those already implied in the vision of America. Bercovitch argues that even when the American classic writers' "vision of the country tottered uncertainly between misanthropy and chauvinism, shrill condemnation and uncritical acclaim" the "vacillation" itself was "part of a national ritual mode" (p. 190). The pessimistic strain that ran through the work of the classic writers demonstrates that it was "not just a matter of temperment or chance but intrinsic to the optative American mood" (Ibid).

Thus, the major writers of the American classic literary tradition, according to Bercovitch, in their castigations of society, celebration of the myth of

America or disenchantment with America, remained inescapably captivated by the power and reach of the Jeremiad. It can be concluded that the Seventeenth Century New England Jeremiad which had its origins in the needs of an immigrant community developed through the centuries by feeding on crisis and eliciting consensus which foreclosed the threat of fragmentation. As a vehicle of ideological consensus it enforced cultural continuity and facilitated the transformation of a nascent theocracy into a world-dominating democracy. Its rhetoric and ritual fashioned the myth of America which peristently obviated all other alternatives to the dominant culture.

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Chapter V

CONCLUSION

PURITANISM AS RHETORIC: THE LEGACY

We have sown to (he wind and are now reaping the whirlwind of crime, drug abuse, racism,, immorality, and social injustice. We need to repent of our sins and to turn by faith to you. . . . to dedicate ourselves anew, not only to you but to America and all (he great ideals that we stand for.

Billy Graham
Congressional Record (1993)

We thank thee forthe miracle that is America..

Richard C. Halverson, Jr.
Congressional Record (1993)

It would be clear by now that Sacvan Bercovitch's central argument throughout his analysis of Puritanism in its Anglo-American context is that the rhetoric of American exceptionalism and the myth of America are the discovery of the Seventeenth Century New England Puritan imagination. The rhetorical strategies developed by the early New England Puritans, according to Bercovitch, evolved into an ideological hegemony which permeated every facet of American culture. This chapter, as a conclusion to the thesis, begins with a summation of Bercovitch's analysis of New England Puritan rhetoric with a discussion of the various inferences that are to be found in his work. It situates Bercovitch in the tradition of American Puritan Origin Studies and examines Bercovitch's work as an extension and revision of Perry Miller's thought in terms of the Jeremiad and typology. It also examines Bercovitch's work as an effort at acculturation and a vicarious celebration of his innate Zionism in the New England/Israel rhetorical analogies. It also discusses, Bercovitch's recent suggestions indicating the

inadequacies of viewing American Origins from an exclusively Puritan perspective which expresses the need for not only rewriting American history but also redefining the American literary canon.

Bercovitch's engagement with American history began as "a series of increasingly particularized border-crossings: first into America' proper; then into the interdisciplinary fields of American Studies; and finally into the special area of American literary scholarship" (1993:32). The first border crossing, Bercovitch recounts occurred in 1961, when he undertook graduate studies at Claremont Graduate School, California. He had come, he recalls, with a limited, largerly pejorative knowledge of the United States that his Canadian schooling had imparted to him. The Yiddhishist left-wing world of his parents and his brief post-high school stay in a socialist Kibbutz in Israel had not only insulated him against cultural assimilation but had also left in him a deep sense of his Jewishness. He admits that the result of all "these experiences was an abiding suspicion of high rhetoric, especially as a blue print of the future and an abiding fascination with the redemptive promises of language especially as a source of personal identity and social cohesion" (RA, p.2).

Bercovitch acknowledges that on arrival, he was ill-equipped and unprepared for the shocking spectacle of the turbulent sixties in America - where shouts of angry protest and cries of hopelessness were amazingly subsumed in the celebration of America's mission and the dream. He recounts that what he "discovered was a corporate identity built on fragmentation and dissent: a hundred sects, factions, schools and denominations, each aggressively different from the others, yet all celebrating the same mission" (Ibid:29).

Bercovitch's quest for the conceptual roots of American exceptional identity and mission leads him back to the Puritan vision of the New World and the religious discourse of the Seventeenth Century Puritans.

