

CHAPTER THREE:
PURITAN NEW ENGLAND (1620-1691)

PART A:
THE PILGRIMS

In 1606, in the village of Scrooby, Nottinghamshire, England, a small group of people made a covenant to be a Separatist congregation. Under the leadership of their minister, John Robinson (ca. 1575-1625) they held services in the home of Elder William Brewster (ca. 1560-1644). Harassed with fines and imprisonment, they fled to the Netherlands in 1608. They joined the “Ancient Brethren,” the Separatist congregation of English exiles in Amsterdam founded by Francis Johnson. Uncomfortable with the incessant conflict in that congregation, Robinson with some of the Scrooby congregation and others from the Ancient Brethren went in 1609 to Leyden, Netherlands, where they organized another Separatist congregation.

Henry Jacob, an advocate of non-separating Congregationalism, for several years worshiped with the Leyden congregation. During this time, Robinson and his people moved away from rigid Separatism to acceptance of some participation in the Church of England.

As war clouds gathered over Europe, the Leyden Separatists negotiated with English merchants to establish a colony in North America. When the colonists-to-be left the Netherlands in July, 1620, John Robinson, who could not go with them, advised them to cooperate with any non-separating Puritans who might come to them, and invited them to be open to change, declaring, “The Lord hath more truth and light to break forth out of his Holy Word.”

From the Netherlands these “Pilgrims” sailed to England, where the merchants placed on board additional passengers not necessarily motivated by religion. Arriving at Cape Cod, New England, aboard the *Mayflower* in November 1620, this mixed group founded a civil government with the *Mayflower Compact*, patterned after their church covenant, in this case giving church members and non-members equal voice in the colony’s affairs. The church members, more organized and with a clear vision of the colony’s purpose, always provided the leadership of the colony.

Plymouth Colony was founded in 1620 under the leadership of Separatists who were no longer rigid in their separation. Their church, the first Congregational Church in America, was in fact a branch of the church in Leyden. Their spiritual leader, William Brewster, was an Elder, not a minister. He preached and prayed and catechized the youth, but did not administer the sacraments. Services of “prophecy” were held Sunday afternoons, in which any member could comment on the application of the Scripture. Marriage was strictly a civil affair; the dead were buried with great simplicity. Sunday was the only holy day. However, when non-church members complained about having to work on Christmas Day, they were allowed to remain at home, provided they observed the day quietly.

PART B: THE PURITAN MIGRATION

Non-separating Puritans in England faced increasing restrictions, harassment and punishment. As ceremonial conformity was pressed, it became increasingly difficult to maintain that one could be a good Puritan and stay in the Church of England. But schism was a sin. What was a Puritan to do? Puritans began to think that perhaps they could remain non-Separatists in the Church of England if they were separated by an ocean from the Archbishop and King. In America they could put into practice their Puritan principles and still claim to be loyal members of the Church of England.

From 1630 to 1640 about 20,000 immigrants came to New England from England. This “Puritan Migration” founded the colonies and established the Congregational churches of New England. The Puritans who settled New England wanted worship to be less formal and more spiritual. They looked to the Bible for guidance in ordering church and society. The leaders of the migration were non-separating Congregationalists. Puritans of other opinions either went along with this new establishment (after all, schism was a sin), or else found themselves driven into the wilderness to found new colonies.

The Colonies

The Puritan colonies of New England each developed in its own way, some more liberal than others. In all of them, the church organized on a Congregational pattern, but considered itself still a faithful part of the Church of England.

Massachusetts Bay Colony. Puritans dominated the New England Company which in 1628 secured a charter from the King to occupy a portion of

New England. Small groups sailed in 1628 and 1629 to establish the settlement of Salem. In 1629 the church at Salem was organized on the basis of a covenant, without renouncing the Church of England. This was the first Congregational Church organized in America. The following year eleven ships full of immigrants arrived. The immigrants founded Boston and several other towns, and established the government of Massachusetts Bay Colony in New England.

In the eyes of Governor John Winthrop (1588-1649) the new colony was “a city set on a hill.” It was to be an experiment in creating a model church and society, a model that old England could observe and eventually imitate. Church and State had distinct functions, but the state nurtured the church, promoted its values, and only communicant church members could vote.

