

The Puritan Dilemma; the Story of John Winthrop Study Guide

The Puritan Dilemma; the Story of John Winthrop by Edmund Morgan

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Plot Summary

The Puritan Dilemma, The Story of John Winthrop is a brief biography of John Winthrop but also tells the story of the events that led to the Puritan colonization of America and the struggles the colonists faced in their early years. The book covers the role of Puritan theology in the Puritan relationship with the political authorities in England, its role in creating their unique culture and its role in generating one of the most democratic political bodies in the 17th century world.

The Puritans are often represented as extreme moral policemen who hate everything good in life. While the stereotype does not wholly misrepresent them, the author shows that there is much to commend in the Puritans and their first leader, John Winthrop.

The book has thirteen chapters that proceed in chronological order but are also based around important historical events. In Chapter 1, the author introduces John Winthrop and discusses his childhood, early adulthood and his conversion to Christianity. It explains his education and the early recognition of his argumentative, organizational and political talents. Chapter 2 discusses how the Puritans perceive the political situation of their day under King Charles I of England. More or less, many Puritans worry whether the government was legitimate because Charles I's wife is Catholic and because Charles often persecutes Puritans.

Chapter 3 discusses the alternatives Puritans discuss for handling their current social and political condition. God's wrath, in their minds, would soon strike England due to its sins. The Puritans may very well be swept up in the punishment. With England's morality declining, the Puritans must form a "remnant" of the Godly. They eventually decide to migrate to New England to preserve their righteous religion and morality. Chapter 4 covers Puritan preparations to leave for New England and the details of how Puritan leaders secure a charter from the king to settle New England and manage to escape England with little notice.

Chapter 5 covers the migration to New England and the Puritans' first year trying to survive. Chapter 6 details the Puritans' understanding of their commission from God and how they enforce it. Chapter 7 outlines their strikingly advanced structure of government and how and why it becomes increasingly democratic. Chapter 8 covers the political and social tension the Puritans face between maintaining God's kingdom on the one hand and being reasonably lenient with the behavior of the people on the other. In Chapter 9, the author writes about the problems created by separatism and Roger Williams, whereas in Chapter 10 he discusses the challenge Anne Hutchinson brought to the colony.

Chapter 11 analyzes the Puritan form of government in detail and the debates the people have over how to structure it and which groups had which authority. The Puritans are a largely democratic people who are also very jealous of their liberties. Chapter 12 introduces the challenge presented to the Puritans by the English Civil War; since Puritans were coming to power in England, what more need would there be for

preserving a remnant? Despite this concern, the Puritans stay behind. In Chapter 13, Winthrop and the people of New England face economic depression and realize that they must reach out to the wider world to find markets for their goods and services.



Chapter 1, The Taming of the Heart

Chapter 1, The Taming of the Heart Summary and Analysis

The Puritan story begins in 1544, when Henry VIII, King of England, splits the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church, bringing England into the Protestant Reformation. When monasteries are closed, Adam Winthrop, a London cloth merchant, buys part of one of the confiscated monasteries. Forty-four years later, the English navy defeats the Spanish Armada, ensuring that England cannot be recaptured by the Catholic Church. That same year, John Winthrop, the grandson of Adam, is born, and grows up in Groton Manor, the estate Adam purchased.

Winthrop grows up the only son of wealthy parents who are constantly visited by family members with tales of strange places. Winthrop's father, the second Adam Winthrop of Groton, is a good man, trained in law, and devoted to making the manor a financial success. He is also a gentlemen and he raises his family's fortunes.

At seven, John begins school, in preparation for college at Cambridge, and at fifteen he leaves for college. After two years, he returns home and quickly finds opportunity. On March 28th, 1605, John is engaged to Mary Forth, the daughter of a friend of Adam's, John Forth of Great Stambridge. Three weeks later they marry; John is seventeen. Ten months thereafter he is a father.

During this time, John Winthrop becomes a Puritan but it is not clear why. The Puritan belief at the time is that the Church of England should have its hierarchy removed and anything else that makes it resemble the Roman church. However, it also demands much of the individual, and it revolutionizes the lives of those who convert. It is a great power but its belief system is full of tension. It demands moral perfection of men but teaches that they are unable to be good, that they must trust in Christ entirely but God will reject them unless they are predestined to salvation. Puritanism demands that its followers change the world to make it more like God's Kingdom while maintaining that the world is inevitably corrupt.

Different people respond in different ways to these tensions. Some live in agony, some enjoy holy certainty, some try to constantly demonstrate their holiness to themselves and others. Everyone works hard, but tries not to enjoy the fruits of their labors.

To Winthrop, Puritanism means living in the world but not taking his mind off God. He cannot withdraw from the world. His friends dissuade him from the ministry, for he likes the country life. He should enjoy his gifts because they are God-given, yet he must not like them too much. However, over time, Winthrop denies himself the things he likes most because he follows a rule that an activity is permitted when the enjoyment of it is proportionate to the time and effort involved in it; this means anything he really likes he ultimately has to stop doing.



Eventually, Winthrop stops piling rules upon himself. By age forty, he contains his symptoms. He devotes himself to marriage, as celibacy is not an option. However, his first wife is not the devotee of Puritanism that her husband is. They have six children in ten years and she dies in 1615. In six months, Winthrop marries Thomasine Clopton, a godly woman, but on their first anniversary, she dies as well. At thirty, John marries Margaret Tyndal, from whom he receives a substantial sum. She is tender, kind and feminine.

At thirty, Winthrop finds he can enjoy himself so long as he works hard, although work itself can be a snare. He must labor because God wills it. His primary work is managing his estate but he also begins to study the law. As Winthrop's management of his estate and his future acquisitions bear fruit, he becomes increasingly wealthy and thus important. This leads him to become more familiar with men in his county. His new friends are not the Puritan devotees he is, but they apparently do not mock him.



Chapter 2, Evil and Declining Times

Chapter 2, Evil and Declining Times Summary and Analysis

Puritans are, of course, interested in purifying the world. Men must always attempt to give God perfect obedience. However, evil in their hearts will always betray them. Thus, men must have institutions to constrain their wickedness. God will then reward minor victories over will with minor rewards, bringing prosperity and health to nations that punish evil. In the Puritan view, nations or peoples exist through a covenant with God where they agree to obey God's law and He promises to treat them well in return, much like the Covenant God had with ancient Israel. Governments are instituted to punish the wicked and so long as they do so, men owe them their full obedience. Otherwise, God will punish the nation.

It is not always clear, however, whether a government is adequately doing its job. Most Puritans in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries think it was not. However, they cannot justify rebellion. Queen Elizabeth keeps Puritans guessing. James I is worse in their eyes. However, they deal with regimes they think half-right, but they are always disturbed by troubles in their nation, as if they result from their complicity.