The Puritan vision of the New World, according to Bercovitch, evolved from the conjunctive implications of three major religio-historic events that occurred at the turn of the Sixteenth Century to exact a lasting influence on the Seventeenth Century New England Puritan imagination. The invention of the printing press, by facilitating the hitherto forbidden dissemination of the Scripture, provided the crucial premises for the constitution of the emigrant Puritans' identity. Their firm belief in, and adherence to, the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* developed into an obsessive biblicism. Therefore, as a people of the Book, they identified themselves as the English Israelites oppressed by the Roman Babylon, a band of Christian soldiers waging holy war against the Papal Antichrist. The sacred identity of the Puritans thus obtained was further empowered by the Elizabethan concept of National Election to redesignate the prospective immigrants as the advance guard of the Reformation. Therefore, the Seventeenth Century immigrant Puritans, by virtue of their total reliance on scriptural texts, were a community who conceived their identity through the authority of the word. Their status as the New English Israel and the New Chosen People of God destined to consummate universal reformation persisted throughout the Seventeenth Century and beyond. This mode of identity emerged as a major constituent of the New England Puritan legacy to American Culture. After the decline of the theocracy, subsequent generations of New Englanders continued to retain this mode of identity as a strategy for social control by constantly revising it according to the demands of untoward history. It was gradually widened during the critical periods of American history to obviate denominational and sectarian divisions in order to accommodate the entire body of Protestant Americans as one nation.

The second historic event that shaped the Puritan vision was the geographical discovery of the New World which heralded what has been commonly called the age of modernity. The discovery bestowed the New World with the exotic name `America' which affirmed Vespucci's conquest of the land not only through the use of force but also through the use of metaphor which described `America' in terms of a

sacred-mythic virgin garden of Eden. It exemplifies the intermingling of history and rhetoric, fact and metaphor as interdependent, mutually sustaining factors which had the power to subsume divergent perspectives. The symbol of America has ever since evolved as a synthetic ideal which represented the unparalled union of "nationality and universality, civic and spiritual selfhood, secular and redemptive history, the country's past and paradise to be" (A **J**, p. 176). The mystical import of the term `America' acquired such a powerful magnitude that it continues to remain as the most dominating cultural symbol of the modern world. Furthermore, it lent itself to the American classic literary tradition as an internalized, ideal America of the writer who perceived in it the only true alternative to the dominant culture.

Finally, the Protestant Reformation with its central tenets of *Sola Fides* and *Sola Scriptura* infused a spiritual dimension into the Puritan Vision. It not only emphasized the preeminence of individual faith but also identified the faithful individual collectively as the true Church of God. The conviction of the Seventeenth Century emigrant Puritans that the true Church of God has always been persecuted led them not only to identify their sufferings in England with those of the ancient Israelites but also inspired them to appropriate to themselves the status of a new chosen people. By perceiving contemporary history as an extension of the Biblical past, the Seventeenth Century Puritan immigrants distinguished their migration as a providential development of redemptive history fulfilled through God's Chosen People - from the Israelites of Old to the New English Israel in New Canaan.

Furthermore, as Visible Saints of the invisible Church of Christ and as the spiritual descendents of the Isaelites, they perceived their New Canaan as the sacred site of Christ's Second Coming. The intense anticipation of the approaching Millennium fostered by the Seventeenth Century emigrant Puritans was invoked throughout American history in the rituals of covenant-renewal ceremonies, revival concerts of prayer, revolutionary and civil war Jeremiads. These rituals were used to create fear and anxiety

in order to transform emergent crises into an affirmation of a millennial future and thus ensure cultural continuity and communal progress.

Therefore, Bercovitch concludes that the invention of the printing press freed the Scripture from Roman authority. The discovery of the New World offered the opportunity of evangelizing the heathen wilderness. Finally, Protestantism heralded the commencement of what appeared to be a glorious new age of evangelical faith. The textual, geographic and spiritual constitutents of the Puritan vision conjoined with the Puritan concept of national election to create a deep sense of anxiety among the early Seventeenth Century Puritans. It presaged the imminence of an apocalyptic transformation of the existing order into the renewed splendour of a millennial future. Thus, the intense evangelical fervour of the Puritans, the resistance of the established Church to their demands for a complete reformation and the beckoning expanses of a new world formed the motivating factors for the Great Migration of 1630.

