Chapter IV

THE AMERICAN JEREMIAH:
THE DIALECTICS OF REGENERATION

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

Jeremiah 7: 5-7

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

John Winthrop
A Model of Christian Charity (1630)

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

Peter Bulkeley
The Gospel Covenant (1651)

The American exceptionalist identity and the myth of America is the typological creation of colonial Puritan hermeneutics. The rhetorical mode of this conceptual design is, according to Bercovitch, the most significant legacy of Puritan
New England to American life and culture. It persisted throughout American history to ensure its ascendency to World Power. After having discovered the Puritan origins of American identity, and the myth it espoused in the religious rhetoric of Puritan New England, Bercovitch traces the continuity and "the changing relations between myth and society in America" (P O, p. 186). He examines the Jeremiad form of the American Puritan rhetoric which, he argues, was an integral part of the Seventeenth Century New England Puritan imagination.

This chapter will evaluate Bercovitch's assertion that the ideology of American exceptionalism and the myth of America owed much to the rhetoric of the Seventeenth Century New England Puritans. He argues that the American Jeremiad, which had its genesis in the rhetoric of the first generation of New England Puritans, became a ritual renewal of the concept of Seventeenth Century New England sacred mission in subsequent American history. He states that, unlike the European model, the American Jeremiad was not just a condemnation of a prodigal society but a call to return to Covenantal obligations and the reclamation of their mission as a people chosen to execute a unique role in the divine economy. Thus, the American Jeremiad conjoined lamentation over the present with celebration of a glorious vision of the future. The chapter also examines the American Jeremiad's inherent capacity to forge an ideological consensus which, according to Bercovitch, transformed every emergent crisis in the long and turbulent history of America into a triumphant reaffirmation of the national myth. It was an ideological consensus which Bercovitch argues, emerged out of successive "rituals of socialization, and a comprehensive officially endorsed myth that became entrenched in New England" and spread across the entire nation (A J, p.xii). Furthermore, as Bercovitch suggests, the entire corpus of Classic American Writing belongs to the tradition of the Puritan American Jeremiad and the major American Writers, from Jonathan Edwards through Emerson, take on the role of "latter-day Jeremiah" and the "keepers of the American myth".
Bercovitch's *The American Jeremiad* (1978) is both an extension and a re-examination of the typological construction of the myth of America of his earlier work. He explains that the "additions and revisions amount to a new version of the argument, but the argument itself -- concerning the richness, complexity, and the continuing vitality, for good and ill, of American Puritan rhetoric -- remains essentially the same" (Ibid:xii). The *Puritan Origins of the American Self* (1975) defined Puritanism and the American myth in purely religious rhetoric isolated from contemporary social situation, *The American Jeremiad* relates the myth to its socio-political origin and functions. Bercovitch contends that the Jeremiad or the Political Sermon, as the Puritans called it, was an essential constituent of the myth of America. He traces its roots to the sermons of the early emigrant fathers. The following sections will examine Bercovitch's analysis of the rhetorical functions and continuities of the New England Puritan imagination from the Great Migration through the Revolutionary era up to the Romantic period of the Nineteenth Century.

I

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

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

*All the following references to The American Jeremiad are taken from the same source*
Jeremiah, in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E., was one of the major prophets of the Old Testament who embodied Jehovah's commission of declaring His complaints against Israel and revealing to them the dangers of their apostasy. His uniqueness lay in the nature of his prophesies which expressed a deep pessimism of the present and foretold the horrors of a cataclysmic future. This mode of public condemnation and fiery judgement initiated by Jeremiah as a prophetic medium between God and Man, became a lamentation over the sinfulness of Man and was passed down through successive generations of medieval Europe and the Protestant era. Therefore, Christian preachers, as ministers of God, continued to denounce ungodly living by using excerpts from the Book of Jeremiah not only to chasten human morality but also to revive true piety. However, as Bercovitch points out, these preachers, by taking recourse to the Hebrew text could only impart moral admonishment because they perceived that the texts themselves conveyed little hope of mercy. Therefore, the Jeremiad, as a way of denunciation and lamentation was an ancient formulaic refrain, a ritual form imported to Massachusetts in 1630 from the Old World. Insofar as the Puritan clergy were castigating the evils of the time, they were drawing directly upon the fifteenth - and sixteenth - century England which in turn derived from the medieval Pulpit (p.6).

