

chapter on Turner's significance as a historian, where Turner the New Historian rather than the frontier theorist is stressed. In a better crafted biography, such chapters would perhaps be superfluous, the points already having been made *ars est celare artem*.

There are a few minor irritations: occasionally the prose is a shade too rich, the detail at times a little excessive and one wonders why a letter is footnoted only to a manuscript collection when it has been published twice already once by Billington himself.

However, this is a book that should be read by all interested in American historiography. It will clearly dominate its field for some time to come: it deserves to.

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Puritan New England Revisited

DAVID H. HALL. — *The faithful Shepherd; A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1972.

STEPHEN FOSTER — *Their Solitary Way: The Puritan Social Ethic in the First Century of Settlement in New England*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971.

After the untimely death of Perry Miller some ten years ago, the mantle of leadership in Puritan Studies fell to one of his former students, Edmund S. Morgan at Yale. In the past few years, Yale has produced a number of doctoral dissertations *cum* books, on Puritan political ideas (Breen), the halfway covenant (Pope), the early Massachusetts General Court (Wall), to mention only three. *Their Solitary Way* and *The Faithful Shepherd*, both written by Morgan students, represent new additions to the work of the third generation of Puritan scholars in the Miller tradition. A good deal of scholarly debate has recently been generated over the meaning of "Millerism," but most disputants could probably agree that basic components are the emphasis on the "mind" of New England society as represented in its public utterances; a principal focus on the seventeenth century; and an acceptance of the Puritan's own view of the decline of piety and unity from the vigour of first settlement. Like their other colleagues, Hall and Foster are to some extent revisionists, but quite firmly within the Miller canon.

Foster is quite explicit about his concentration on the public utterance in a preface which is sometimes painfully apologetic and self-conscious. He argues that "for the most part I am writing about what New Englanders habitually said they believed in, not what they habitually did about it," though he recognizes the need for a social context (which he cannot provide) for what was said. Foster's opening casuistry is illuminating about the limitations of the Miller approach in the hands of some sensitive members of the third generation. They realize, as did the third generation of ministers in New England, that they have no answers, but they appear unable to formulate or work out a new approach. Hall is less apologetic about the matter of evidence. As his analysis and footnotes make quite clear, he has relied heavily upon the publications of his ministers, and has employed other sources (manuscript collections, and especially church and town records) only at their most available.

How one can hope to write about the ministry without a thorough explication of its activities on the local level is problematic. The covenanted church in the organized town, after all, was the basis of the ministerial authority and responsibility. Hall's remarks on civil maintenance, one of the most critical and divisive issues facing the seventeenth-century ministry, are sketchy and unrevealing. One looks in vain for any evidence that he has personally inspected the necessary church and town records to attempt to place the ministry into its local context. Not surprisingly, Hall does not particularly emphasize that the clergy had a local context. Emphasis instead is on Boston (where Boston records are

readily available) and on ecclesiastical issues in their larger setting. The reader takes away from Hall's account no notion that a Puritan minister spent most of his waking hours serving, leading, fighting, a community of about 100 families most of whom knew one another all too well. Foster recognizes the problem and explains it away; more traditionally, Hall ignores it.

The concentration on the public record and the focus on the seventeenth century are, of course, closely related. As Perry Miller and everyone else who has worked closely with New England in the eighteenth century has discovered, it virtually defies analysis. The period between say, 1685 and 1760, was complicated enough when its study was based on the public record at the provincial or regional level. As new categories and classes of evidence have been introduced (church and town records, probate records, land records, court records), the period has become hopelessly lacking in central theme and direction. Things are a bit easier in the seventeenth century. In the first place, there are fewer of those annoyingly complex records. Even so, Foster explicitly has focused on the published record to "keep from being swamped by evidence." As one of my students realized a couple of years ago, the ideal historical witness is somebody who provides the only evidence and cannot really be contradicted. What kind of reputation as historian would Thucydides have if his account of the Peloponnesian Wars was not virtually the only source? The mind boggles. For the same reason either John Winthrop or William Bradford are nearly as useful as Thucydides. Even if one were to examine all the available church records (as Pope nearly did in his study of the halfway covenant), the result would be — for the seventeenth century — barely manageable. Small wonder Pope stopped in 1690, just when his story was getting interesting. Moreover, the seventeenth century in New England has a beginning, though both Hall and Foster (perhaps typically of the Yale school) want to murk up founding dates and begin in sixteenth-century Europe. Nevertheless, one can use phrases like Foster's "the First Century of Settlement in New England" with some assurance. Although one can push back intellectual origins as far as one likes, there is no disputing that the actual business of living in America began in the seventeenth century,

Which brings us to the matter of "declension," a term and concept popularized by Perry Miller. Although they might deny it, both Foster and Hall, in their own ways, accept the notion. Hall is fairly explicit about it. His revisionism is to argue that adjustment to American conditions returned New England's Puritanism to its earlier formulations, rather than to something distinctively American. Foster, a more subtle thinker, talks about inherent ambivalences and the dissolution of the Puritan social ethic "into unrelated, often irreconcilable parts." For Foster, then, disintegration is built in and not a product of the American experience. He is less emphatic than Hall on stressing a unity which was lost. In any event, the fact that New England settlement had demonstrable beginnings builds some sort of declension into the equation. There was, after all, only one direction to go.

