Chapter III

SACVAN BERCOVITCH AND THE PURITAN IMAGINATION: RHETORIC AS IDENTITY

*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me...* For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Matthew 16:24-26,

*Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.*

Revelations 3:12

*We Americans are the Israel of our time; we bear the Ark...* God has given us, for a future independence, the broad dominions of the political pagans... we are the pioneers, the advance-guard, sent on through the wilderness... to break a new path in the New World that is ours.

Herman Melville
White Jacket 1849

The religio-historic exigencies and concepts delineated in the preceding chapters underline the premises of Bercovitch's approach to the study of the ideology of American exceptionalism. The Seventeenth Century Puritan immigrants derived their sense of mission from the Elizabethan concept of national election. The Judeo-Christian doctrines of covenant led them not only to identify themselves with the chosen people of the Old Testament but also to claim the status of visible saints who were predestined to herald the commencement and consummation of the millennium in the New World
Jerusalem. The congregational form of their ecclesiastical polity provided the foundation of their prospective Church-State and finally, typology cast the entire transatlantic venture into the framework of sacred history and a fulfilment of Scriptural prophesies. The rhetorical manifestations of these unique conceptions of the early immigrants, according to Bercovitch, reflected a distinct symbology which created the American exceptionalist identity. This chapter examines Bercovitch's contention that the Seventeenth Century Puritan immigrants bequeathed to the American nation a mode of rhetoric which not only embodied the idea of American identity but also fashioned the myth of America. The chapter traces the origins and development of what Bercovitch describes as the rhetorical construction of American exceptionalist identity and its continued significance throughout the American classic literary tradition.

I

It is an accepted fact that the twin doctrines of Martin Luther, *Sola Scriptura* and *Sola Fidei*, not only obviated the intermediacy of the Roman Catholic Church and brought God and man into direct communion with one another, but they also formed the basis of Reformed theology and established the central tenets of Protestantism. The exclusion of the Catholic hierarchy and the consolidation of the Protestant doctrine of the 'Priesthood of all Believers' brought the Bible and its exegesis, for the first time in Christian history, within the grasp of the laity.

Puritanism, as an extension of Protestantism, also insisted on the right of each Christian to read and interpret the Bible in one's own native language and facilitated the dissemination of the English translation of the Scripture. Puritanism's most distinguishing characteristic stemmed from a deep veneration of the Bible as the living word of the living God conjoined by an unwavering devotion to the study and practice of everything it prescribed. Therefore, after having wrested the Holy Scriptures from the exclusive confines of Catholicism, thus obviating the role of the Church as the sole
exegete of the Scriptures, the Puritans set about the task of laying down the principles of biblical interpretation,

Sacvan Bercovitch argues that the Puritans' intense desire to mould and order their lives, both temporal and spiritual, in strict accordance with Scripture led them to seek the true rule of biblical exegesis. In Protestant tradition, they were quick to condemn the entirely allegoric exposition of the Scripture by the Catholic Church and their deliberate obscuring of the Scripture in order to make "the Pope the door keeper of Scripture and not the Holy Spirit" (Farrar 1961:296). In an effort to re-establish the true function of hermeneutics, William Tyndale had argued that "the Scripture has but one sense which is the literal sense and that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth" in the believers turbulent journey from self to Christ (Knappen 1939:357).

It is interesting that while on the one hand the Puritans did not altogether rule out allegorical exposition, on the other, they did not also insist on a liberal or plain interpretation of the Scripture. William Bridge conceded that "though the sense of the Scripture be but one entire sense, yet sometimes the Scripture is to be understood literally, sometimes figuratively and metaphorically" (Warfield 1931:252).

Furthermore, the doctrine of the Priesthood of all Believers' in the words of John White, emphasised that "every godly man hath in him a spiritual light by which he is directed in the understanding of God's mind revealed in his word" (Ibid:231). The doctrine of innate depravity which prompted the Puritans to distrust themselves and confess their natural inability led them to invoke the assistance of the Holy Spirit in their attempts at interpreting Scripture. Thomas Goodwin argued that "the same Spirit
that guided the holy Apostles and Prophets to write it must guide the people of God to
know the meaning of it; and as he first delivered it, so must he help men to understand it" (Ibid:231, 232).

Bercovitch argues that, apart from obviating the institutional authority of Catholicism, the twin doctrines of *Sola Scriptura* and *Sola Fidei* also posed the danger of total liberation of the self by facilitating a drastically voluntary, self-willed style of exegesis leading to wild speculation. Recognizing the threat of individual license, the Reformers hastened to enforce strict discipline on hermeneutical practice by limiting the possibility of self-assertion on the part of the exegete which they believed was tantamount to sin. They insisted that the exegete must first be a believer, and secondly, that the nature of exegesis should not be invention but a discovery of the inherent meaning hidden in Scripture. As William Whitaker stated: "When we proceed from the thing to the thing signified, we bring no new light but only bring to light what was before concealed in the sign" (Fitzgerald 1849:407).