The Puritan immigrant clergy continued the relentless tirade against the growing iniquities of their community but qualified it with an equally unshakeable faith in the imminent fruition of their sacred mission. Bercovitch argues that the early American Puritans' transformation of the Old World Jeremiad "inverts the doctrine of vengeance into a promise of ultimate success, affirming to the world and despite the world, the inviolability of the colonial cause" (p.7). Therefore, to prove the crucial significance of the transformation and its centrality to American culture, Bercovitch takes issue with Perry Miller. He refutes Miller's claim that the Puritans' concept of errand, which in itself was self-defeating, eventuated the failure of the errand and that the American Jeremiad took shape in the face of a disintegrating theocracy to facilitate the
process of Americanization. The Millerian interpretation of the Puritan Jeremiad, Bercovitch argues, "seems to have fostered a series of misrepresentations both of the Jeremiad and of the Puritan concept of errand" (p.5).

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

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

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

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

The Puritan errand, Miller argued began in the former sense of the term when the Puritans conceived of themselves as the forerunners of a reformed England and their New England Way as a model out-post which, through example, would hasten the consummation of the Reformation in England first and then the rest of the world. Therefore, errand, as perceived in the first sense of the term, was a venture undertaken by the Puritans on behalf of the Reformation to set up a City upon a Hill. But with the Collapse of Cromwell's protectorate in 1660, Miller argued, the errand of the first sense also came to an end and the Puritans embarked on another errand. The second errand
took on the later meaning and was directed inwards -- of discovering themselves -- forcing them "to fill it with meaning by themselves and out of themselves." (1956:16). Therefore, after the premature end of their errand in the first sense and "having failed to rivet the eyes of the world upon their city on a hill, they were left alone with America" which, they discovered with revulsion, was "nothing but a sink of iniquity" (Ibid).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Finally, errand meant progress to indicate a teleology beginning with Genesis and extending up to the Apocalypse. In keeping with the Puritans' conception of themselves as the chosen people of God, the errand was perceived as a crucial chapter in sacred history and a transition from the Biblical past to millennial future. While "the Old World ideal of society was vertical, a model of class harmony", the New England ideal, Bercovitch argues, was "a 'way', a road into the future. Virtually all its rituals of control - its doctrine of calling and preparation, its covenants of Church, State and Grace -
were directed to that ideal" (Ibid:34). To this end, the New England Puritan Jeremiah directed their energies not only to decry apostasy and warn of the dangers of failure but also to invoke a sense of anxiety as a means of ensuring the successful materialization of that ideal: "The errand, after all, was by definition a state of unfulfilment, and only a series of crisis properly directed, could guarantee the outcome" (Ibid).

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

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

I shall count my country lost, in the loss of the primitive principles and the primitive practices upon which it was at first established; but certainly one good way to save that loss, would be to do something that the memory of the great things done for us by our God, may not be lost, and that the story of the circumstances attending the foundation and formation of this country and of its preservation hitherto, may be impartially handed unto posterity. (Mather 1967, I:40).
The Seventeenth Century New England Clergy appropriated the essence of the Prophetical song of Moses to transform their Jeremiads into ritual incantations of the wonderful ways of God in dealing with His people for reviving obedience and eliciting the anticipation of greater wonders. On the other hand, Danforth's Jeremiad, Bercovitch argues, uses the biblical analogue to "not only obviate the threat but transform self-doubt into consolation. Apostasy' itself serves as the prelude to deliverance" (p. 16).

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

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

Therefore, the similarity between the errand of Moses, John the Baptist and Danforth, Bercovitch asserts, was that "the story of all three errands was one of ingratitude, folly, backsliding, but the progression itself, from one errand to next, attested to a process of fulfilment (p. 16).
Danforth’s rhetorical design in his *Errand* Bercovitch argues, is representative of the Seventeenth Century New England Jeremiads. It begins with a biblical precedent, followed by condemnations and threats underscored with the relative prosperity guaranteed by covenantal transaction, to culminate with a glorious vision of the future when all the prophetic promises would be fulfilled. Therefore, contrary to Miller’s interpretation of Danforth’s sermon as a lamentation over a lost vision, Bercovitch contends, it actually reaffirmed the New England Orthodoxy’s commitment to, and tenacity in, retaining the Puritan vision which amazingly persisted throughout the transition of Colony to Province and Province to World Power. He asserts that

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

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

The Jeremiads of the Seventeenth Century Puritan immigrants, Bercovitch asserts, not only consolidated and perpetuated the Puritan vision but it was also instrumental in the shaping of the modern American culture. He contends that the Jeremiad not only elicited the immigrants’ consensus regarding the inherent meaning and purpose of their errand but it also obviated Old World social stratification to forge a cohesive middle class society in America. Bercovitch attributes the emergence of the
fluid, homogeneous society in Seventeenth Century New England to the Puritan doctrine of calling which, it can be argued, had its roots in the Puritan attitude towards work.