Connecticut. In 1636 Thomas Hooker (1586-1647), a pastor in Newtown (now Cambridge), Massachusetts, led much of his congregation west to the Connecticut Valley, where they founded the city of Hartford and the Colony of Connecticut. This new Puritan colony was more liberal than the Bay, in that the franchise was not restricted to communicant church members.

New Haven. When minister John Davenport (1597-1670) arrived in Boston, he thought the colony not strict enough. With a following of more exact Puritans he founded New Haven Colony in 1638. In New Haven only church members could vote, membership standards were strict, and discipline was freely enforced. Connecticut annexed New Haven in 1662.

New England Confederation. These four Puritan colonies, Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, Connecticut and New Haven, consulted together as the New England Confederation beginning in 1643. The meetings of this body often consisted of efforts by the Bay to establish unity by getting the smaller colonies to conform to its policies.

Other Colonies. In 1640 Thomas Mayhew (1593-1682), a resident of Massachusetts, purchased from the English merchants the right to colonize Martha’s Vineyard and nearby islands. These islands were annexed to the colony of New York in 1663.

The religious motive was less important in the establishment of a number of smaller settlements along the coast of what is now New Hampshire and Maine, although a few were havens for dissenters from Massachusetts. When Civil War broke out in England, authorities from the Bay Colony visited each of these

settlements and convinced them to side with the Puritans by recognizing the authority of the Bay.

The Polity: Cambridge Platform

When old England was adopting Presbyterianism in 1645, and some New Englanders began agitating for Presbyterianism, the Massachusetts legislature called on its churches to draw up a statement of doctrine and church government.

The Cambridge Synod, meeting from 1646 to 1648, was composed of ministers and elders from Massachusetts and representatives from the other Puritan colonies. It endorsed the new *Westminster Confession* “for the substance thereof,” and commended it to the churches as “worthy of their due consideration and acceptance.” The Synod expressed its respect for Presbyterians, and did not believe their differences in polity were sufficient to call for schism in local congregations. The Synod published the *Cambridge Platform* (*LTH*, 3:6), which summarized the current consensus of Congregational Polity and recommended it to the churches.

- Congregational churches were created by mutual consent to a church covenant.
- Persons could be received into membership who lived outwardly moral lives and could profess their faith. The nature of this profession was controversial. Originally, a person was required to express comprehension of the basic doctrines of Christianity. Beginning in 1636 some churches in Massachusetts required persons to “declare what work of grace the Lord had wrought in them.” This soon became the practice in Massachusetts and New Haven, and to some extent in Connecticut. The rigor with which this standard was applied varied greatly from congregation to congregation. The *Platform* declared, “a personal and public confession, and declaring of God’s manner of working upon the soul, is both lawful, expedient and useful.”
- Church officers were Pastor, Teacher, Ruling Elder and Deacon. The first two were considered ministers, the last two laity. All officers were elected for life, and ordained. As ordination was to ministry in a local church, a minister called to another church was ordained again. Ministers ordained in the Church of England did not look upon this added ordination as in any way a rejection of the validity of their Anglican ordination. The positions of *Pastor* and *Teacher* were often combined, especially as the clergy surplus evaporated after the first generation. The position of *Ruling Elder* – a lay leader who participated in

discipline – soon passed out of use. *Deacons* handled the business affairs of the church, assisted with communion, and aided the needy. Ordination was by laying on of hands by the minister(s) and elder of the church, sometimes by representatives elected by the congregation, and sometimes by ministers and elders of neighboring churches.

- The congregation elected officers, admitted members, and exercised discipline.
- Churches were to preserve “church-communion” with each other. Churches faced with difficult decisions or controversy could invite other churches to send ministers and representatives to a council to discuss the issue and make recommendations. These would later be called “vicinage councils,” that is, councils of churches in the vicinity. The *Platform* did NOT provide for standing representative bodies. Larger Synods could be called when needed by the legislature or the churches; such synods could not exercise authority or discipline, but their decisions should be respected by the churches.