The end result of general acceptance of the Miller model are two relatively conventional and familiar stories well-told. Only the specialist is likely to catch the subtle changes of interpretation in these books, and the specialist is unlikely to find readability sufficient reason to slog through them. Neither book has been written for the general reader, and one wonders whether they were really necessary as contributions to scholarship. Foster attempts to disarm potential critics by asking that his book "be judged on the basis of the answers it does give to the questions it does ask." While he is quite right in emphasizing that critics should not condemn him for the book he did not write, surely readers are entitled to wonder why he produced the book in hand. As I have indicated, Foster is more than a bit uneasy about his book on this point. Nevertheless, there are sections of both books which are worth the readers's careful perusal.

Though the concept of Puritanism's ambivalence is hardly original, it is nevertheless a useful way to approach a complex topic. Foster breaks little new ground in his analysis of

Puritan social, economic, and political thinking, though his chapters on Love and Poverty are both more original and more provocative. It is more than worthwhile to emphasize that part of the motivating imperative for the Puritan insistence on unity was regenerate love. Too much of the history of Puritanism has been written from the standpoint of piercing intellectual reason. Puritans had a positive commitment to *agape* as well. The chapter on "Poverty" comes closer to social history than any other part of Foster's text proper (there are some interesting bits in the appendixes, to which we shall turn). New England had its poor, and while Puritans did not approve of poverty — seeing it as a judgment of God — they made sincere efforts to deal with it within the limits of their time. In passing, Foster points out that in the eighteenth century, the procedure of warning out potential charges by towns was merely a formality to avoid responsibility for their support. Such analysis of the relationship between action and intention is, unfortunately, all too rare in *Their Solitary Way*.

Equally unfortunate is the relegation of much of Foster's most interesting material to a series of four all too brief appendixes. These matters are not in the text, one gathers, because they deal with practice rather than prescription. But the appendixes show Foster at his best, simultaneously suspicious of facile generalization and sensible about what can be asserted. He is especially dubious of efforts to distinguish a separate merchant class in seventeenth-century New England, and Appendix D offers four sample genealogies to demonstrate the connections of merchants, magistracy, and ministry. It is regrettable that Foster did not do more with the issues raised in the appendixes. As they stand, they are mere titillation at the tag end of the book.

Those who revel in the intricacies of intellectual influence and positions will find Hall's opening chapters illuminating. He is at some pains to point out that Miller's fairly clear-cut categories of Separatist and Non-Separatist (see *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts*) bear little relationship to the dynamics of intellectual interchange in the formative European years of New England Puritanism. But the most successful chapters are those which deal with the ministry after the initial founding had ended. Hall appears to date the rise to preeminence of the second generation (native-born rather than immigrant clergy) around 1660. For the latter part of the century he is particularly good on the desperate efforts of the second generation to maintain their political influence in provincial politics and on the relatively unspoken alteration of sacerdotal evangelicalism, led by the Mathers. Revivalism was well under way before the seventeenth century had ended, though it would be many years before evangelical techniques caught up with ministerial intention.

Given the veritable spate of writings on Puritan New England, one would expect new books on the subject to offer substantial new insights. With the exception of Foster's appendixes, however, this reviewer came away from these two books unfulfilled, with little excitement and no outstanding recollections of what had been said. Such a feeling of futility is all too common in the books published on New England over the past few years. Indeed, it is the occupational disease of readers of most books published by the American academic establishment in general. It is bad enough that the way to a job lies through the cul-de-sac of the doctoral dissertation, which almost by definition must be arcane and unreadable. Worse still, the way to promotion lies through the publication of those doctoral dissertations (suitably revised) as hard-cover books. Very few young scholars have matured enough between their first venture in full scale scholarship and the resulting book publication to justify the capture of their efforts between hard-covers. Foster and Hall have done better than most. Their works have at least the merit of being readable. But freshness, stimulation, mature judgment are in short supply in these books. The grooves have perhaps been worn too deep by those who have travelled the path before.

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