The Great Migration, as the Puritans perceived it was not a secular venture but a sacred `errand' into the New World wilderness. It was a mission that involved the transplantation of the Puritans' religious and ecclesiastical convictions to New England with the specific purpose of establishing a truly reformed evangelical society. The New England theocracy was meant to serve as a model for the emulation of England and Europe which, the Puritans believed, would hasten the consummation of world-wide redemption. Their conception of the transatlantic migration as an advance guard of the Reformation was also an extension of the Elizabethan premises for national election. Therefore, in conformity with their sense of sacred mission, the Seventeenth Century Puritan emigrants developed a rhetoric which interpreted their New World enterprise as the last stage in redemptive history beginning from Ararat, Sinai, Golgotha and culminating in New Canaan as the Millennium. While the unforeseen religio-historic developments conjoined with the interpretative potential of the Puritan rhetoric to emerge as the Puritan vision of New England, the rhetoric of errand fed on the vision

to develop into a mode of ideological consensus which dominated American culture through more than three centuries of its turbulent history.

In order to show the centrality of the Seventeenth Century Puritan rhetoric of errand to American history, Bercovitch redefines the Puritans' errand in terms of ideology. So considered, errand embodied a combination of three sacred-secular functions. Firstly, errand as migration took on the meaning of exodus in the Biblical sense to denote the Puritan venture as a flight from the enormity of the Old World to the purity of the New. The Seventeenth Century immigrant Puritans justified their settlement in the New World as the fulfilment of Biblical prophesy. They defined the migration as the vehicle of prophesy and interpreted prophecy itself as the opportunity for unrestrained territorial expansion. Therefore, the rhetoric of errand as migration laid the ideological foundation for justifying the expansionist and acquisitive tendencies of later generations. This was particularly true during the militant confrontations of the latter-day Puritans and Americans in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. Furthermore, by invoking the doctrine of calling the colonial leaders enforced social control which encouraged individualism and at the same time curbed disorder. The rhetoric of errand as migration laid the foundation for justifying the imperialist dynamics of latter-day Americans.

Secondly, the errand as Pilgrimage signified the spiritual journey of every individual from the self to Christ. The transatlantic voyage to the New World wilderness required the constant commitment of the individual to the communal cause and by implication a rededication of the believer in his pilgrimage of the soul from sinfulness to salvation. In other words, the rhetoric of errand as an act of pilgrimage constituted the ideology of social cohesiveness by identifying the individual as the representative of the communal cause.

The Puritan rhetoric of errand also implied progress and continuity of the New England community as a part of the onward march of humanity from the beginning of time to the end of history. The New England Puritan society perceived itself as representing the crucial link that connected the progression of the Biblical past into the millennial future. Therefore errand as progress meant the advancement of the community through the constant improvement of its institutions to attain the ideal state of the millennium. The New England Puritans took recourse to the ritual of the Jeremiad to invoke fearful anxiety of the future which in turn served as a powerful agent of social conformity and general rededication.

The Seventeenth Century Puritan rhetoric of mission in its varied connotations, persisted through the next century as a developing ideological mode. During the King Philips war the Jeremiads of the period invoked the rhetoric of sacred mission to interpret the war as their continuing struggle against the minions of Satan. In the Edvvardsian revivals the rhetoric of errand as pilgrimage was used to emphasize the necessity of personal conversion in order to renew the bond between personal and social covenants. It combined evangelical Protestantism with English libertarianism to forge unity among the States in their war against French Canada. It helped widen the sacred identity of the New England theocrats to include all the American saints as the Protestant soldiers of Christ's army. During the French and Indian wars of the Eighteenth Century the American Jeremiahs once again resurrected the Puritan rhetoric of sacred mission to describe the war as one more conflict in their prolonged battle against the forces of Satan.

The revolutionary leaders took recourse to the Puritan rhetoric of errand as migration to redistinguish the Old World as a haven of corruption. The struggle for independence was interpreted as the holy war of heaven fought between the American army of Christ and the English forces of Satan. The Puritan rhetoric of errand was repeatedly invoked throughout the long period of colonial maturation of America from theocracy to liberal democracy and world power.