To provide for an educated ministry the Congregational colonies founded Harvard College in 1636 and Yale in 1701. Following graduation from college the theology student received private instruction from a minister.

Puritan Piety and Worship

The New England Sabbath began at sunset Saturday and ended at sunset Sunday. For twenty-four hours the struggle for survival was set aside, along with all acquisitiveness and frivolity, and the community contemplated the sacred.

Congregational churches held services every Sabbath morning and afternoon, and each service lasted about three hours. Every service centered on the Bible; whole chapters were read by the pastor or teacher, accompanied by enough explanation to make the meaning clear. The preacher employed his knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, Theology and History in preparing a sermon that expounded one verse of the Scripture lesson in plain language that the simplest hearer could understand. Sermons addressed the spiritual and ethical aspects of the lives of the hearers, and lasted 60 to 90 minutes. The people sang Psalms to Psalm tunes (*LTH* 3:4) in unison and without accompaniment, often “lined out” by a song leader for the benefit of those without Psalm books. The worship leader prayed for 60 to 90 minutes from his heart without written forms. In the early days a collection was taken for the benefit of the ministers and the poor, but the custom faded as the Towns assumed responsibility for both. The sacraments of

communion and baptism were celebrated in public worship, never in private, and communion was usually celebrated about 6 to 12 times a year. The entire service was conducted without the aid of Prayer Books or responses or other human inventions. Even the prayer that Jesus taught his followers, commonly called the Lord's Prayer, was not recited, but was viewed as a pattern for prayer.

In addition to the congregation's two public services on the Sabbath, and a "lecture" on a weekday evening, Congregationalists also held "private exercises." These were gatherings in small groups for prayer and discussion, where lay people had the opportunity to participate and to lead. In groups composed of women, women had the opportunity to speak and to lead. In these meetings people discussed their personal sorrows and struggles and received support. Also, the family was a mini-church which read the Bible once or twice a day and offered prayers at those times and at meal times. Youth were catechized in the home.

The devout Puritan found time for personal devotions. These "secret exercises" often consisted of reading the Bible and other spiritual works, meditation, prayer, and entering in a diary one's spiritual experiences and reflections. Self-examination constituted a major element in these exercises. Before the public celebration of communion, the devout prepared in their spiritual exercises by contemplating the meaning of the sacrament.¹

PART C: PURITAN CONTROVERSIES

When the dissenters from old England became the establishment in New England, they soon had to deal with new dissenters. New England's leaders brought from England their assumption that a state could have only one church, and that the state should protect that church for the good of the state. They were religious zealots, convinced that they were right and that the purity of their religion should be maintained. They also acted for self-preservation. Fearful that old England might restrict their freedom or impose old England's religious conformity, New England tried to maintain the appearance of being loyal subjects of the King and members of the Church of England. New England had to maintain order and suppress heresy just like old England.

The Congregational churches of New England had only spiritual power and

¹The poems of Ann Bradstreet (ca. 1612-1672) (*LTH* 3:5) express the popular Puritan piety of early New England.

could do nothing in the form of punishment beyond excommunication. However the civil power could and did require church attendance and financial support and could fine, imprison, whip, banish and execute persons for their religious views. The civil authority believed it was their duty to maintain orthodoxy for the good of the state.

The Puritans who settled New England were not all of one mind. Some diverged from the norm so far as to receive severe action. Others, who were orthodox in their views, still urged tolerance and criticized the state's severe actions. Through a series of controversies the New England colonies' harshness toward dissenters gradually lessened.

Roger Williams

Roger Williams (ca. 1604-1683) arrived in Boston in 1631. Offered the position of teacher at First Church, Boston, Williams refused. The people of First Church had not separated from the Church of England, and rejected Williams' appeals to repent of their non-separatism. Roger Williams was a Puritan's Puritan; motivated by the love of God, he wanted to worship that God in purity of spirit and separate from all impurity of the world.