Winthrop thinks of England as a blessed land under the shadow of God's wrath. In his mind, things grow worse as he grows older. During a downturn in the textile market that adversely affects his family, Winthrop grows more concerned. He is able to get a job in London as a lawyer but he is often away from home. However, he has family in town. His work is mostly dull but Winthrop has networking opportunities and becomes well-known in London; it also acquaints him with government corruption.

When faced with corruption, Puritans do they can to save their country from doom. They believe Parliament is their hope of fending off God's anger. While Parliament grows in power, Charles I, who ascends to the throne in 1625, does not respect its rights, ultimately dissolving it and forming a new one. Puritans are afraid of Charles because he is married to a Catholic princess.

Charles espouses a mild Calvinism related to the Puritans' own but the Puritans are alert to heresy at the time because of Arminianism, the belief that men can achieve salvation through their own wills. This view causes defection among the ranks of some of their leaders. Puritans become increasingly democratic in response. However, without Parliament the will of God in England cannot be done.

Winthrop feels that responsibility for England's wickedness is partly his. He blames himself for much of what is happening. He thinks of revolution and he also considers launching a second Protestant Reformation, withdrawing from the Church of England and England as beyond hope. Winthrop rejects the idea but some Puritans, known as separatists, embrace it.



Many separatists leave England for Plymouth Plantation in New England. However, Winthrop and others see the separatists as cowardly, abandoning their call to keep their nation holy. As things worsen for the Puritans, separatism becomes more attractive. Ultimately, Winthrop embraces the separatist cause but without burning bridges with the King or rejecting England's churches.



Chapter 3, A Shelter and a Hiding Place

Chapter 3, A Shelter and a Hiding Place Summary and Analysis

By Winthrop's time, Englishmen have been settling in Virginia and New England for decades. Many Puritans are interested in colonization before Charles I's dissolution of Parliament and many noblemen continue to be interested in funding colonization, despite its unprofitable nature. Further, a group, the Council for New England, has received a royal grant to settle the whole of New England and has yet to make a colonization effort.

The group grants a charter to a group of Puritan merchants known as the New England Company in 1628. Winthrop is not a member, nor is he optimistic about colonial life. The Company sends sent Captain John Endecott to New England to take charge there and Winthrop's son John, Jr. goes with him with his father's blessing, despite his misgivings. A journey his son Henry takes to Barbados corrupts him, making Winthrop even more concerned. Winthrop's brother-in-law, Emmanuel Downing, is becoming more interested in colonization as well. Winthrop begins to lean towards separation.

In response to his interest, Winthrop composes a series of serious legal documents on the prospects of migration to New England that are circulated among important Puritans and are persuasive. The documents are full of economic arguments. He also argues that Puritans should leave to avoid God's judgment. Puritan clergy are concerned about the corruption of the young, so they often agree. America has many advantages in many respects.

Through these discussions, Winthrop's prominence increases and many recognize great talent within him. The members of the Massachusetts Bay Company want to persuade him to join them. They argue to him that he will not be abandoning England but preserving a remnant in the wilderness. They assure him he can use his God-given talents as the leader of a settlement.



Chapter 4, The Way to a New England

Chapter 4, The Way to a New England Summary and Analysis

On July 28th, 1629, Winthrop and other prominent Puritans meet to discuss emigration. Corporate charters like that of the Massachusetts Bay Company usually specify that corporate meetings must be held in a specific place, but, for whatever reason, their charter has no specification. So they propose to hold their meeting in New England to remove control of the colony from the Crown. They cannot be watched in New England. The membership of the company sees the advantages of the move. They can in effect become self-governing and can thereby obtain divine favor. As part of a holy enterprise, they can justify leaving larger responsibilities they have committed themselves to.

Matthew Cradock is governor of the company and officially informs members of the proposal. They consider it on August 29th and decide to hold their official meeting in New England. Winthrop is committed and he and the other Puritans prepare over the next six months, putting their affairs in order. During this time, Margaret becomes pregnant, so she has to stay behind, along with several other women and young children, but she is to come with them later.

Unfortunately, Winthrop has little time for family; he has to gather ships, provisions and passengers. Accumulating passengers is particularly difficult. He also has to deal with stockholders uninterested in their stock being used for a holy experiment. They have to be guaranteed a return. Winthrop also has to keep a lock on public discussion of the plan, as a thousand men and women are making preparations. He also has to gain the support of those who oppose separatism; he even convinces some anti-separatists to come along to keep the colony in order.

Before leaving, Winthrop and other Puritans publish a statement maintaining their love for the Church of England and insisting that they are not separatists. Their statement is issued from their ship, the *Arbella*, the flagship of the expedition, on April 7th, 1630. The next day they leave.



Chapter 5, Survival

Chapter 5, Survival Summary and Analysis

The North Atlantic trip is cold and many groan. Winthrop fights to keep up their spirits by getting them to play games on deck. After two months, land is sighted and in two days they see New England. They eventually cast anchor between Bakers Island and Little Island off Plum Cove. When they arrive, they see only a few huts and hovels, and realize they have no obvious way to survive the winter. They cannot live only on food that can be salted and dried, as they will risk scurvy.

The summer is hot and many of the passengers are malnourished. The winters will be colder than English winters as well. Many die and they risk attack from the French and Spanish, who have rival colonies. Further, nearby Indians and traders might prove a menace as well. Winthrop, however, sees opportunity and tries to inspire his people. We know little about Winthrop's movements the first few months as he had little time for journaling or letters.

Winthrop has some success inspiring his people and quickly gets them all to work, planting corn enough to live. They need more room as well, so Winthrop surveys nearby lands and decides to have his people settle in Charleston. They quickly form plantations around Charleston bay and Winthrop builds his headquarters there. Next the settlers start to gather food for the winter. They are able to purchase food from others and trade with the Indians, which he handles well. The settlers are digging in and building homes.

In Boston and other plantations many are getting sick and dying from hunger, others infected with virus and bacteria. As December begins, Winthrop loses eleven servants. Many people are disillusioned. They nearly freeze during the winter and the cold finally breaks in February. Two hundred have died and two hundred more go home in the spring. However, Winthrop never loses hope.

In spring, resumption of sea traffic brings a new problem because the tales of those who return discourage others. Winthrop has to spend his own money to pay for supplies to save the colony but the day has already been saved by his friend John Humphrey. However, there is never to be another starving winter in New England for the Puritans. The colonists begin planting large farms and the people prosper.