While the Puritan rhetoric of errand developed and perfected the ideology of American exceptionalism, the ritual of the Jeremiad established and perpetuated a hegemonic ideological consensus to serve as a vehicle of social cohesiveness and cultural continuity through out the American history. The ideology of consensus attests to the power and reach of the New England Puritan imagination in providing rhetorical strategies which perpetuated not only the exceptionalist identity and mission but also sustained the myth of America. The ideology of consensus, according to Bercovitch could empower the myth on the one hand, and on the other, "blight and ultimately preclude the possibility of fundamental social change" by reaffirming the myth (A J, p. 179). It was equally influential on the writers of the classic literary tradition who could conceive of no other alternative ideals other than those already implicit in the myth of America. They were so totally captivated by it that their celebrations of the culture's transcendent and universal values obscured the contemporary social realities. Their appeals for justice to the myth of America attracted the myth to the point of oppression, but because its invocation was spontaneous, it was all the more effective in exacting social control.

The rhetoric of consensus elicited social cohesiveness in every area of American life by diffusing debate and gearing its energies into a revitalization of the Founders' vision of America. It identified every form of radicalism -- from Industrialization, Westward Expansion, Anti-Slavery campaigns to Women's Rights Movements — with the Puritan sense of sacred mission to subsume dissent and enforce social control.

The fact that Bercovitch has offered new insights into the understanding of American Puritanism suggests the need to situate his work in the larger context of American Studies. His analysis of the Seventeenth Century New England Puritan imagination as a shaping influence on American history and national character indicates

the Millerian conviction that "history is part of the human mind ... [and] that the mind of man is the basic factor in human history" (Miller 1956:ix). Bercovitch's emphasis on the historical continuities of Puritan rhetoric identifies him with the tradition of the intellectual historians and historical critics of American culture.

The tradition of Puritan Origin Studies as a part of American historiography began during the 1920s when the term "Puritan served as a comprehensive sneer against every tendency in American Civilization . . . [like] sexual diffidence, censorship, prohibition, theological fundamentalism, political hypocrisy" (Miller 1933:18). It was initiated by a group of Harvard scholars whose work inaugurated the reversal of the contemporary stereotypes. The first important work, a biography entitled Increase Mather (1925) written by Kenneth B. Murdock, described the life and career of the leading Seventeenth Century Puritan with admiration and sympathy. It was followed by another biographical work entitled **The Builders** of **the** Bay **Colony** (1930) by Samuel E. Morison which presented the Puritans as admirable people who gave primary learning and education even in the midst of a harsh wilderness. Morison described Puritanism as a"dynamic force" which transplanted a group of people whose "object was not to establish prosperity or prohibition, liberty or democracy or indeed anything of currently recognized value (1930:iv). He explained that the course of his study had transformed his posture toward Puritanism from "scorn and boredom to a warm interest and respect" to accept the Puritans as "a courageous, humane, brave, and significant people"(lbid).

While the work of Murdock and Morison helped to alleviate popular misconceptions through a serious, if selective, treatment of Puritan intellectual life, Perry Miller, their contemporary, elevated the study of Puritanism to a sophistication unsurpassed by any other area of American historiography. Miller's "mission of expounding ... the innermost propulsions of the United States" led him to embark on a monumental work of historical scholarship which continues to be a source of inspiration for contemporary scholars. His work, as embodied in the twin-volumes of **The New**

England Mind (1939, 1953), laid the foundation of the notion of exceptionalism and continuity by stating that Puritanism was "the most coherent and most powerful single factor in the early history of America" and a proper understanding of it could reveal "what heritages it has bequeathed to the present" (1967, I:viii).

While Miller's illuminating study of Puritanism offered subsequent scholars the opportunity of exploring American Puritanism, no one before Bercovitch could achieve the distinction of building on Miller's work in order to offer fresh insight into the subject. Since Bercovitch extends or revises Miller's work a comparison of the two is necessary' to gauge the former's contribution to Puritan Studies. An obvious distinction marking their approaches is that while Perry Miller sought to understand Puritanism through a study of its doctrines, Bercovitch does it through a study of the origin and functions of its rhetoric as the expression of the Puritan imagination. He asserts that the "Puritan legacy to subsequent American culture lies not in theology or logic or social institutions, but in the realm of the imagination (P I, p.7).

Bercovitch, reminiscent of the Millerian premises, undertakes his study by deploring the "injustice of the stereotype -- the patently inaccurate image of the Puritan as self-serving moral hypocrite, lusting after conspiracy and guilt" (Ibid:l). He singulariz.es the Jeremiad and typology as two crucial constitutents of the Seventeenth Century New England Puritanism which, he argues, were "drastically underrated" by Miller (Ibid). According to Miller, the Jeremiads, as a ritual mode of exorcising guilt,

> were professions of a society that knew it was doing wrong, but could not help it. . . . having acknowledged what is amiss the populace could go back to their fields and benches and ships, trusting that a covenanted Jehovah would remember his bond.... and by confessing iniquities regained at least a portion of self- respect (1967, II:51).