Williams preached in Plymouth for a couple of years, then at Salem. In 1635 the General Court (that is, the legislature) of Massachusetts banished Williams from the colony. The authorities perceived the issues to be more political than religious, but for Williams everything was religious. The issues were:

1. Roger Williams preached against the charter of Massachusetts Bay Colony, and called on the colony to renounce it. In the charter, King Charles, claiming to be the first Christian sovereign to discover these lands, granted them to the colony. Williams argued that the unregenerate King could not claim to be a Christian, the colony should not be founded on such a lie, and, besides, the land belonged to the Indians, not to the King.
2. Williams preached against a loyalty oath the colony required of adult males. Williams pointed out that an oath was an act of worship. To require unregenerate persons to worship was to create hypocrites.
3. Williams called on the Salem church to separate from the other churches of the colony because the others did not separate from the Church of England. The Salem church refused.
4. Williams preached that the civil authority did not have the right to enforce the first table of the Ten Commandments (commandments 1-4), which referred to a person's relationship with God.

New England Puritans respected Roger Williams for his deep and pervasive spirituality. But Williams' Separatism led him into paths that others were unwilling to follow.

In January 1636, before Williams could be sent back to England, he fled to the wilderness, where he established the colony of Providence Plantation. With other refugees from Salem, Williams organized the first Baptist Church in America in 1639. However after a few months Williams withdrew from that church. His drive for a pure church ultimately led him to have communion only with his wife.

Anne Hutchinson

In 1633 John Cotton (1584-1652) arrived in Boston, New England, and was promptly elected Teacher of the church in Boston. The following year Anne (Marbury) Hutchinson (1595-1643) arrived, one of Cotton's most ardent admirers from his former parish in Boston, Lincolnshire, England. This intelligent and devout Puritan woman held private women's meetings in her home, according to Puritan custom. At these meetings Hutchinson discussed the sermons heard in church, always praised Cotton, and found fault with the theology of all other ministers. She soon entertained a second weekly meeting that included men. Hutchinson believed the clergy – except Cotton – placed too much emphasis on works, and not enough on grace.

The colony was soon divided between the "covenant of grace" and the "covenant of works." Hutchinson's followers, under the covenant of grace, believed they could discern who was under the covenant of works, and condemned them.

The situation was aggravated when Hutchinson's brother-in-law, John Wheelwright (ca. 1592-1679), arrived in 1636, and at an afternoon service identified most of the colony's clergy with the antichrist. Later, Wheelwright said of the colony's civil and religious leadership, "we must kill them with the Word of the Lord," and he was convicted of sedition. The annual election for governor, May 1637, was a near riot in which the "works" candidate defeated the "grace" candidate.

The government called on the clergy to resolve the matter. This first synod of New England Congregationalists in 1637 defined the heresy of "antinomianism" without naming names. The civil authorities then applied the decision of the synod. Wheelwright was banished; then Hutchinson was brought in (*LTH* 3:3).

Although supposedly on trial for “antinomianism,” two other issues loomed large:

1. that as a woman she had instructed men in theology;
2. that she had shown disrespect for most of the clergy, thus creating division.

Hutchinson defended herself well through a long belligerent interrogation, in which prejudice against her gender played a major part. But she finally made a statement that convicted herself: Hutchinson claimed direct inspiration from God. Massachusetts was a Bible Commonwealth; the Bible was the ultimate source of truth. Religious experience was highly valued, but could not be placed on the same level of authority as the Bible. Anne Hutchinson was banished; her supporters were disarmed. They purchased the island of Aquidneck, renamed it “Rhodes Island” and began a new settlement. In the Anne Hutchinson affair the Bay colony resolved a divisive theological conflict with civil actions seriously colored by sexism.

Presbyterians

Later leaders estimated that 20% of the Puritan Migration favored Presbyterianism. For most the differences were not sufficient to cause division. The church in Newbury, Massachusetts, was presbyterian; Hingham had presbyterian leanings. In the second generation the churches in Wethersfield, Killingworth and Woodbury, Connecticut, adopted a presbyterian system. In seventeenth century New England being presbyterian meant two things: (1) Church discipline and other important matters were handled by the Elders, not the congregation; (2) a “parish system” was adopted, in which anyone not a notorious sinner could receive the sacraments.

