**THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW ENGLAND**

**A New Wave of Colonists**

The Puritans were radical Protestants who wanted to purify the Church of England, or Anglican Church, of its remaining Catholic practices, including the Latin Mass and the governing hierarchy of bishops and archbishops. They favored a plain service and a church government of autonomous congregations.

The Puritans who came to America were of two types. Some remained within the Church of England, and others, called Separatists, formed their own churches, so as not to be corrupted by the established church.

But both groups were harassed by the government to the point where they felt they had to leave England. The Separatists, or Pilgrims as they came to be called, left for the New World first, in 1620, on the Mayflower, after having settled briefly in Holland. These simple, plain-living people were less prosperous and less committed to big designs than were the Puritans who built Massachusetts Bay, a far larger colony to the north of Plymouth Plantation.

**John Winthrop and the Massachusetts Bay Colony**

The founder of Massachusetts Bay was John Winthrop, a Cambridge-educated lawyer. He and a group of Puritan friends took over a company that had been formed to promote American settlement, the Massachusetts Bay Company. Winthrop was elected Governor and sailed for New England in 1630. He took the company charter with him -- that's important -- insuring that the colony would be self-governing.

In the next thirteen years, 20,000 more Englishmen migrated to the Bay Colony. No colonizing group would come to America in greater numbers or better prepared. Before leaving, Winthrop had talked with John Smith, who had mapped New England and given it its name.

Winthrop believed that Virginia was an example to be avoided…not enough discipline, along with a lust for gold had corrupted it. Winthrop was determined to go a different way.

He launched the Puritan adventure with a stirring sermon, "A Model of Christian Charity," which he delivered at sea, on board the ship, *Arbella*. In it, he set down a vision of human fellowship. "We must be knit together as one man," he declared, and in "brotherly affection."

**A Puritan Society**

Beginning at Boston, Puritans settled in tightly-knit town-building groups. And the towns became the focal units of government. To understand New England, you must start with the towns. And to know the towns, you must know something about Puritanism, for faith was the glue that held the towns together. When the glue started to loosen, the Puritan commonwealth began to fly apart.

The Puritans were the disciples of the sixteenth-century theologian, John Calvin. In Geneva, Switzerland, Calvin established an unforgiving theocracy in which women were drowned and men beheaded for the sins of heresy and adultery. Calvin's core belief was the impossibility of salvation except for those few, the Elect, predestined to enter Heaven.

Good works could not bring on God's saving grace. But once a person received grace, he felt an inner peace, and became a crusader against sin. Puritans admitted only the elect, or Saints, to church membership, and applicants had to prove they were saved by passing an oral test administered by church members. The test was doubly important in Massachusetts, where only church members could vote and hold political office.

Puritan towns were the most completely and equitably planned of any American settlements. Land that had belonged to Indians was handed out free of charge to town-building groups, rather than individuals. To keep title to it, the group had to build a town around a congregational church and agree, in a signed covenant, to live in harmony and Christian brotherhood.

Since Puritans believed in equity, not equality, men of means and stature were given larger allocations of land for their families. Even so, a rough equality prevailed, and every family received land to build homes and farms. All families had to pay taxes to support the church, whether they were members or not.

Other institutions enforced order and orthodoxy. The educational system instilled inflexible discipline and created a literate public, able to read and interpret the Bible. In God-fearing families, mothers taught their children to spot sin in themselves and others. Today, we hate moral surveillance; Puritans welcomed it.

**The Decline of Puritanism**

Some historians like to point out that Puritans enjoyed beer and good fellowship. But Puritans were not a tolerant people. People were tried in court for card-playing, drunkenness, and idleness.

When dangerous dissent was spotted, it was crushed. The first community-wide crisis involved Winthrop's friend, Roger Williams. From his Salem pulpit, Williams thundered against ministers who refused to separate from the Church of England, and he insisted that the king couldn't give away lands belonging to the Indians.