Bercovitch inverts Miller's definition by suggesting that the Jeremiads not only attested the continuance of the Puritans' covenantal transactions with God but also conveyed "affirmation and exultation" (A J, P. 179).

After revising Miller's analysis of the Puritan Jeremiad, Bercovitch takes up the issue of the Puritans' use of typology which, he argues is central to the rhetoric of American identity. While Miller's reading of the Williams-Cotton controversy, according to Bercovitch, had led him to conclude that "the Puritans `eshewed' typology," Bercovitch asserts that typology "pervaded all branches of early American writing, secular as well as religious" and that the "controversy . . . took place within a culture throughly familiar with typology" (**TNE**,p.169,171). Miller failed to recognize that the Puritans'

> typological approach held far reaching consequences. . . . it permeated the literature of all factions of Puritanism, and [was used] explicitly from one generation to the next as an integral part of their outlook: in their histories, in diaries, poetries and politics, Jeremiads and discourses on grace (**PAL**, p.3).

Bercovitch's effort at redressing the injustice of Miller's grave oversight leads him to discover the roots of American exceptionalism. He argues that a typological mode of imagination provided the Biblical model which inspired the immigrant Puritans not only to identify themselves as God's Chosen People, but also consecrate their errand as a sacred mission and sanctify their habitation as New Canaan. In short, typology cast the entire transatlantic Puritan venture into the framework of sacred history and established the New England theocracy as a fulfilment of Scriptural promises. He contends that through their assertions of the "literal-spiritual continuity between the two testaments and the colonial venture in America," the Puritans developed the rhetoric of their identity (TNE, p. 176).

The proof-text of Bercovitch's argument lies in ***Nehemias Americanus*** and his methodological approach, like that of the Puritans, is hermeneutical. Mather's conjunction of the two terms, according to Bercovitch, "links the biblical hero, the New

England magistrate and the enterprise at large in an emphatically American design" (P O, p.ix). Bercovitch argues that Mather inverted traditional hermeneutics to relocate the source of meaning from Scripture to secular history and used Typology to sacralize history in order to obtain sacred identity. Mather situates Winthrop within the structure of Biblical history by comparing him successively with Nehemiah, Moses, Job, Solomon and Jacob. He then proceeds to correlate the Old Testament frame-work with that of the New Testament, which is the biography of Jesus. Thus Winthrop the Puritan at one end is linked, through the Biblical Patriarchs, to Christ the Saviour at the other. The entire process of the regimentation of the self is centred on the Puritans' "Christic" identity and so Winthrop as "microchristus" becomes the representative Puritan saint. Bercovitch argues that just as Christology merged the personal with the divine to obtain sacred identity, historiograhically the Governor and the colony conjoined to facilitate the consummation of God's redemptive plan.

The New England Puritan, according to Bercovitch, discovered his personal identity as visible saint by recourse to Christology. 1 le overcame the problem of his American identity by imposing upon the communal effort the prophetic type of the Messiah's advancing Millennial army. And by virtue of the American identity of the visible saint, America is lifted out of its secular context and placed within the framework of sacred history. Just as the saint represented the entire Church of the elect, America represented the tribulations and inner calling to redemption of each of its elect colonists. Thus, the two modes of identity: the personal through christology and the historical through soteriology, merged with the Puritans' concept of national election to accord America the status of visible sainthood. This conception of the redemptive meaning of America, according to Bercovitch

> contributes significantly to the link between the New England and the American Way to the usurpation of American identity by the United States, and to the anthropomorphic nationalism that characterizes [American] literature — not the secular anthropomorphism of parenthood (British homeland, German Fatherland), but the

> eschatological anthropomorphism of spiritual biography: American dream, manifest destiny, redeemer nation,and, fundamentally the American self as representative of universal rebirth (P O, p. 108).