When a Presbyterian Parliament was in power in England, in 1646, Dr. Robert Child of Newbury petitioned the Massachusetts Colony, that either the sacraments be made available to all, or dissenters be allowed to organize Presbyterian Churches, or else he would appeal to Parliament. Child was fined, then imprisoned, and by then there was no longer a Presbyterian Parliament to which he could appeal.

Friends

George Fox (1624-1691) searched for spiritual truth in civil war England, and organized the Society of Friends, commonly called “Quakers” in 1652. Fox and Friends preached a radical puritanism. Every person had an inner light – a divine spark – within them, which had more authority than the Bible. They rejected all church offices, including the educated ministry. They rejected

outward sacraments. They rejected all class distinctions and all violence. Their worship consisted of sitting in silence until someone was inspired by the Inner Light to speak.

Massachusetts Bay authorities looked upon the Friends as disturbers of the social order and took strong measures against them. The first Friends to arrive in Boston, in 1656, were confined to jail until they could be sent back to England. In that and the following year, Massachusetts passed laws against the "Quakers." However, the Friends practiced non-violent confrontation; when banished they promptly returned. In 1658 the colony made "Quakers" who returned three times from banishment eligible for the death penalty. Four Friends were executed by hanging in Boston Common by 1661. One of them, Mary (Barrett) Dyer (ca. 1610-1660), was a former member of Boston's First Church, from which she had been excommunicated with her friend Anne Hutchinson. The execution of "Quakers" was stopped by order of the King.

Not all Puritans agreed with this harsh treatment of the Friends. James Cudworth (1604-1682), one of the Assistants to the Governor in Plymouth Colony, voted against anti-Quaker laws as one of Plymouth's two representatives on the New England Confederation. Although the new laws made it illegal to entertain Friends or to attend their meetings, Cudworth invited them to meet in his home, so he could learn more about them. He concluded, "I tell you that as I am no Quaker, so I will be no Persecutor." For this he was disfranchised. The Plymouth government appointed four persons to attend Friends meetings in order to debate them. One of these four, Isaac Robinson (ca. 1610-1704), son of the Leyden pastor, became a Friend as a result of these debates.

The first Friends meeting in America gathered in Sandwich, Plymouth Colony, in 1658. The Friends became more numerous in Plymouth Colony than anywhere else. Some inhabitants of that colony saw in the Friends traits that were diminishing in the Congregational Churches, where the custom of lay participation in prophesying had once been strong, and where lay persons like William Brewster had often given leadership to pastor-less churches. In time the colony elected a new governor, and the fines and whippings stopped.

Baptists

The Baptist Church rose out of the Congregational Church. The first English-speaking Baptist church was a secession from the separatist "Ancient Brethren" of Amsterdam. The second Baptist Church was a secession from Henry Jacob's semi-separatist Congregational Church in London. It should not be surprising that some Bible-loving advocates of regenerate churches would

conclude that Baptism should occur when a person professed regeneration.

In 1654 Henry Dunster (1612-1659), President of Harvard College, did not have his newborn child baptized. When pressed on the matter he declared that he found nothing in the Bible to justify infant Baptism. All the Congregational clergy sent to him to persuade him of his error failed. He was required to resign from Harvard, and retired to Scituate in Plymouth Colony, where he occasionally preached in the Congregational Church. Many others like Dunster, resisted the pressure to have their children baptized, but considered it a matter of personal conscience, and did not withdraw from the Congregational Church to organize separate Baptist congregations.

John Myles (1621-1683), a Welsh Puritan who became a Baptist minister in 1645, held an important position in the Church of England under Cromwell. Fearing reprisal from the restored monarchy, he came to America, settled in Rehoboth, Plymouth Colony, in 1663, and founded a Baptist Church there. His church practiced open communion, and he was often asked to speak at the Congregational Church when their pastor was ill. However, in 1667 the Colony fined Myles for setting up a separate church. Then the Plymouth officials proposed a novel solution: if the Baptists would move, to create a Town of their own, there would be no problem. The southern portion of the Town(ship) of Rehoboth and adjoining unincorporated territory was incorporated as the Town of Swansea in 1667. The new town had one church, a Baptist Church.²

This “solution” tells us something about how Plymouth Colony understood the “problem.” There was only one Church; schism was a sin. To have two congregations in the same small town would be schism. However there had always been local variations in the church. If the one holy catholic church could be Reformed in Zurich, Lutheran in Wittenberg, and Anglican in England, why couldn't that same one catholic church be Congregational in Rehoboth and Baptist in Swansea? The two churches practiced intercommunion. The nature of Baptism was of less importance to Plymouth officials than preserving the unity of the church.