Winthrop struggles to get the colony on sure financial footing, and has help them develop a staple crop. He has a trading ship built, The Blessing of the Bay, which trades furs. Its first ten years brings more immigrants due to the activities of Charles I and the Arminian Bishop Laud. Puritans are more afraid of sin in England than death in America. Fifteen to twenty thousand people come in only ten years time and bring many resources with them.



The main problem economically is to prevent prices from skyrocketing, which the government looks to. They have to prevent charging more than a "just wage" through government punishment and thereby set maximum wages. However, supply and demand kick in and save them from runaway prices. In 1631, Margaret and the rest of Winthrop's family arrive and they no longer have to worry about survival. Winthrop has achieved a great personal triumph; God has blessed them. He must now justify his pleasure.



Chapter 6, A Special Commission

Chapter 6, A Special Commission Summary and Analysis

The Puritans believe God demands more of them than ordinary moral codes do. However, they do not think they need to be pruders or prohibitionists. However, they still are attempting to create a society where God's will is observed in every way. In their eyes, God approves; he has delivered them across the ocean and made them prosperous.

Since the Puritans have a special commission, they have to adhere to God's law particularly stringently. They are determined to be a model for others. For this reason, they try to punish every sin in Massachusetts. Families are cells of righteousness and no one is allowed to live alone. Church is filled every Sunday and censures or excommunicates those who stray. The whole population is a police force but it is hard to determine what counts as sin. This shows itself most prominently with respect to their treatment of alcohol. The Puritans, the author argues, fail to understand that God's kingdom on earth is still one of flesh and blood.

Winthrop knows he cannot deal as harshly with dissenters as King Charles had. He welcomes all Puritans, even separatists. However, the punishment of sin often prevents Puritans from expanding into the wilderness lest there not be enough people watching one another. Winthrop also has to fight to prevent Puritans from wholly repudiating the Church of England because their charter might be revoked. He is ultimately successful in stymieing the separatist impulse.

Another problem for the Puritans is the problem of disagreement. Puritans disagree about what God commands. Some, known as Presbyterians, believe that the English bishops should be replaced by another form of hierarchy, with churches and clergy ordered into a pyramid. Other Puritans think each individual church should be on its own. The second group comes to be called Congregationalists.

The two groups also differ on the composition of the church, with Presbyterians wanting to admit anyone to membership save those who engaged in scandalously sinful behavior, but Congregationalists require individuals to prove that God has chosen them for salvation.

Originally, when churches are founded, they have few members, starting with seven most of the time. They then choose a minister and start to sift through their town's population, admitting only those they unanimously consent to. Those excluded from membership, interestingly enough, rarely complain about exclusion. However, the effect on those in the church is enormous because they have to continually pass judgment on one another and themselves.



Many of the separatists become quite dangerous as a result of this form of moral policing. Some churches block all means of controlling them. The Puritans require following a body of religious principles, but one is inherently schismatic, because it does not allow Puritans to affiliate with those perceived to be sinful. And everyone disagrees.

Reason often heals differences though; the Puritans are good at this. They think ignorance produces heresy and study hard, listening respectfully to those who disagree. Informal methods, therefore, go a long way to preventing separatism. Eventually, however, Winthrop will use the state to preserve community unity.



Chapter 7, A Due Form of Government

Chapter 7, A Due Form of Government Summary and Analysis

The Massachusetts Bay Company charter allows Winthrop and eleven other members of the company's charter to establish order by making laws, statutes and ordinances. The powers are intended to be used in England but in New England the charter gives the company great power. The charter is specific about the form of government, requiring "freemen" to meet four times a year to make laws. They elect a governor and a deputy governor along with eighteen assistants.

Through these powers, Winthrop and the other company members can exercise any government they like. So long as their laws do not contradict English law, they are in the clear. To their credit, Winthrop and the company men do not establish an aristocracy. Endecott was governor of the colony before Winthrop and his people arrive. He does not think he needs assistance, neither does the deputy governor, Thomas Dudley.

However, Winthrop is more mature than they are and does not seek too much power. He always affirms the view, common among Christians, that they are in submission to the secular powers, as well. However, Winthrop regards democracy as dangerous and unwarranted by Scripture. Everyone is unfit to rule. Instead, the assembly meets regularly and passes various laws.

Oddly, Winthrop and the others decide that the Freemen should choose the assistants by election and that the assistants should choose the governor and the deputy governor. Their grounds? The people—not just the freemen—want this. Winthrop runs a general assembly of the settlers at Charleston and they establish Massachusetts' first constitution, using the terms of the charter. The people vote and the assistants are made a legislature and freemen come to mean all members of the commercial company. Instead of consolidating power, Winthrop and the others give it away.

The people have no political rights under the charter, and Winthrop gives them a role to which they had no legal claim. The gift is confined to church members but it is still significant, extending the franchise of government far beyond what exists in England. The people can vote so long as they own more than forty shillings worth of assets.

It is not clear why Winthrop and the others act as they do. There is no evidence that they cave to popular demand. They might have admitted more members through the charter. Instead, the reason is that their theological belief in the idea of a "covenant" with God implies that being part of the covenant is the root of salvation for everyone. The people are a corporate body before God and have corporate rights as a result.

This form of government is not democratic; legislation does not rest with the people but in a select group where Winthrop believes it belong. Nor does Winthrop think that the



people have given the government legitimacy merely through their consent. Rulers only have authority from God, not from the people and are accountable to God, not the people.

However, Winthrop believes still that the people have the right to determine the shape of the government that rules them and the composition of the government. The people must remove ungodly rulers. However, as long as the ruler does his duty, the people are obligated to submit lest they revolt against God's law. Winthrop does not see himself as having limited the authority of government by extending it to the people.

Winthrop is worried that the people might choose the wrong kind of man but he believes the ministers will give the people good advice. The ministers, for this reason, cannot seek public office themselves. No one wants a theocracy, given the shadow of Rome. The priests should not rule (even if religious law rules).

Winthrop and the assistants do not distinguish between legislative and judicial power. Instead, they set laws as they see fit and did not explicitly legislate. They simply judge and often exercise authority over religious deviation for this reason. Winthrop has to handle a problem when George Phillips, a pastor in Watertown and Winthrop's neighbor back in England, teach that the Roman Catholic Church is one legitimate body of Christians. Winthrop storms down to Watertown and argues them out of their position, save for three men.

The author then proceeds to discuss other such disputes. The chapter concludes with Winthrop realizing that excessive purity and excessive laxity are both problematic and ultimately strikes a balance, but it is not to last.