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

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

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

Beginning with Luther and Calvin, subsequent Protestant leaders rejected the Roman Catholic concept that only those in the Church, Monasteries and Nunneries were engaged in an exceptionally holy work far above the mundane pursuits of ordinary people in secular areas of life. The English Reformer William Perkins declared that hereby is overthrown the condition of monks and friars who challenge to themselves that they live in a state of perfection, because that they live apart from the societies of men in fasting and prayer: but contrariwise, this monkish kind of living is damnable; for besides the general duties of fasting and prayer, which appertain to all Christians, every man must have a particular and personal calling that he may be a good and profitable member of some society and body (Morgan 1965:52).
Therefore, the Puritans, while sanctifying all types of work, took recourse to the doctrines of Election and Providence to assert that every Christian was endowed with a divine calling. Thus, the Puritan doctrine of calling emerged as a twin-concept involving a special application of God's Providence to a Christian's personal life. While the general calling was a summons to seek personal salvation and live the life of a redeemed soul, the particular calling signified God's direction of the Christian Life into a particular career. The Puritan divine William Perkins explained that "a vocation or calling is a certain kind of life, ordained and imposed on man by God, for the common good. . . . Every person of every degree, state, sex, or condition without exception must have some personal and particular calling to walk in" (Ibid:36, 51). Richard Steele wrote in similar terms: "God doth call every man and woman . . . to serve him in some peculiar employment in this world, both for their own and the common good . . . The Governor of the World hath appointed to everyman his proper post and province" (Tawney 1926:204, 321). Cotton Mather reiterated that "every Christian ordinarily should have a calling. . . . here should be some special business . . . wherein a Christian should for the most part spend the most of his time; and this, that so he may glorify God" (1701:123).

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

God alloweth a man to remove, when he may employ his talents and gifts better elsewhere, especially when where he is, he is not bound by any special engagement. Thus, God sent Joseph before to preserve the Church. Joseph's wisdom and spirit was not fit for a shepherd, but for a counsellor of state, and therefore sent him to Egypt . . . (Cotton 1630:78).
Similarly, in the *Arbella* sermon, Winthrop took recourse to the doctrine of calling and through his emphasis on self-discipline and self-sufficiency, expressed his conception of a socially cohesive community. Danforth's *Errand* provides a later example of the emigrant Jeremiads in its reassertion of the essence of Cotton's biblical analogies and Winthrop's conception of Christian charity to reiterate that "the values of piety, frugality and diligence in one's worldly calling" were crucial to the consummation of prophetic promises (Cawelti, 1965, p.4). This exposition of the doctrine of calling initiated by Cotton and Winthrop, with its modernistic implications, Bercovitch argues, persisted as an integral part of latter-day American Jeremiads to enforce and maintain social control on a group of buoyant, non-conformist settlers, who were "militant, apocalyptic [and] radically particularistic" (Battis 1962:255).

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

The emigrant Jeremiahs' attempt to blend the sacred with the secular according to Bercovitch, gave shape to the American Jeremiad. It was developed by subsequent generations to materialize their vision of a society where "the fact could be made one with the ideal" (Miller 1967, 1:462). Bercovitch buttresses his argument through a consideration of Melville's novel Pierre which is generally understood as a
scathing critique of the development of the American Jeremiad as a vehicle of cultural hegemony. Bercovitch singularizes the central section of the novel entitled "Chronometricals and Horologicals" wherein Plotinus Plinlimmon compares man's defective horological time with the "chronometrical" time of heaven which is God's everlasting and omnipresent truth. Plinlimmon, according to Bercovitch, insists that man should desist from imposing the ideal upon experience lest he deceive himself into destruction. He explains that "Christ was a chronometer; and the least affected by all terrestrial jarrings, of any that have ever come to us" (Melville 1957:295). He asserts that while "Christ encountered woe in both the precept and practice of his chronometricals, yet did he remain throughout entirely without folly or sin. ... however with inferior beings the absolute effort to live in this world, according to the strict letter of the chronometricals is, somehow, apt to involve those inferior beings eventually in strange, unique follies, and sins" (Ibid:296).

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

To substantiate their chosenness with its implicit promises of sacred and temporal rewards, the Puritans took recourse to Jeremiah who, served as both "a historian of horologicals and a chronometer of the future" (p.31). Bercovitch contends that Jeremiah, apart from his fiery denunciations and firm insistence on repentence also, with equal vehemence, foretold of the imminent spiritual regeneration of Israel:
Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel . . . not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them . . . but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God and they shall be my people (Jer. 31:31-33).

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

Thus the ritual of the Jeremiad established by the immigrant Puritans, invested their New World venture with an identity that was both progressive as well as representative. It conferred the immigrant community with an identity based not on their English origins, but on the nature of their transatlantic exodus. It obviated the immigrant genealogy and Old-World tradition to forge an ideology of consensus that was derived from the twin concept of calling. It blended the Hebrew concept of national convenant
with the Christian doctrine of grace to perpetuate the Puritan Vision and establish a mode of social cohesion and cultural continuity in America.