Baptists did not fare as well in the Bay Colony. The First Baptist Church of Boston was founded in Charlestown in 1665. Thomas Goad (d. 1675) and the other First Baptists were Congregationalists who, because they did not have their children baptized were harassed by church and civil authorities until they left. For

²The Baptist Church of Swansea later affiliated with the Christian denomination and through that avenue became part of the United Church of Christ.

the sin of schism they were admonished, fined and imprisoned and Gould was disfranchised. For several years the civil authorities harassed the Baptists, but popular sentiment against persecution prevented the authorities from banishing them. The Baptists moved to an island in Boston Harbor, where the authorities did not disturb them. After the colony elected a new governor the Baptists drifted back into Boston in 1674 and were not disturbed.

Summary

Popular sentiment increasingly opposed the persecution of otherwise law-abiding citizens for religious non-conformity. Baptists in Boston and Friends in Plymouth Colony found relief in the same way: on the death or retirement of a governor, the people elected a more tolerant governor. Old England's attitudes had been changed by Civil War. There Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Baptists had intercommunion, and worked together *for* toleration. New England persisted much longer in pre-civil war England's quest for religious conformity – the very quest that had caused others to drive them *from* old England. Congregationalists faced the new theological task of rethinking the unity of the church. By becoming more liberal (tolerant), old ideas of catholicity (one church in each place) were being set aside.

PART D: PURITAN MISSION

The early New England Congregationalists were *not* a mission-minded people. According to the Massachusetts Bay charter, preaching to the Indians was one of the reasons for establishing the colony, and supporters in the old country always showed an interest in the progress of this enterprise. However the great majority of Congregational clergy ignored this responsibility. Of the few English Congregationalists who preached to the American Indians, most were lay persons. Only *two* Congregational ministers took their missionary responsibility seriously, and they devoted their lives to the cause.

Thomas Mayhew, Junior (1620-1657) began the settlement of Martha's Vineyard in 1641, soon after his father had purchased the right to settle the island. The younger Mayhew served the small settlement as pastor. Hiacoomes (1610-1690), a native of the island, came to Mayhew's services, first listening from outside, then taking a back seat. Mayhew and Hiacoomes soon became friends, Mayhew giving instruction in the Christian faith and Hiacoomes giving instruction in the local language. Soon the two of them preached to natives all over the island. Hiacoomes was received into the church in 1643 and ordained by 1649. When the younger Thomas Mayhew was lost at sea in 1657, his father,

a layman, continued the work with the Indians. An American Indian Congregational Church was organized in 1659, others soon followed; by 1674 most of the island's natives identified themselves as Christian.

John Eliot (1604-1690) came to Massachusetts in 1631 and was soon elected Teacher of the Congregational Church in Roxbury. After two years of language study, he began preaching to the Indians in 1646.

Eliot set a pattern for future missionaries by devoting much effort to linguistics. Not only did he need to speak the native language; the natives needed the same direct access to the Word of God in their own language that English people had. Eliot published a catechism in the local language in 1654. He published in an Algonkian dialect the New Testament in 1661 and the Old Testament in 1663 – the first Bible printed in America. His *Indian Primer* (1669) was used to teach the Indians to read in their own language.

Eliot believed that Indians interested in Christianity needed to live separate from the pagan influences of the Indian village, and also separate from the corruptions and prejudices of the English village. At his request, the colony granted land for the formation of villages of “praying Indians” beginning with Natick in 1651. Fourteen praying Indian towns were established in Massachusetts, plus others in Plymouth and Connecticut. In praying towns the Indians farmed, observed the Sabbath with three hour services, dressed and worked much like the English in their villages. “Civilization” came with Christianity. Church membership standards were equally rigorous in both communities. The first Indian converts to Christianity as a result of Eliot's work were received in 1652; the first church at Natick was established in 1660. Daniel Takawampait, the first Indian Congregational minister in Massachusetts, was ordained in 1681.