Chapter 8, Leniency Rebuked

Chapter 8, Leniency Rebuked Summary and Analysis

Winthrop's government is simple, keeping annual contact with the people through election. There are no parties or special interests, or complicated laws. The success of the colony depends largely on Winthrop, Dudley, and Endecott. Winthrop is a good leader, but not a brilliant thinker, taking positions intuitively and then defending it in a lawyerly way with an "I told you so" attitude.

Dudley and Endecott have a worse problem: they do not know when to be lenient and when to be strict. Endecott has a temper and a tendency to take his views to absurd conclusions. Dudley is too cold and too simple. Both men enforce the legal code of the people too strictly and Winthrop has to fight against it. Dudley thinks Winthrop is not severe enough. The author then discusses a story where they butt heads, with Dudley publicly accusing Winthrop of dangerous leniency and later challenging his authority.

Through this challenge, Dudley has the other freemen worry that Winthrop claims too much authority for himself. In one case, it looks as if Winthrop is imposing taxation against consent, something the Puritans go to jail over in England. Winthrop's extension of the term "freemen" is being extended even further, with the people of the colony wondering if Winthrop can exercise this power justly. In response, Winthrop has to acknowledge the justice of the charter.

At an annual court of election in 1634, the freemen appoints representatives who ask to see a copy of the charter. They learn they have the authority to make laws, which they had not known and ask Winthrop for an explanation. Winthrop says the condition only applies when the number of freemen is small and he admits that no taxes will be imposed without the consent of a small committee, but these conceptions come late. The freemen want a full body of legislation to protect themselves from arbitrary government. Winthrop cannot see the merit in their view, but he still gives way.

Afterwards, Winthrop is rebuked by being made an assistant and Thomas Dudley is made governor in his place, with Roger Ludlow as deputy. Winthrop accepts his new role calmly. His journals and letters do not indicate any bitterness. He will still allow himself to be governed.



Chapter 9, Separatism Unleashed

Chapter 9, Separatism Unleashed Summary and Analysis

Winthrop holds the reins of government lightly, despite striking down sin. However, he deals moderately with the separatists and people get along. When Dudley comes to power and John Haynes and Henry Vane, after him, things change, as they are filled with zeal and politically foolish. Separatism threatens the colony and if Winthrop's successors push too hard, the colony will break. The migration is bringing in many new people who are willing to stand up to the government, including, notoriously, Roger Williams.

Williams has lived in Massachusetts Bay as long as Winthrop. He is a young Cambridge man, studying divinity, when he decides to make his trip, leaving for Massachusetts in the spring of 1630. When he arrives, he takes over a congregation for a pastor who is returned home and he is a committed separatist. He is deeply upset by the fact that the Church of England admit the unregenerate to communion and feels he cannot not associate with those who refuse to break ties with them.

Winthrop likes Williams but he rejects separatism and rebukes the separatists generally, while not knocking their characters or piety. Ultimately William's purity concerns lead him to leave Boston for Salem and build another church. He is radical but rarely antagonizes and many regard him as saintly. He wins over Endecott almost at once. Winthrop is alarmed when he hears.

As a result, Williams has to leave for Plymouth, where he will be tolerated. He is satisfied there for a time but his separatism leads him away even from Plymouth, but for odd reasons, such as applying the term "Goodman" to the unregenerate. He leaves Plymouth in 1633 and returns to Salem and is elected to an assistant pastorate so as not to raise the ire of the church at large. Williams begins to draw the people to his views and asks the question of whether the colonists have a right to their land. The problem, in Williams's mind, is that they own the land in virtue of a grant from the King but the King may have no political authority because he is guilty of blasphemy.

The magistrates are horrified and ask Williams to appear before the next General Court to be censured. Winthrop intends to argue him out of his views. In the meanwhile, Williams argues that unless the people send the charter back to the king that they will be living in sin. The people will have to return to England. However, either alternative is absurd.

Dudley wishes to rebuke Williams publicly but John Cotton, another minister, persuades him that the ministers be given a chance to convince Williams privately. Dudley agrees and the conversation succeeds. Williams does not raise the issue again. However, he will make other trouble. The magistrates want non-freemen to take an oath to support



the colony and its government against enemies, but Williams objects on the grounds that the godly will be contaminated. Oaths are acts of worship.

Williams's separatism only increases, generating stranger opinions, increasingly more separatist. He most radically maintains that civil government has no authority in religious matters and cannot punish breaches of the first four commandments unless they disrupt civil peace. The people of Salem agree with him on many things and in 1635 choose Williams as their minister, knowing that the government might move against them.

The government does not move against them directly, but refuses to give Salem a new land grant unless they depose Williams. The Salem church is outraged and the stability of the colony is at stake. The government seeks foremost to keep the government intact. However, Williams is so appalled by the behavior of the government that he accuses the other churches of Massachusetts of abandoning the principle of congregational independence and demands that the Salem church denounce the others or he will have to withdraw. The Salem church is deeply upset.

In 1635, Williams has his final confrontation with the General Court; they charge him with dangerous opinions and seditious letters. Williams does not deny the charges and refuses to recant, defending himself. Even Thomas Hooker cannot move him. The court orders him to leave in six weeks. The Salem church is unwilling to support him and so he resigns his office and church membership. In the face of leaving his church, the government extends the deadline for him to leave but this gives Williams time to draw people to leave with him. The court decides to ship him back to England but he leaves before they can catch him.

While Williams's radicalism leads him to many bizarre opinions, his extreme views lead him to break "through to a new realm of freedom" and to deny that the state has anything to do with religion. He becomes so extreme in trying to escape the filth of the earth that he realizes he must embrace it and becomes open to preach to all men and pray with everyone. Winthrop finds Williams' liberalism as absurd as his former separatism. Williams degrades the holy purpose of the state. Many of Williams' followers agree with Winthrop.

Winthrop prevents the split of Massachusetts; the goal of godliness has to be pursued together. The wild ones have to be cut loose.



Chapter 10, Seventeenth-Century Nihilism

Chapter 10, Seventeenth-Century Nihilism Summary and Analysis

In 1634, William and Anne Hutchinson come to Massachusetts; William is a mild man and Anne a strong woman. The force of her intelligence is apparently great, along with her wit and boldness. Anne is determined to pursue the Gospel in its purity and goes wherever she thinks the Gospel is. She claims John Cotton as her spiritual leader, who himself is highly regarded, even by Winthrop. Cotton, along with Jonathan Edwards, reasserts Calvinist doctrine against encroaching Arminianism.

However, Cotton is moderate, seeing radical Calvinism as taking things too far. He believes that men should strive to be morally good given God's grace. He also recognizes Anne Hutchison's talents and she is eventually brought into the congregation. However, she carries the idea of God's power and human helplessness to a heresy often called Antinomianism.