II

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

may be seen as the doctrinal counterpart of the concept of errand. It confirms the Puritan Mission from within adds to the assurance of Scripture prophesy the internal evidence' of generational succession. And like the errand into the wilderness, the genetics of salvation is a distinctive product of American Puritanism. It blends the
heterogeneous covenants of community and grace; and it adapts the rhetoric to new conditions" (p.64).

The primary aim of the Puritan Clergy, according to Bercovitch in instituting the Halfway Covenant was to sustain social cohesiveness and cultural continuity without forsaking the vision of the Founding Fathers. They justified it by taking recourse to God's covenant with Abraham and adapting it to their own situation:

"And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger" (Genesis 17: 7-8).

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

The scripture speaketh of these two terms, Church and the World', as opposite and contradistinct . . . [and since our] Visible Church is gods house of which the Israelites' temple was a Type . . . [therefore all those] within the pale of the visible Church have the right to Baptism, and consequently may transmit the right to their children. The Lord promised to give grace to our children that he should extend his
covenant, not only to Parents, but also their Offspring (Increase Mather 1675:7-8, 26).

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

The Puritan Jeremiahs denounced the Halfway generation for their ingratitude and disloyalty to the God of their fathers and their negligence in honouring filial obligations. They, according to Bercovitch, asserted that "the children were obliged to demand grace by virtue of the uniqueness of their parents' mission. And "to sustain their case, they proceeded to elevate the emigrants into mythic tribal heroes — a race of giants in an age of miracles — imposing on the tiny, barren American strand of three decades before the archetypes of scriptural and classical antiquity" (p.67). Their rhetoric turned increasingly grandiose as they recalled the magnificence of their predecessors: "Our Fathers were clothed with the Sun . . . the Moon was under their Feet . . . God Rode upon the Heavens for their help . . . to fall on their necks and kiss them" (Scotton 1694:311, 305). John Higginson declared that "if my weakness was able to show you, what the cause of God and his people in New England is, according to its divine Original and Native beautie, it would dazzle the eyes of Angels, daunt the hearts of devils, ravish and chain fast the Affections of all the Saints" (1663:12). William Stoughton in New England's True Interest (1670), James Fitch in An Holy connexion (1674), Cotton Mather in The Wonders of the Invisible World (1693) and others declared, in similar terms, that their City on a Hill was a unique place of temporal and spiritual perfection a paradise on earth which made mainfest the hopes and aspirations of the entire human
race. In all this, Bercovitch argues, the Puritan Jeremiahs intention was not merely to exhort the Halfway generation "to emulate the Fathers, but to assert progress through continuity" (p.71).

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

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

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

Bercovitch contends that the dawn of the Reformation had a tremendous effect on the rabbis of the day who perceived in it "proof of the hastening fulfilment of the Zohar, the 'Hebrew Book of Mysteries', they fixed upon the year 1648 as the 'annis mirabilis'" (p.74). The apocalyptic intensity that the Reformation fostered among the Jews of the period, according to Bercovitch, greatly influenced the leaders of the Reformation in not only inspiring millennial anticipation but also revealing the prospect of the Christian conversion of the Jews. The Seventeenth Century New England Puritans found the doctrine of National Conversion particularly suitable for substantiating their genetics of salvation. The legislators of the Halfway convenant, Bercovitch argues, deviated from the traditional concept to apply the doctrine of National Conversion to their own unregenerated children and assert that all they needed to do was to exercise
forbearance. Therefore, just as the scriptural pattern of the Israel's exodus shaped the Puritan concept of their errand into the Wilderness, the doctrine of National Conversion helped sustain the errand's continuity by not only justifying the Halfway covenant but also neutralizing the threat of the errand's failure. Thus, the "total identification -- literal, spiritual, and figural -- of old Israel and New," according to Bercovitch, "is a distinguishing trait of the Jeremiads in the last decade of the Seventeenth Century" (p.76). To further substantiate his argument that the development and transformation of the New England Puritan Jeremiad was coterminus to the growth of the Colony, Bercovitch examines the rhetoric of the last quarter of the Seventeenth Century and, as the Puritans called it, King Philip's War.