This infuriated Winthrop, who knew land was essential to the colony's success. When Williams refused to back down, Winthrop banished him, and he fled to Rhode Island. There he founded a colony devoted to freedom of worship and the separation of church and state.

A greater challenge to the Puritan orthodoxy came from Anne Hutchinson, a popular mid-wife who began to hold controversial prayer meetings for women, and some men, in her home. Hutchinson denounced the ministers for leading people to believe that they could earn God's grace by good works. She also argued that when a person was saved, the Holy Spirit dwelled in him and guided his life.

To Winthrop, this was revolution. By making religion a deeply personal experience, Hutchinson gave power to lay people, women as well as men, at the expense of ministers. For this, she was hauled into court, charged with sedition, and banished after a dramatic trial in which she acted as her own defense attorney.

Winthrop was her chief judge and prosecutor, and she tied him in knots with her brilliance and sharp wit. To break her down--she was eight months pregnant--she wasn't allowed to sit, eat, drink, or leave the courtroom for natural relief. Even so, she might have been acquitted had she not claimed, like Joan of Arc, that God had spoken directly to her.

To a Puritan, that was heresy, for God revealed himself only through the Bible. Years later, Hutchinson was killed in an Indian massacre. When word reached Winthrop, he remarked: "God's hand is in this."

But it wasn't dissent that killed Winthrop's holy experiment. It was prosperity…a prosperity that was due to Puritanism's own ethic of hard work and self-denial, and the belief that worldly success was a sign of salvation.

As one minister said: "Religion brought prosperity, and the daughter devoured the mother." Winthrop believed there would be trade, but it would be regulated to prevent the outbreak of greedy practices, such as price gouging. When the Winthrop died in 1649, after fathering his 16th child, his successors were unable to maintain his morally regulated economy.

**Indian Wars**

Oliver Cromwell described New England as "poor, cold, and useless." Yet in this harsh place, with its rocky soil and brutal winters, Puritans built a dynamic, commercial society based on fishing, shipbuilding, and trade.

Most New Englanders continued to live on small towns, but in Boston and other seaports, an aggressive merchant class arose and became a power in the Atlantic trading community. In these port cities, church attendance declined and people began parading their new wealth. As this occurred, Puritan ministers increased their attacks on the commercial spirit, predicting that God would soon show his displeasure with New England. In 1674, a Puritan minister named Increase Mather delivered a sermon called "The Day of Trouble is Near."

The following year, New England was almost wiped out by an Indian assault. It was brought on by Puritan expansion into Indian territory. Between 1650 and 1700, New England's population grew from 23,000 to 93,000. The Pequot Indians had resisted early Puritan expansion into the Connecticut River Valley, and they were exterminated in what Winthrop called a "divine slaughter."

Then, there was an uneasy peace with the tribes of New England until 1675. In that year, a Wampanoag chief named Metacom, known to the English as King Philip, launched the bloodiest war, in proportion to population, in American history. King Philip's forces burned more than half the Puritan towns in New England, and pushed back the line of settlement to within 15 miles of the coast.

It was a war fought with an unbelievable savagery. King Philip's warriors wore belts of human skin and necklaces of human fingers. Puritans killed Indian women and sold Indian children into slavery.

When the Puritan forces captured King Philip, they executed him on the spot. Then they cut his body into four parts, severed the head, and took it to Plymouth on a pole for a Thanksgiving Day celebration. It remained there for many years.

After his death, King Philip's forces were eventually defeated by hunger and disease. Not long after this, merchants in the seaport towns asked to loosen Puritan restrictions on free trade and voting, and stop persecuting other religions. The Crown combined Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth and made the enlarged colony a royal colony.

Property ownership replaced church membership as the basis for voting and religious toleration was extended to all Protestants. The ministers complained, citing the loss of Winthrop's original charter as God's punishment, but the new charter ended exclusive Puritan rule in Massachusetts.