After salvation, Anne believes, God destroys the human and replaces him with the Holy Spirit. As a result, human actions are no clue as to their spiritual transformation. If a man behaves well, this does not demonstrate his salvation. Sanctification and justification have no connection. Puritans reject perfect correspondence but they are still tied.

Winthrop becomes alarmed by her teachings, particularly given that Williams has only departed a few months earlier. He is also worried that her view held that one might know God's will from immediate revelation alone, without the aid of the Bible. Hutchison apparently adopts a seventeenth-century version of nihilism. She also thinks that any saved person can be informed of the salvation of another by the Holy Spirit; she therefore begins to pronounce others as saved or damned by herself.

Hutchison refuses to clearly state her doctrines so that she cannot be condemned. Her meetings are growing. Eventually, her followers want an official spokesperson for her views, so they appoint her brother-in-law, John Wheelwright, to represent her views. Winthrop sees what is going on and opposes his election. He is successful but loses many friends in the process.

However, the colonists are alarmed by Hutchison and her followers and the General Court begins to pay attention. By 1637, the colony is divided between those in Boston and those around it. After some dangerous comments, Wheelwright is charged with sedition but the charges are leveled by Henry Vane who is to lose the governor's election to Winthrop. Winthrop can now crush the opposition but he is prudent, attempting to use persuasion.



Cotton refuses to believe that Hutchison and Wheelwright hold the heresies attributed to them, but he does not agree with them. Winthrop tries to convince him to be on his side, along with a variety of other individuals. Winthrop has to restrict immigration to keep other dangerous people from coming into Massachusetts who might join with Wheelwright.

Eventually, Winthrop decides that Wheelwright and Hutchison should be expelled and convenes a synod in August, a meeting of all Massachusetts ministers. They talk for twenty-four days and everyone, including Cotton, falls in line, except Wheelwright. In November, Winthrop has Wheelwright banished.

Winthrop then summons Hutchison. Anne is his intellectual superior, but not politically. She bests him in every attempt at argument at the General Court, along with the other members. The record of her words in the court reveals her brilliance, it being put down by men who know less than she does. The men cannot retain their composure, not even Winthrop. She has shrewdly guarded herself against major charges by not signing any official documents. So Winthrop brings spurious charges against her, claiming that she simply dishonors them.

The trial goes on in this way, with Anne defeating their arguments and the men moving forward anyway. However, Anne finds discrepancies in the court proceedings and is able to call ministers to speak under oath to the court. John Cotton is called and refuses to indict her with his testimony, threatening the trial with collapse. If Anne had held her tongue at this point, she may have won but she proceeds to justify herself by personal revelation. She claims in front of everyone that God has led her to see that if they convict her, God will ruin them, their children and the State.

Winthrop's power is challenged directly; if they do not punish her, they believe they will be punished by God. They push her, getting her to admit further heresy and then quickly sentence her to banishment. Her followers are then disenfranchised and disarmed. Winthrop has triumphed but through arbitrary power, crushing a helpless woman. However, Winthrop believes he has continued to show the great value in avoiding separation.



Chapter 11, The New England Way

Chapter 11, The New England Way Summary and Analysis

Massachusetts can resist schism; and the people of Massachusetts under John Winthrop show that they can hold onto their goal of creating a society of God. However, the freemen will not let go of the powers they have secured for themselves. They cannot follow God and accept even a benevolent despotism. Winthrop disagrees; the laws of the land have to be the laws of God and sometimes that might require a despot. That said, Winthrop does not believe in total independence from popular control.

The interface between Winthrop and the people is between the magistrates and the deputies. The magistrates are Winthrop's servants, whereas the deputies are the representatives of the people. The General Court is the Supreme Court and legislature of Massachusetts. The magistrates have a negative voice against their rulings, however—effectively a veto power. The deputies have this power as well.

During the trouble with Williams and Hutchinson, the battle over government structure continues to rage. Winthrop cannot centralize government but when Winthrop becomes governor again in 1637, some of the old structure is retained. The people take Winthrop's successes as evidence of God's favor of his rule. However, the forces of instability remain and the author lists some important defections that can produce new problems.

Church-state relations are important; the Puritans believe God wants them associated but they still separate them more than anyone in Europe. The state supports and protects the church, punishing heresy. However, it is not the church's agent; it only protects the civil peace. If you are excommunicated from the church, on the other hand, you acquire no civil liabilities.

The clergy are politically influential but far from all-powerful. Many of them preach limiting the power of the governor despite approving of his performance. Some want Winthrop to stop running for governor because he has too much approbation and temptation to abuse his power. In 1641, Thomas Dudley becomes governor. The deputies then push to limit the power of the magistrates and want to frame an explicit set of laws to protect their liberties. However, there are worries that the new laws might contradict the laws of England. Winthrop worries but the deputies do not.

A well-respected and intelligent lawyer, Nathaniel Ward, fights to protect the people's liberties, particularly their economic liberties, by proposing that monopolies be banned save on inventions, among other things. The code that is developing is not only for protection, however, but a blueprint for their experiment.

The Body of Liberties does not prescribe the structure of government but lays down general principles of freedom. The author then lists some of the liberties. The General Court accepts the code of liberties in December, 1641. The freemen are pleased, although Winthrop is not. The freemen will later require education and provide free public schooling to those who cannot afford it.



Chapter 12, New England or Old

Chapter 12, New England or Old Summary and Analysis

By 1640, Winthrop has served the Massachusetts government for ten years and would like to retire. He has little time to manage his own affairs. He has to hire a man, James Luxford, to manage his estate but Luxford does an awful job and nearly ruins him financially.

At this time in England, King Charles I is trying to impose more of the Anglican religion on the Scots, who finally begins to revolt. Eight years later, Charles will be beheaded. However, this changes matters in Massachusetts as well. Fewer immigrants start coming over and the great migration is ending. Prosperity is slowing down as well and prices begin to fall.

This raises not only a financial problem but a question of whether the colony ought to continue. If Charles I is to be thrown out, then the true church will rule in England. The Puritans formed the colony to preserve a remnant; shouldn't they return? Returning home has much to commend it. Some start to leave. The pulls of Winthrop's English ties begin to tighten as well. However, he and others resist and only a few settlers leave; Winthrop does not allow his English attachments to rule him. God's commission in Massachusetts continues, in Winthrop's mind.

It is good they do not return, as the war aims of those who look to depose Charles I in the civil war are not ones they can get on board with, in part because the rebellion consists of those who want to centralize church power and authority, something the Puritans oppose. They prefer either mild Presbyterianism or total congregationalism.

Instead, the Puritans aim to deal with their economic crisis and find a foreign market for their goods and services. Political tensions continue as well. Separatism stops being the major problem.