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

In the last quarter of the Seventeenth Century, amidst the terrors of War, Bercovitch argues, the New England Jeremiahs transformed their earlier rhetoric of denunciation to convey consolation and assurance of the eventual completion of their errand. The change in their rhetorical strategy, as can be seen in the covenant-renewal ceremonies they instituted, according to Bercovitch, involved a celebration of the golden
past and the promise of a far more glorious future. Bercovitch contends that the Puritan clergy explained the need for rededication by likening themselves to the Israelites who were the first in not only initiating the ritual but also in practising it through out their own tempestuous history. Apart from the historical dimension of their covenant-renewal rituals, they also insisted, according to Bercovitch, on a spiritual rededication. They argued that it became incumbent on every believer to renew the spiritual experience of Christ's saving grace in his life which alone, they maintained, could compensate for human helplessness in the face of calamity. For example, in Samuel Torrey's sermon *Man's Eternity, God's Opportunity* (1695), Bercovitch explains that "extremity means helplessness in the face of trial and opportunity, a reliance on promises to be performed" (p.85).

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

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

Furthermore, the Jeremiads of this period turned into exhortations in order to anticipate the sure operation of God's grace in saving and preserving the community; "We have not only hope, but a sure Foundation of Faith and Confidence in God for Salvation. He will magnifie New England before the World. God will save us from our
sins and apostasy, by the Power of his Spirit, and when this comes that great promise to the Church will be fulfilled” (Noyes 1698:63-64). In the last two decades of the Seventeenth Century, Bercovitch argues, the Puritan clergy were greatly influenced by a rising tide of apocalyptic fervour in New England. They turned their attention from the problems of contemporary life and dwelt more on their memory of the golden past and on the expectation of a far more glorious future. Mather's *Magnalia*, according to Bercovitch, is the most representative example of the American Jeremiad in two major respects. Firstly, it heralded the imminence of the millennium: "Behold, ye European Churches, there are golden candlesticks (more than twice times seven !) in the midst of this outer darkness; unto the upright children of Abraham, here hath arisen light in darkness" (1967, 1:27). While Winthrop had announced that "the eyes of the World are upon us," Mather proclaimed that the prophesies and promises of the emigrant era were now fulfilled and that the city on a hill had now become the light of the world. Secondly, it revealed a growing sense of the ministers' alienation from society.

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

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

\[\text{the more stones they throw at this book, there will not only be the more proofs that it is a tree which hath good fruits growing upon it, but I will build my self a monument with them. . . . whether New England may live any where else or no, it must live in our History! (1967, 1:36, 27).}\]

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

\[\text{preserving the past, they transformed it (as legend) into a malleable guide to the future. Seeking to defend the Good Old Way, they abstracted from its antiquated social forms the larger, vaguer, and more flexible forms of symbol and}\]
metaphor (new chosen people, city on a hill, promised land, destined progress, New Eden, New Jerusalem) and so facilitated the movement from visible saint to American patriot, sacred errand to manifest destiny, colony to republic to imperial power. In spite of themselves, as it were, the latter-day orthodoxy freed their rhetoric for the use and abuse of subsequent generations of Americans (P.92).

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

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

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

As has been mentioned earlier, the last quarter of the Seventeenth Century witnessed intense apocalyptic fervour and an unprecedented interest in the Book of Revelation. It was largely inspired by the endless conflicts plaguing the New England
Saints and the consequent psychological tensions arising out of the growing disparity between vision and history. They conceived of the cataclysmic events of their age as the realization of those recorded in the apocalypse of John, which were believed to precede the routing out of Satan's Kingdom and the commencement of the Millennium. Bercovitch argues that while the Puritan immigrants had regarded their errand as a prelude to the Millennium, the Eighteenth Century New Englanders believed that the Millennium had begun with the Great Migration itself.

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

Bercovitch asserts that Edwards "abandoned the Puritan belief in theocracy" only to reaffirm the Puritan concept that the development of redemptive history entailed the combined impetus of personal salvation and communal progress (p. 106). This equation of the ascending mobility of redemptive history to the forward march of humanity, according to Cushing Strout released American Puritanism from the harsh confines of "Calvinism [and] expounded and paved the way for ... new Arminian theologies of belief in the free will and moral strivings" (1975:113).
Edwards echoed the exhortations and consolations of the latter-day Jeremiahs by joyfully accepting contemporary trials and tribulations. This he argued, not only proved their chosenness but also the imminence of New England's transformation into New Jerusalem. He declared that only grace obtained through prayer, not human strength or intellect, could not only redeem them from their afflictions but also consummate the fulfillment of God's promises. Because, it is the will of God, wrote Edwards,

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

Bercovitch contends that while the Puritan rituals of covenant-renewals had exhorted the latter-day generations to honour their filial obligations, Edwardsian calls for communal prayer aroused the American saints at large, to critically evaluate themselves, their community and the destiny of their New English Canaan. It was up to them now, he declared, as the New English Israel of the New World to realize "the designs of Christ's Kingdom" on earth because, the Old World, by crucifying Christ, had forfeited its right. The most awesome example of the Eighteenth Century Jeremiad is Edwards' *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (1741) wherein the vengeful wrath of God towards "unconverted persons" is described as the utter abhorrence of "one [who] holds a spider, or loathsome insect [ready] to be cast into the fire [of hell]" (Baritz 1964:83, 85). But again in the tradition of the American Jeremiad, he provides the solution to his "awful subject" by affirming that "Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands in calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners"..."God
seems now to be hastily gathering in his elect...it will be as it was on the great out-pouring of the spirit upon the Jews in the apostle's days" (Ibid:83, 90).