Thus, the New England Puritan concept of election gained strength from Christology which made the Puritans visible saints, and soteriology which defined the errand as the last step towards universal redemption. The rhetorical confluence of these two models of thought consolidated the Puritan vision of New England as the American City of God. In the final analysis, what emerges from Mather's complex rhetorical construction of *Nehemias Americanus* is a symbolic mode which became an integral part of the American classic literary tradition. The Puritan concept of the American as a representative of the New World vindicated the self-assertions of the latter-day American Nehemiahs to goad their society fonvard in order to fulfill the realization of their sacred mission.

Following the tradition of Cotton Mather, the classic writers reacted to contemporary socio-political and moral turbulence by taking recourse to, according to Bercovitch, "the genre of auto-American-biography: the celebration of the representative self as America and the American self as the embodiment of a prophetic universal design" (P O, p. 136). Through the celebration of the regenerate American -- an embodiment of sainthood and nationality -- auto-American-biography conveyed the simultaneous significance of self- assertion, a Jeremiad against untoward history and the prophetic affirmation of a glorious future.

Thus, Bercovitch explores and illuminates the neglected area of typology in Miller's study not only to restore typology to its due position in the Puritan imagination but also, in the process, discovers the rhetorical construction of American exceptionalist identity.

The consideration of Bercovitch's work as an extension of Millerian thought has come under sharp criticism. David Harlan argues that Bercovitch's

interpretation is "not an extension and a completion of Miller's work, but its denial and negation". He indicts Bercovitch for approaching American Puritanism "not as a source of insight but as a system of deception" (1991: 952). While Miller saw Puritanism in New England as a source of enduring values which had the power to instruct and redeem a decadent, materialistic society, Bercovitch, according to Harlan, saw in it only a tyrannical ideology which impinged itself on the American mind not only to obviate change but also to severely restrict and eliminate all other alternatives to it. Puritanism for Miller was "a source of strength . . . which, were it with us today, might enable us to meet our problems head on" (1979:35). Bercovitch, according to Harlan, contrary to Miller's thought, perceives Puritanism by way of rhetoric, as a source of hegemonic consensus which not only established and legtimized a national ideology but also stultified and subordinated American imagination in the service of that ideology. In respone to Marian's indictments that Bercovitch has returned Puritanism to the highly pejorative status of pre-Millerian scholarship, Bercovitch asserts that his attempt to "understand the constraints (as well as creative energies) embedded in the rhetorical and conceptual forms" of New England Puritanism for estimating their significance and influence in contemporary times is "a positive, not a negative pursuit" (1991: 972).

Bercovitch clarifies that his approach to American Puritanism began primarily as an investigation of what he perceived, as a Canadian immigrant, a set of cultural secrets behind the myth of America. He soon discovered that the roots of these secrets reached far back into the Seventeenth Century New England Puritanism. He opines that a fruitful investigation of the symbolic construction of America was possible only when one resisted the sacred/secular symbology of America and adopted an interpretative cross-cultural approach.

Bercovitch's discovery of `America' from an outsider position unfolds at two levels: "negatively as cultural otherness and ambiguously, as a set of cultural secrets, the other American hidden from view by interpretation. . . . " America, according to Bercovitch is not a progenitor of symbols but "a process of symbol-making through

which the norms and values of a modern culture were rationalized, spiritualized and institutionalised — rendered the vehicle as the American Way, both of conscience and of consensus" (1993:13).

Rael Meyerowitz argues that Bercovitch's work is indicative of not only being "a progressively more sophisticated appreciation, and more intricate analysis of the literary vehicles of American acculturation", but also "the intellectual and existential path" and the medium of "his own gradual acculturation" (1995:237). He asserts that the intricate search for acculturation and the enormous effort at incorporation initiated by the predecessors of contemporary American Jewish scholars have currently acquired a culturally befitting form. But while they respond to the realities of their existence, and sometimes political necessities, they continue to be bound by lingering, probably unconscious, contradictory impulses which manifest simultaneously. They tend either to "inscribe their doubts concerning the sincerity of their American welcome within radical textual critiques" or according to Meyerowitz, "conform, even celebrate their `naturalization' by contributing to the cultural mainstream" (1994:41). Bercovitch as a Jewish-Canadian immigrant to the United States, Meyerowitz suggests, is an emphatic example of the contemporary Jewish American predicament.