Chapter 13, Foreign Affairs

Chapter 13, Foreign Affairs Summary and Analysis

In 1640, the Puritans look outward for the first time. The immigrants with dangerous new ideas stop coming. Now it looks as if the whole people are separatists, content in their own holiness and indifferent to the fact of others. They see the realm of the righteous as very small. But they are not isolationists and begin to condemn the impulse. The deputies remain self-righteous but Winthrop sees self-righteousness destroying charity. So he starts to engage in trade with "sinful" people.

The author then discusses some cases. Winthrop is generally intelligent about his foreign dealings and understands that the holy commission of the Puritans does not require them to make war on foreign evils.

The Puritans are divided by the Civil War; some think revolt against the king sinful, others leave to fight. This is no mere question of loyalty, but a legal and constitutional one as well. For the most part, though, the Puritans do not need to fear oppression; when war breaks out, New England sides with Parliament. However, English and American Puritanism have begun to grow apart.

Winthrop needs to be on good terms with England not only for protection but so that the English Puritans will not impose their new ways on New England, particularly Presbyterianism and toleration of heresy. In Rhode Island, Puritanism has taken a similar course as it did in England and the Puritans do not like what they see. Roger Williams obtains a charter from the crown and issues literature criticizing the Puritans for religious intolerance.

When the Long Parliament ascends, many New England men of repute are tempted to go back, so the General Court extends the franchise to nonmembers in all town affairs. Nonmembers, however, might demand Presbyterianism. The author then discusses the case of Robert Child in this regard. However, Winthrop wins the confrontation. Afterwards, the franchise is extended as planned and the code of liberties looks secure as Winthrop ages.

In 1647, Margaret dies. He marries again soon after; his new wife is a Charleston widow, Martha Coytmore. She gives him another son at age sixty. He continues to manage Massachusetts affairs until a fever contracted in February kills him on March 26th, 1649.



Characters

John Winthrop

John Winthrop is the main character of *The Puritan Dilemma* and led the English Puritans to New England in 1630. He lived from 1587 to 1649 and served as governor for most of the twenty years between 1629 and 1649 when he died. He was a greatly talented politician and colony manager and widely respected by the Puritans but also came under criticism from time to time.

Winthrop had four wives, the first three of whom died before he did; his theology required that he quickly remarry. He had numerous children. Winthrop converted to Puritanism in early adulthood and quickly became deeply zealous. Through his management of Groton Manor and his work in London as a lawyer, Winthrop quickly rose to prominence in the English Puritan community. When the apparent depravity of English society rose to what the Puritans regarded as unacceptable levels, Winthrop and others led a group of Puritans to New England to Boston area where they created a settlement with the help of the Massachusetts Bay Company.

Winthrop was the first governor of Massachusetts and kept colonist spirits high through the difficult early years. While being voted out of office several times, Winthrop largely served his people in his 1630-34, 1637-40, 1642-44, and 1646-49 terms in office. He is most widely criticized for opposing the extension of the voting franchise to all freemen, although he eventually conceded to the popular demand for increased democratization of the Puritan government.

The Puritans

The Puritans were a group of 16th and 17th century English Christians, which were a loosely associated group of believers in "purity" in Christian dogma and practice. They were radical Protestants, arguing that the English Reformation had not gone far enough in distancing the Christian Church from its dominance by Roman Catholic authority and ideas. The Puritans were deeply influenced by Calvinist dogma, despite seldom cooperating with his more centralized followers, the Presbyterians. Instead, many defended separating themselves from other Christians with a decentralized group of churches.

The Puritan movement had theological and political aspects. Theologically, they believed that the Bible was the infallible word of God and that no Christian traditions could override it. They wanted to see all people educated, not only in Bible reading but generally as well. No Christian believer was naturally an authority of any other. They argued that Christian worship should be simple. They believed that man was born so sinful that only God could bring him to proper repentance and belief. Man was also



predestined from birth for salvation or damnation and that some could discover whether they were "elect" by God.

Puritan political beliefs were tied to their theological beliefs. Puritans believed that all Christian societies had a "covenant" with God. If the people followed his law and worshipped him, God would bless them with peace and prosperity. They also believed that God contracted with the people as a whole and that all held equal political authority in principle. However, the authority of the government did not come from the people, but from God alone. As long as the rulers followed God's law to a reasonable degree and kept the peace, the Puritans believed that all people were required to submit to ruling authorities.

Due to the events under Charles I and the persecution of the Puritans, many Puritans decided to leave for New England to start their own settlement. John Winthrop was among their most prominent members. As their first governor, Winthrop led them to settle New England where they would have a profound influence on the political institutions of American society, shaping them until the present day.

Roger Williams

An English theologian and Puritan separatist who lived from 1603 to 1683; Winthrop expelled Williams from Massachusetts for his radical separatist views. Williams went on to advocate the complete separation of church and state and founded Rhode Island on this principle.

Anne Hutchinson

Anne Hutchinson lived from 1591 to 1643. She was a Puritan woman with a strong, bold personality who helped to lead a dissident church in Boston. For her heretical views, she was expelled from New England.

King Charles I

The King of England from 1625 to 1649 who was briefly overthrown during the first English Civil War from 1642-45. He was married to a Catholic and many felt he brought England too close to Roman Catholicism. For this reason, the Puritans were suspicious of him and believed he would bring God's wrath on England. They left for New England for this reason.

Separatists

Separatists were Puritans who believed that they had to cut themselves entirely off from other Christians. Roger Williams was among the most prominent separatists (although he later changed his views).



Thomas Dudley

A colonial magistrate who served as governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony several times, often clashing with John Winthrop. He also created Harvard College.

John Endecott

Another English colonial magistrate who served as Massachusetts Bay Colony governor.

Presbyterians

Puritans who believed that the church should be centrally organized and administered. The American Puritans were hostile to them.

Congregationalists

Puritans who believed that the church should be a loose affiliation of churches, run in a decentralized fashion. Most American Puritans were Congregationalists but they came in more moderate and radical varieties.

The Freeman

The freemen were members of the Massachusetts Bay Colony charter. But over time, "Freemen" came to denote all voting members of the colony.



Objects/Places

Groton Manor

Winthrop's childhood home. His management of Groton led him to become a wealthy man.

England

The home of Winthrop and the English Puritans.

America

The "New World" of the 17th century where the English Puritans emigrated.

New England

The part of America surrounding the Boston area where the Puritans settled.

London

The capital of England where the King ruled and where Winthrop worked as a lawyer.

Boston

The main city of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Charleston

A small city near Boston that was an important part of the colony.

Salem

Another important city in the colony where Roger Williams was the head pastor for some time.