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

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

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

To demonstrate further the powerful influence of the New England Puritan imagination and the vision it perpetuated on the American mind, Bercovitch undertakes a study of the Post-Edwardsian era of American history. He traces the rhetorical continuities of the American Jeremiad in its capacity to transform every emergent crisis into a triumphant reassertion of America's mission by not only forging an
ideological consensus which sustained social cohesion but also in establishing a cultural hegemony unsurpassed by any other modern nation in the world.

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

The solidarity that the Jeremiad helped forge between the colonies, Bercovitch argues, was based on their common claims to evangelical Protestantism and English libertarianism which enhanced their combined allegiance to the mother country. The Eighteenth Century Jeremiads invoked the legend of the Founding Fathers, as the common legacy of Protestant America, to reaffirm that religious and civil "liberty [was] the noble errand of our fathers across the Atlantic" (Cooper 1759:48). The end of war and the establishment of peace witnessed a resurgence of the hitherto subdued lamentations of the mid-Eighteenth Century Protestant Jeremiahs over the socio-moral degeneracy of an ungrateful people. The traditional intensity of the early Jeremiad as an agent of harsh condemnations and threats of divine retribution returned with a vengeance in the Revolutionary era. The call this time was not for a return to sacred covenantal responsibilities or the fulfillment of filial obligations,
the cause now was independence, not British American Protestantism; the social ideal a republic, not a theocracy or an enlightened monarchy. . . . the enemy assumed another subtler, and more perfidious form. The English King, rather than the French, was now the instrument of the Scarlet Whore; England rather than French Canada was the modern Babylon; the danger within came from European fashions and royal agents rather than from Indians, Jesuits, or heretics (p. 119).

Bercovitch argues that from the 1760s onwards, ministers as well as lay leaders increasingly repeated the denunciatory rhetoric of the Edwardsian Jeremiahs. They castigated an evil generation and recalled them to the rituals of covenant renewal and collective prayers. Drawing from Biblical precedents they reproclaimed a state of emergency - a period of trial and national probation — for the people of New Israel whose afflictions, they conceded with pride, were no less greater than their chosenness. Thus, the strategies of the immigrant Jeremiahs, Bercovitch argues, of interpreting the perils of the world as confirmations of providential deliverance and catastrophe as a prelude to revival not only regained crucial significance in the struggle for independence but also elicited mass support for the new cause. The dominance of vice and corruption that many Americans saw in their midst . . . became a stimulus, perhaps in fact the most important stimulus, to revolution. . . . The calls for independence thus took on a tone of imperativeness . . . only this mingling of urgency and anxiety during their introspective probings at the height of the crisis could have given their revolutionary language the frenzied quality it acquired. Only profound doubt could have created their idealized expectation that "on the morrow" there would be a "new thing under the sun, that hath not been already of old time" (Wood 1969:107-8,414).

The fearful anticipation of deprivation, impoverishment and general misfortune due to the oppressive measure of taxation led to the customary result of
critical introspection and an upsurge in morality. In this connection, Edmund Morgan explained that

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

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

> When that God to whom the earth belongs, and the fulness thereof, brought his Church into this wilderness, as on *eagles'* wings by his kind protective providence, he gave this good land to her…. drove out the Heathen before her. . . . tenderly cherished her in her infant state, and protected her amidst innumerable dangers. . . . in this American quarter of the globe. . . . He has wrought out a very
glorious deliverance for them, and set them free from the cruel rod of tyranny and oppression . . . leading them to the good land of Canaan, while he gave them for an everlasting inheritance (Ibid:22-24).