Bercovitch's relation of the "typological or metaphorical, or rhetorical `Zionism'" of the Puritan enterprise in the New World to the "original" Hebrew dream of the Jews' "Return to Zion" is accomplished with great felicity (Ibid:43). It bespeaks his apparent celebration of the American Dream and thus his participation in the American ideology of consensus as a mode of acculturation. But Meyerowitz contends that being a Jew who is not only rooted in Yiddish culture and also a resident of Israel for a personally valuable period of time, Bercovitch's consciousness must necessarily reverberate with his own traditional Zionism. A Zionism which was sustained by ritual incantations in prayer, discussed in religious education and intensely desired or temporarily deferred for more than two millennia. To show Bercovitch's covert preoccupation with his inherent Zionism behind the apparent celebration of the myth of

America, Meyerowitz singularizes the first paragraph of the last chapter of **The American Jeremiad.** Bercovitch's emphatic distinction between the Old World dichotomy of the Church and State and their unique conjunction that Puritan New England bequeathed to American polity leads Meyerowitz to seize a fleeting glimpse of Bercovitch's Jewish predicament. The passage, a description of the all-pervading union of Church and State, raises a series of questions in Meyerowitz's mind:

> Is there not at least one other, albeit non-Christian, "modern culture", "national designation", and "symbol of identity" to which these judgements might also apply? And does this combination of insistent tones with oversight or ellipses not paradoxically reveal the site of ambivalence in Bercovitch's prose, and announce the recurrent issue of dual allegiance with which even so intellectually sophisticated a Jewish American, or American Jew, must still grapple? (Meyerowitz 1994: 44).

After that outburst of rhetorical hyperbole, Bercovitch, according to Meyerowitz, quickly recovers himself from the momentary lapse into unconscious reverie. He begins an analysis of a passage from Melville's **White Jacket** which draws on the Israelites' exodus from Egypt as the source of the American ideal of liberty to reassert the parallel between America and Israel. Again in the final pages of **The American Jeremiad,** Bercovitch movingly describes Hawthorne's Dimmesdale as another Moses surveying the Promised Land, which he cannot enter, to reaffirm the Founding Fathers' vision and ends the book by quoting from the appropriate passages of the Old Testament.

In all this, Meyerowitz argues, "Bercovitch has a personal and psychic stake in his Puritan scholarship ... in addition to everything else his work represents and achieves, it also manages to give expression to some of his anxieties of Jewish identity in America" (Ibid), Furthermore, Bercovitch's selection of Cotton Mather as the central figure of his first book, **The Puritan Origins of the American Self,** according to Meyerowitz, suggests significant parallels between the two. Mather's filial position in

comparison to his forefathers, who were the progenitors of the Puritan enterprise, is analogous to Bercovitch's own place both in the larger context of the historical continuities of the Puritan venture and to his status as a second-generation Jewish immigrant in America. Mather's position, Meyerowitz argues, offer him a "retrospective view" to write Puritan history and "reconstructive, mythicizing biographies" of the Founding Fathers (1995:219). Mather considered it his sacred mission, through his writing, to recall his society from its waywardness. But the writing also distanced him from his contemporaries and shifted his sense of belonging, not to the primal community of the Founders but, to a succeeding generation. Meyerowitz points out that, for Bercovitch, Mather's " defensive recourse, like that of all subsequent Americans, is to prepare the ground for the America yet to come" (Ibid).

Meyerowitz contends that Bercovitch's description of Mather's representative status in **The Puritan Origins of the American Self** offers a parallel unfolding of Bercovitch's own career. As a second-generation Jewish American he is one of "expatriate idealists" and a "latter-day" Jewish intellectual who is mostly unconnected to "any existent community" (P O, p. 131). Bercovitch, like Mather, is saved from the rigors encountered by the first-generation immigrants who are totally absorbed in building their "City on a Hill." So considered, both of them are "irremedially cut off from firstness, and that this is experienced not only consciously, as respite and relief, but unconsciously as anxiety and loss; such psychic conditions may then be translated by each into the mission, or compulsion, to use the past, the projected future, and all the critical and creative tools at his disposal," to invoke the past in order to distinguish the breach between past and present (1995:222).

Thus, Bercovitch's Puritan scholarship in all its intricacies of analysis emerges as a significant personal and intellectual effort at his own American acculturation.