The General Court

The Supreme Court and legislature of the Massachusetts Bay Company.



The Massachusetts Bay Company

A colony founded by the Massachusetts Bay Company, a trading and merchant company that was granted a corporate charter to settle the New World.

The Corporate Charter

The charter of the Massachusetts Bay Company which set up its form of government.

The Bible

The holy book of Christianity; the Puritans believed it could be used to solve all theological disputes, along with calm, careful reasoning.

The Code of Liberties

The legal code of the Puritan colonists set up to protect the liberties of the people.

Magistrates

Assistants to the Governor and Deputy Governor.

Deputies

Representatives of the people.

Churches

Church bodies were autonomous and self-governing but loosely affiliated among the American Puritans.

Total Depravity

The Puritan belief that man was utterly sinful and incapable of redeeming himself.

Predestination

The Puritan theological view that God preordained whomever was saved and whomever was not.



Salvation by Faith

The Puritan view that humans were saved by their faith in God alone.

God's Wrath

Unless they had a righteous society, the Puritans feared that God would unleash his wrath upon them.

Sin

The corruption of the human and the act of breaking God's law. In the colony, most sin was punished by law.



Themes

Righteousness in a Fallen World

A central Puritan theological belief, following their Calvinist influences, is Total Depravity. The doctrine of total depravity holds that all humans are born with the brokenness and corruption of sin. This means that their hearts are naturally turned away from God and towards the self.

However, unlike many other Christians, Puritans believed that humans were so sinful, so corrupt, that they could not possibly turn away from their sinful ways on their own. True, humans could maintain a kind of civil social morality that would keep society from descending into utter chaos and barbarism, but without the Holy hand of God, no one could be truly good—no one.

For this reason, if a society wishes to be good, it must be Godly. It must worship God and obey His law to the best of its ability. That said, this goal is mostly impossible to attain because so few believe in God and even those who claim to believe are usually so rife with corruption that any holy accomplishments they have will slowly (or quickly) crumble.

If the righteous are to avert the wrath of God due to sin, they must form and enforce a holy society. The Puritans believed that due to the events in England, they must do the same. At the time, they saw no hope of reforming their society and so separated themselves by immigrating to New England and creating their own holy society.

The Puritans enforced Biblical morality with unremitting fervor, admonishing all citizens to watch one another for sin and reprove sin whenever they saw it. They banished unrepentant sinners and heretics and put people to death for the most heinous sins of murder, rape and adultery. However much they fought to avoid corruption and sin, however, it still crept back in.

The Covenant with God

Puritan political theology was deeply tied to what is known as "Covenant Theology." In this view, God had formed a covenant with the people of Ancient Israel. He gave them moral laws and if they followed it, worshiped Him, and made sacrifices, He would protect them and make them prosperous. In the Puritan view, the people of Ancient Israel became the Christian Church when Christ included Gentiles in the population of the Redeemed.

As such, all distinct Christian societies lived under the same Divine Covenant. The people had a duty to honor God through worship and through absolute obedience to His law. Further, they owed the leaders He appointed absolute obedience so long as they enforced God's law, but were obligated to replace them should they become corrupt.



The Puritans feared that Charles I broke the English covenant with God for having a Catholic Wife and remaining too tied to Roman Catholicism, which the Puritans regarded as a dangerous heresy. Since they saw little hope for reform, they believed it was only a matter of time until God punished the English people for their sins. For this reason, the Puritans believed that they needed to emigrate to preserve a remnant of the holy, perhaps one day to return and bring England back to the righteous path.

When the Puritans reached America they formed their own covenant and asked God to be part of it. As a result, they did everything they could to enforce God's law and give Him proper worship, along with using state power to ferret out and banish heretics and separatists that threatened the unity and righteousness of the colony.

Free Democratic Government and the Temptations of Power

The Puritans were able to escape to New England and rule themselves largely autonomously through a legal loophole. The charter of the Massachusetts Bay Company specified that they must hold yearly meetings but it did not specify where the meetings had to be held, through an oversight. For this reason, the "freemen," or members of the company, suggested to Winthrop and the other potential colonists that they hold their first meeting in New England so that the King would have little oversight over their decision-making.

So the Puritans came to the United States and the freemen made Winthrop governor. The charter specified that the form of government of the colony be an oligarchy, ruled by the freemen, but Winthrop and the freemen refused to rule in this way, instead opening company membership to others and allowing the people to elect deputies as representatives.

As time progressed, popular pressure was put on Winthrop and the government to expand the voting franchise to larger and larger groups of people. Winthrop eventually opposed these expansions but he was unable to prevent them.

The people of New England ultimately formed a "Code of Liberties" which limited the power of the Puritan state with respect to their economic liberties and the General Court, the state's legislative body, passed it. Thus overtime, through oddities of the corporate charter, the Puritan state democratized and simultaneously limited the power of its rulers.

Surprisingly, Winthrop and the freemen rarely abused their power, save in the enforcement of morality. Corruption was almost unheard of and the leaders of the colony repeatedly avoided attempts to centralize their authority. The Puritans thus had one of the first free, democratic governments in the world and were able to largely avoid the temptations of power.

Style

Perspective

The author of *The Puritan Dilemma* is Edmund Sears Morgan, born in 1916. He is widely respected as an authority on early American history and currently is employed as an emeritus professor of history at Yale, where he taught from 1955 to 1986. During this time, he wrote many books on early American history, including *The Puritan Dilemma*. This book has been used for decades in undergraduate courses in history.

Morgan won the Columbia University Bancroft Prize in American History and President Clinton gave him the 2000 National Humanities Medal for his contributions to American culture. He won a Pulitzer Prize in 2006.

Unlike many historians, Morgan does not try to hide his views on the Puritans entirely. While most of his discussion of Winthrop and the Puritans sticks to the facts, he occasionally makes criticisms. For instance, to keep themselves holy, the Puritans more or less converted their society into an enormous moral police force of which everyone was a member. It is quite clear that Morgan finds this arrangement miserable. Further, in the dispute with Anne Hutchinson, Morgan comments that Winthrop's treatment of her showed him at his worst and that Anne was clearly his intellectual superior.

Finally, Morgan clearly admires the Puritans for their early democratic forms of life but understands that their devotion to democracy was not motivated by the same considerations as those who embrace democracy today. He feels bad for Winthrop, suggesting that he was never able to bring about righteousness on earth but had made a good effort.

Tone

The tone of *The Puritan Dilemma* has three primary shades: neutral, admiring, and critical. *The Puritan Dilemma* is a work of history so, for the most part, it relates facts in an impartial fashion, only commenting from time to time on ideas and beliefs that are relevant to informing the narrative. This is not to say that the book is not written in an engaging fashion, however. However, the primary tone of the book is that of a work of history—it strives to have a scholarly, neutral tone that relates facts as much the way historians think they were as the author is capable of.