Bercovitch contends that Sherwood's sermon embodies crucial historio-literary similarities to Cotton's *God's Promise to His Plantations*, delivered almost a century and a half ago, particularly in its treatment of the concept of the Puritan errand. Cotton, according to Bercovitch, to bring order and cohesion to the Puritan venture, accorded the prospective immigrants a whole new identity based on biblical precedent. He likened their situation to the plight of the ancient Hebrews and argued that the dissenting Puritans like the Israelites of Old, had transformed rebellion into migration and rededication. They were now a new chosen people of God called out of Romish bondage to inherit the promised land of Canaan. While biblical tradition, according to Bercovitch, offered Cotton the prerogative of vindicating the Puritans' transatlantic errand, his justification not the tradition that facilitated it - became the source of Sherwood's authority. Bercovitch contends that Sherwood inverted Cotton's hermeneutical mode to substitute biblical precedent with the American experience. The Puritan past took the place of biblical tradition, the country's progress provided the source of his authority, the eagle symbolized the spirit of liberty and the Revolution emerged as the antitype of exodus, errand and revival. Bercovitch asserts that the Patriot Whigs reaffirmed the typology of America's mission which they argued, had begun with the Great Migration "as the opening of a grand scheme and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant, and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth" (Adams 1856, 1:66). And quite significantly "a major reason for the triumph of the republic according to Bercovitch was that the need for a social ideal was filled by the typology of America's mission" (p. 140).

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

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

Another important factor that attests to the persistent yet flexible form of the American Jeremiad is the way the Seventeenth Century New England Puritan concept of representative selfhood was redefined to include all Eighteenth Century Protestant America. The Great Awakening and the French war, Bercovitch argues, widened the idea of New English Canaan to accommodate every loyal colonist. By the beginning of the Revolutionary era every White American Protestant became the representative self, of God's long prophesied New Israel. From its very conception, the idea of representative selfhood, according to Bercovitch, was formulated to limit self-assertion and subordinate it to cultural dictates. The revivalist Clergy's insistence on the conversion of the self, initiated the rituals of inter-colonial Protestant solidarity. Similarly, during the French and Indian wars, the emphasis on conscience and self-interest facilitated Protestant patriotism and finally in the Revolutionary era independence signified a free and glorious America.
In the process of adapting itself to the demands of the changing times, the American Jeremiad had come full circle. In the course of a century and a half of turbulent American history, it underwent a gradual transformation from being the architect of a unique theocracy to that of the builder of a modern democracy. By the last decade of the Eighteenth Century the Jeremiad had completely freed itself from the theocentric and regional moorings of Seventeenth Century New England Puritanism to become firmly established as a rite of passage for the transition of colony into a unified Republic. According to Bercovitch, the American Jeremiad's "capacity to accommodate change is proof of vitality, in symbolic no less than in social systems; and through the Eighteenth Century the rhetoric of errand remained a vehicle of social continuity" (R A, p.35).

The Seventeenth Century Puritan concept of the errand into the New World Wilderness, Bercovitch contends, established the basic tenets of American consensus. The Puritan errand, in the biblical sense of exodus was primarily considered as the migration of visible saints from Old World depravity to New World purity. During the Great Awakening, the emphasis on personal conversion and rededication widened the epic of the exodus. It forecast the errand as pilgrimage which included not just a band of visible saints but the entire Anglo-Protestant community. Again in the French and Indian wars, the errand was not just a sacred mission in the cause of Protestantism but was also a defence against oppression and the preservation of liberty. Finally, in the Revolutionary era, the errand took on the meaning of progress embodied by the loyal colonists who, in their struggle for independence, considered themselves as the advancing army of Christ moving from sacred past to the Millennial future. Thus, Bercovitch contends, the rhetoric of errand, through the long course of its undiminished influence on the colonial mind, evolved into an exclusive ideological mode. Furthermore, when the Revolutionry leaders used the concept of errand to substantiate and defend their cause of
independence "they gave full and final sanction to the ideology of consensus. Once and for all, the errand took on a special self-enclosed American form (R A, p.36).

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

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

Bercovitch asserts that the dynamics that burgeoned the Revolutionary movement evolved from a quickening spirit of liberty. But in post-Revolutionary America, the libertarian spirit that had overcome monarchical oppression turned into unrestrained license bordering on anarchy. The triumph of their militant errand in the cause of independence and the fervour of the patriotic rhetoric of freedom encouraged the Revolutionaries to question the authority of government control. The ruling minority, who were privileged with wealth and property, felt threatened at the growing popularity of egalitarian times, according to Bercovitch, revealed the emergent dangers "in nervous
satires of an egalitarian world-turned-upside-down; in Gothic novels, and tales of violated taboos (parricide, incest, idolatory); and Federalist Jeremiads, warning against unbridled ambition and denouncing a long series of local insurrections": (p. 134).