War broke out in 1675 between the non-Christian Indians, commonly called “wild Indians,” and the English. In King Philip's War the praying Indians were looked upon as the enemy by both sides. The “wild Indians” burned their homes; the English threatened their lives. The praying Indians were placed on an island in Boston Harbor for their own safety. There hunger and disease took their toll. After the war, a much diminished praying Indian community re-established four of the Indian towns.

PART E: STEPS TOWARD INCLUSIVENESS

New England Congregationalism was a hybrid: a cross between a gathered church and a parish church. This created contradictions that could never be fully resolved. As a gathered church they received into membership only those who could testify to a work of grace in their lives, and they restricted the sacraments to these faithful. As a parish church they were the church for a defined geographic area – the Town – whose inhabitants were required to attend the church and support the church through their taxes.

The churches began with voluntary contributions, but they were insufficient. In 1638 the Bay Colony passed a law providing for payment of the minister through the property tax wherever voluntary contributions were insufficient. John Cotton and others protested, but only Boston was able to maintain voluntary support. Connecticut Colony adopted a similar measure in 1644. Plymouth passed a weaker measure in 1657, *permitting* the Colony to assess the tax in towns that were negligent in getting a minister. It seemed reasonable to New Englanders that those paying the bill should have a say in how it was spent. Therefore the taxpayers were invited to ratify or veto the church's selection of a minister. This early became the custom, although it was not law in Massachusetts until 1692.

By the 1650s the Congregational Churches faced another problem. The children of communicant members were baptized, making them members of the church. Now these children had grown up. Many believed in what the church taught, and lived Christian lives, but could not testify to a work of grace in their lives, therefore could not become communicant members. Now they had children and asked for them to be baptized. What should the church do? Beneath the immediate question of baptism was the more difficult question of the status of members of the parish who were intellectual believers but not experiential Christians.

This was not a problem for the Presbyterian parishes, or for the churches of Plymouth Colony, who had not required such a testimony for church membership. Neither was it a problem for many parishes, especially in Connecticut, that were lenient in their interpretation of this requirement. But most Congregationalists looked upon the requirement for communicant membership of a testimony of God's work of grace in one's personal life – an innovation of 1636 - as a fundamental feature of the Congregational system.

Several pastors favored baptizing the children of the baptized, but were reluctant to act on their own. The church in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, did go forward, baptizing 75 children of baptized members on 1 February 1657. A synod of Massachusetts churches in 1662 (*LTH* 3:7) allowed that those who were members by baptism,

understanding the Doctrine of Faith, and publicly professing their assent thereto; not scandalous in life and solemnly owning the Covenant before the Church, wherein they give up themselves and their children to the Lord, and subject themselves to the Government of Christ in the Church their children are to be baptized.

These adults were still not full members – they could not receive communion or vote. Critics a century later called this a “half-way” covenant. It did create a “half-way” or second class membership. However it was an act of inclusion, recognizing the validity of intellectual faith, and bridging the growing gap between church and community. Many congregations instituted a new ceremony in which persons gave intellectual assent to the Christian faith: “owning the covenant.”

The time and manner of the adoption of this new strategy varied greatly from congregation to congregation, and resistance was strong. Several churches split over the issue. In some instances the “losers” in a church’s decision migrated to form a new community. By 1692 most congregations had adopted the innovation recommended by the Synod of 1662. Many had gone further, opening their “half-way” membership to other persons in the community, not necessarily children of the communicant members, or eliminating the testimony of a work of grace from the requirements for membership.

In 1686 the King appointed Edmund Andros (1637-1714) to govern New England directly, and the first phase of the Puritan experiment came to an end. For 66 years non-separating Congregationalism had been the established church of most of New England. In communion with the Church of England through all of its transformations, before, during and after Cromwell’s Commonwealth, the church of New England maintained its piety, developed its polity, and began its missionary activity. In the tension between purity and tolerance, both state and church had been pushed in the direction of tolerance.