However, Morgan does not entirely shield his tone from expressions of opinion. He clearly admires various features of Puritan belief, culture and institutional structure. For instance, he is impressed with how fervently the Puritans held to their beliefs and how much they were willing to sacrifice to remain true to them. This comes out in particular when the author makes it clear that Puritan politicians remained notoriously uncorrupted due to their strong belief in their accountability to God.



Morgan admires their culture of hard work and perseverance and works against the common understanding of Puritans as prudes. Finally, he expresses deep admiration for their political culture with respect to their zealous defense of their liberties and the Puritans' preference for democratic government.

However, Morgan expresses criticism of Puritan beliefs, culture and institutional structure as well. Clearly the Puritans had a belief system that does not appeal to most people, with the dour, helpless outlook on human corruption and their belief that humanity could never be truly good in this life. Predestination takes matters even further out of human hands. Morgan clearly has the standard distaste for these views. Further, he very much dislikes their constant moral policing of one another and he is uncomfortable with their highly theistic justification of political authority.

Structure

The Puritan Dilemma contains thirteen chapters which move mostly in chronological order while being shaped by important historical events. Chapter 1 introduces John Winthrop, recording his childhood, early adulthood and conversion to Puritanism, along with the recognition of his management, argumentative and political talents. Chapter 2 explains how Puritans understood their political situation under King Charles and how they worried about the corruption in their society.

Chapter 3 introduces the Puritan-conceived alternatives to their political and social state and their fear that God's wrath would soon strike England. They aimed to preserve a remnant of the Godly by going to New England. And in Chapter 4, Morgan elaborates on their travel plans and the clever legal loopholes they used to go.

Chapter 5 concerns the Puritan migration to the New World and their attempts to survive their first year. Chapter 6 reviews Puritanical conceptions of their Godly commission and how they enforced their covenant with God. In Chapter 7, Morgan reviews the Puritan's strikingly democratic form of government. And in Chapter 8, the reader encounters the Puritans' dilemma in enforcing God's law while remaining reasonable lenient.

In Chapters 9 and 10, Morgan covers the dangers that separatism presented to the colony, mostly prominently in the forms of Roger Williams (Chapter 9) and Anne Hutchinson (Chapter 10). In Chapter 11, the Puritan form of government is outlined at length as are the debates the Puritans had about its structure and how they protected their liberties against government encroachments. In Chapter 12, Morgan explains the challenge the English Civil War presented to the American Puritans and in Chapter 13, Winthrop and the Puritans must struggle with economic depression and decide to engage in foreign trade in order to find markets for their goods.

Quotes

"Puritanism was a power not to be denied. It did great things for England and for America, but only by creating in the men and women it affected a tension which was at best painful and at worst unbearable. Puritanism required that a man devote his life to seeking salvation but told him he was helpless to do anything but evil." (Chapter 1, The Taming of the Heart, 7)

"Every nation or people, the Puritans believed, existed by virtue of a covenant with God, an agreement whereby they promised to abide by His laws, and He in turn agreed to treat them well." (Chapter 2, Evil and Declining Times, 19)

"Though Winthrop's own capacities for public service had hitherto been demonstrated only in local and minor offices, though he had never sat in Parliament, those who knew him evidently recognized that he had extraordinary talents." (Chapter 3, A Shelter and a Hiding Place, 42)

"This daring proposal would effectively remove the colony from control by the Crown." (Chapter 4, The Way to a New England, 46)

"Yet for all these things (I prayse my God) I am not discouraged, nor doe I see cause to repent, or dispaire of those good days here, which will make amends for all." (Chapter 5, Survival, 58)

"They had undertaken to establish a society where the will of God would be observed in every detail, a kingdom of God on earth." (Chapter 6, A Special Commission, 69)

"Winthrop and the other members of the Bay Company were authorized by their charter to exercise absolute powers of government ... How natural, then, that they should become a ruling oligarchy. They might readily have succumbed to the lust for power, since power lay unchallenged in their hands. But they did not succumb." (Chapter 7, A Due Form of Government, 89)

"Yet there was a real issue here, the old issue of uncompromising purity versus charity. Winthrop, on the side of charity, sought the true course in judicial discretion rather than legislative precision." (Chapter 8, Leniency Rebuked, 106)

"The Great Migration was filling Massachusetts with men and women who were not afraid to take sides and not afraid to stand up against government. Among them, as it happened, was a man named Roger Williams, a charming, sweet-tempered, winning man, courageous, selfless, God-intoxicated—and stubborn—the very soul of separatism." (Chapter 9, Separatism Unleashed, 116)

"What followed was the least attractive episode in Winthrop's career. Anne Hutchinson was his intellectual superior in everything except political judgment, in everything except the sense of what was possible in this world. In nearly every exchange of words she



defeated him, and the other members of the General Court with him." (Chapter 10, Seventeenth-Century Nihilism, 147)

"With the successive expulsions of Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson, the freemen who had rebuked Winthrop in 1634 demonstrated that their mission in the wilderness was the same as his: to found a society whether the perfection of God would find proper recognition among imperfect men." (Chapter 11, The New England Way, 155)

"The crisis was more than economic, for the summoning of Parliament in England and the end of the Great Migration posed a question that went far beyond the simple one of how the colony was to survive economically. The deeper question was whether the colony ought to survive." (Chapter 12, New England or Old, 177)

"Winthrop knew what he was doing. Within his colony, he must indeed make war on all evil and nourish all good; but the special commission of Massachusetts did not require vain warfare against every evil power in the outside world, nor did it require help to every good power if such help might endanger the safety of God's model kingdom on earth." (Chapter 13, Foreign Affairs, 194)

"On March 26th, he reached what in life he had never sought, a separation from his sinful fellow men." (Chapter 13, Foreign Affairs, 205)



Topics for Discussion

Explain the main tenants of Puritan theology. What does it add to "mere" Christian doctrine? What are some of its most extreme beliefs?

How did Puritan theology understand political authority? How did this understanding play out in England? In America?

How did the idea of a covenant with God affect the Puritan decision to leave England? How did it affect the structure of government in America?

How did the Puritans evolve a more democratic structure of government from their charter?

Explain the tension between the Puritan ideal of creating a righteous political society and the failings of ordinary human beings.

What was separatism? Why did it threaten the colony? How are Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson related to separatism? What challenges did they pose to the colony?

How did the English Civil War affect the American Puritans? Why were many tempted to leave for England? Why did almost everyone stay?