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

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

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

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

The Seventeenth Century Puritan ideology of errand, Bercovitch maintains, remained central to American consensus and the rhetoric "reflected and shaped a broad ideological movement which, for a variety of reasons, issued in civil war" (R A, p.56). Bercovitch builds his argument with the words of John Higham in his Hanging Together:Divergent Unities in American History (1974). Puritanism, according to Higham, came to the New World "not as a subversive or divisive force, but as a bedrock of order, purpose, and cohesion." While the emigrant Puritans had a great need for the "discipline of ideology" to prevent disintegration, subsequent generations "put their ideological inheritance to expanded uses" by transforming the "discipline" into a stimulus for a collective, communal cause. For example, independence combined "Protestant ideology" with "American nationalism" to strengthen American solidarity in the Nineteenth Century. But when "the desire for ideological unity increased, slavery - a
flat denial of the American ideology - became less and less tolerable" to finally burst into open conflict (Higham 1974:10-18).

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

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

Bercovitch argues that in all these rhetorical continuities of the Seventeenth Century New England Puritan imagination, the ritual of the Jeremiad increasingly confirmed an ideological consensus which subsumed dissent, and precluded all other alternatives, to transform every major crisis in the country's history into a reaffirmation of the world-redeeming vision of America. The all-pervading Power of the ideological consensus the Jeremiads espoused, according to Bercovitch, invested the term "America" with an exceptional, symbolic meaning. It was a symbol which was "the triumphant issue of early New England rhetoric and a long-ripened ritual of socialization" (p. 176). Through more than two centuries of turbulent history, Bercovitch
contends, the leaders of the self-proclaimed New Israel had subordinated pluralism in all its religious, social, political and economic multiplicity to an integrating, over-arching national ideal. In the process of consolidation, they had relocated the emergent conflicts from history to the realm of rhetoric and ensured the success of that rhetoric, in its capacity to obviate dissent, by relating it to their concept of the representative American self.

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

Furthermore, a significant element of the Seventeenth Century New England Puritan rhetoric, which the Nineteenth Century Jeremiahs inherited, was the figural use of John the Baptist to signify the different meanings of their errand. Thomas Hooker, to emphasize the importance of the social covenant declared that "John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way that all the crooked things might be made straight. This is nothing else but the taking away of the knotty knarliness of the heart, that the King of Glory may come in" (1637:2). Similarly, Edward Johnson had explained the Great Migration as a conversion experience through an emigrant's statement: "I am now prest for the service of our Lord Christ to rebuild the most glorious Edifice of Mount Sion in a wilderness, and as John the Baptist, I must cry, Prepare yee the way of the Lord, make his paths straight, for behold hee is comming againe, hee is comming to destroy Antichrist" (1654:51-52). This tradition continued well into the Nineteenth Century
when Emerson hailed "the new voices in the [American] Wilderness crying Repent\textsuperscript{1}" (Emerson 1904, I:272).

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

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

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

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

intracultural dialogues — as in Thoreau's Walden, where "the only true America" beckons to us as a timeless image of the country's time bound ideals (minimal government, extravagant economics, endless mobility, unlimited self-aggrandizement); or in Whitman's Leaves of Grass, which offers the highest Romantic tribute, the process of poetic self-creation, as text-proof of America's errand into the future (RA, p.58).
Bercovitch argues that in most of the classic writings, the work of the self-contained writer emerged not as a prospective alternative but as the very imitation of the models of culture. An example of such an instance is Walden which, Bercovitch explains, through "the act of mimesis enables Thoreau simultaneously [in the Jeremiad tradition] to berate his neighbours and to safeguard the values that undergird their way of life" (p. 186). In other words, Thoreau's condemnation, like that of Emerson, is part of the ritual of the Jeremiad which entreats the community to conform to the tenets of American destiny. Emerson stated that those "who complain about the flatness of American life have no perception of its destiny. They are not Americans", because to him America "is a garden of plenty ... a magazine of power. ... Here is man in the Garden of Eden; here the Genesis. ... Here the Exodus" (1904, VIII:142).

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

that the time will surely come — that holy millennium of liberty — when the "victory of endurance born" shall lift the masses ... and make them achieve something of that destiny which we may suppose God intends eligible for mankind. And this problem is to be worked out through the people, territory, and government of the United States. If it should fail! 0, dark were the hour and dreary beyond description the horror of such a failure -- which we anticipate not at all! (1846 1:27-28).

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

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

In moments of extreme dejection, the classic writers expressed their deep pessimism through the rhetoric of the anti-Jeremiad as in Emerson's lamentation: "Ah my country! In thee is the reasonable hope of mankind not fulfilled; when I see how false is...[all] heroism seems our dream and our insight a delusion" (Plumstead 1969:24 and
Emerson 1904, II:346). Melville, according to Bercovitch, was the most representative in his vacillation between the extremities of the Jeremiad. His "options . . . were either progress towards the millenium or regression towards the doomsday. He simply could not envision a different set of ideals...beyond that which his culture imposed" (p. 193).

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

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

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

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