Meyerowitz opines that after having grasped the power of the New England Puritan imagination through the legacy of its rhetoric and its exclusions, Bercovitch must also "bring to such matters a double, if not multiple perspective and a need to negotiate between what must at times feel like mutually exclusive experiences and interpretations" (1944:45). In the final analysis, the development of Bercovitch's Puritan scholarship offers the prospect of a suitable "analysis of the way in which American public rhetoric continues consistently to incorporate dissenting voices (like those of the Jews, women, African American, gay and lesbians, and others) by palliative, domesticative ploys that promise far more than they actually deliver, while serving the needs of the status quo" (Ibid).

Bercovitch's work signifies the centrality of New England to the American colonial experience and the subsequent development of the American nation. This constricted view has not only distorted American historigraphy but has also greatly impaired the formation of a truly representative literary Canon. Thus, we might argue that the powerful dynamics of the religious convictions of a male-dominated Puritan New England not only obscured the relative importance of other colonists but also precluded their participation in forging American exceptionalist ideology and national identity.

The New England Puritan legacy as manifest in the rhetoric according to Bercovitch, is a monolithic and hegemonic consensus that has continuously arrested the possibilites of change by subsuming dissent and gearing social protest towards a revitalization of America's mission. The consensual tradition, according to Bercovitch, has persistently excluded all alternatives to the dominant culture by transforming opposition into a mode of redefining the very order it has set out to critique. Bercovitch's critique of American Puritanism to a large measure, has been shaped by this consensus. The choice of canonical texts demonstrates the traditional New England provinciality practised by other theorists before him who subscribed to a narrow, highly prejudiced literary Canon. It may be seen that Bercovitch's work for the most part, projects New England Puritan culture as a microcosm of the American Republic and renders the existence of other English, non-Puritan non-White and non-Christian groups as

subordinate to the shaping of the American national character. However, it goes to Bercovitch's credit that he has acknowledged that the old consensus, which privileged the exceptionalist American ideology with its roots in colonial New England, has broken down, giving rise to dissensus in every area of American Studies. Bercovitch believes that American culture is essentially a poly-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-racial society; and that America far from being an "over-arching synthesis" is a rhetorical battleground. This positon reflects varying forms of "contradiction and change" and expresses the need for not only rewriting American history but also redefining the American literary canon.

With such a realization about the definition of American identity and sensibility, Bercovitch seems to have completed a full circle. The lack of certainty about the meaning of America offers, as in the case of the contemporary multi-culturalists in America a liberating possibility, a means by which the concept of more accommodative American nationhood could be forged. This is the direction in which Bercovitch's latest writings seem to be pointed.

Finally, undeterred by the ideological polemics it has bestirred in the American acamedia, the unabated authority of the New England Puritan imagination and the power of its rhetoric perpetuates itself even in the closing years of the Twentieth Century. A recent example of its undiminished influence on American life and culture as manifested in American public rhetoric is the country's most solemn national event the inauguration of the President. Billy Graham, the most popular evangelist of the Century and a present-day American Jeremiah laments and exhorts as he leads the nation in prayer: "we have sown to the wind and are now reaping the whirlwind of crime, drug abuse, racism, immorality, and social injustice. We need to repent of our sins and to turn by faith to You.... to meet those challenges and to dedicate ourselves anew, not only to you, but to America, and all the great ideals that we stand for" (1993:S55). The Reverend Richard C. Halverston thanks God "for the miracle that is America" while the new President completes the ritual of the Puritan legacy of ideological consensus:

Though our challenges are fearsome, so are our strengths. Americans have ever been a restless, questing, hopeful people. And we must bring to our (ask today the vision and will of those who came before us.

From our Revolution to the Civil War, to the Great Depression, to the civil rights movement, our people have always mustered the determination to construct from these crises the pillars of our history.

Today, we do more than celebrate America, we rededicate ourselves to the very idea of America.

An idea infused with (he conviction that America 's long heroic Journey must go forever upward.

Let us begin anew with energy and hope, with faith and discipline, and let us work until our work is done.

The scripture says "Let us not be weary in well-thing, for in due season, we shall reap, if we faint not".

We have heard the trumpets. We have changed the guard. And now each in our own way, and with God's help we must answer the call (Ibid: S56-58)

Can there be any greater evidence of the abiding nature of the Puritan vision in American culture?

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