Bercovitch contends that the Reformers laid great emphasis on the centrality of the exegete who, by virtue of his regeneracy was already invested with the true sense: "It is he who proceeds from sign to significance, he who brings the spirit to the fact and carries the light of meaning in himself" (P 0, p. 112). The Reformers believed that the conjunction of the regenerate perceiver and biblical fact negated self-assertion because "only biblical facts yielded figural meaning and only the believer who had interpreted himself figurally as part of sacred history could discern the meaning of biblical facts" (Ibid:111). In the light of the above observations, Bercovitch argues that the Reformers were unaware of the fact that their hermeneutical theory offered the exegete who was in the process of discovery the prospect of finding "new sense" as he
moved from "thing to the thing signified." Me argues that in such an eventuality, the exegete would

have the whole system of exegesis at his disposal; he could restructure all of sacred history to bear out his signification; he could marshal all the literal spiritual texts of the Bible to sustain his private vision (Ibid:112).

Bercovitch demonstrates the discovery of new sense in the shift in focus of the reformist exegetes from the thing to the thing signified by citing the example of Martin Luther. Luther, by identifying Catholicism with Anti-Christ, transformed ecclesiastical history by "discovering a new sense of the apocalypse in the concealed meaning of Daniel and Revelation" and proclaimed that Protestant Reformers were being called to liberate the new chosen people from their thousand-year bondage to the Romish Whore (Ibid: 112). Bercovitch argues that the same mode of perception was developed by the New England Puritans who, as visible saints and the new English Israelites, "discovered America in Scripture and had proceeded from the thing to the thing signified --from Noah to Abraham to Moses to Nehemiah to America. They had thus shifted the focus of traditional hermeneutics from biblical to secular history in conformity with their vision of the New World as the Theopolis Americana (Ibid.1 12). In other words, instead of making the meaning flow from Scripture to secular history, the New World Puritans reversed the direction, in what Bercovitch argues was "a wholesale inversion of traditional hermeneutics" or the sacralization of secular history to obtain sacred identity (Ibid: 109).

Bercovitch's analysis of New England Puritan hermeneutics, at once the subject and method of his larger thesis as set down in The Puritan Origins of the
American Self (1975), is based on the biography of John Winthrop, the governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, titled Nehemias Americanus in Cotton Mather's Magnalia Christi Americana (1702). His typological reading of John Winthrop's biography demonstrates Mather's transformation of traditional hermeneutics to express the ideology of American exceptionalism. The unique linguistic structure that emerged from such an exercise, Bercovitch argues, constituted the genre of auto-American-biography, that is, "celebration of the representative Self as America, and of the American Self as the embodiment of a prophetic universal design" (P.O, p. 136). Such a mode was variously adopted by leading figures of the American cultural tradition.

Bercovitch states that the aim of The Puritan Origins of the American Self (1975)* is to trace the genesis and "development of a distinctive symbolic mode" in order to demonstrate the legacy and centrality of New England Puritan rhetoric to American identity. His thesis begins with a discussion of the significance of Mather's title Nehemias Americanus to the life of John Winthrop which, Bercovitch argues, is a succinct embodiment of Mather's biographical technique in the Magnalia.

Nehemias Americanus is a tribute to Winthrop, the first Governor of New England who is revered as a saint, ideal magistrate and the protagonist of an epic venture. Like the biblical hero Nehemiah who, in fulfilment of God's promise (Deut. 30: 1-5), rebuilds Jerusalem and restores the security, sanctity and prosperity of the holy city, Winthrop is also inspired to embark on an equally arduous and extraordinary undertaking to establish New Jerusalem for God's Chosen in the wilderness expanses of the New World. The uniqueness of the title, Bercovitch argues, lies in Mather's conjunction of the two terms which indicates a "far-reaching synthesis because Mather's

*All the following references to The Puritan Origins of the American Self are taken from the same source
hybrid American Nehemiah conforms neither to the principles of hagiography nor to those of secular biography (p. 1). He argues that Winthrop is neither like a medieval saint who is distinguished by a holy anointing nor like a Plutarchan hero whose earthly accomplishments are the source of his greatness. Moreover, Mather consciously obscures the initial identification of Winthrop with Nehemiah by comparing him with a variety of other exemplary figures from both biblical as well as pagan history and "in effect, he transforms all these parallels and the biographical norms they imply into a distinctive concept of the representative American saint" (p.2).

II

But before proceeding to a detailed examination of Mather's biographical technique as explained by Bercovitch, it may be useful to note how Bercovitch distinguishes the Magnalia as chronicle history and exemplary biography from being a mere exercise in filiopietism. Bercovitch explains that the narrative's historicity emerges from the association of Nehemias with Americanus which emphasizes a common core between the two, i.e., the "hero's public role". In other words, while Nehemias distinguishes Winthrop as magistrate, Americanus signifies his service to the nascent state of New England. Mather's presentation of Winthrop covers the entire personality -- from his simple attire, amiable disposition, his hospitality, humour and skills of oratory to his shortcomings like excessive tolerance, serious financial obligations and disputable policies, thus giving the narrative a historical perspective. Furthermore, Bercovitch refutes the popular belief that Mather's biographies are merely expressions of filiopietism with the following observations: first, the Magnalia offers diverse and sometimes critical data in colonial medicine and its practice by providing a great source of information to later historians; second, all of the biographies in the
Magnalia reveal an impartial presentation of the individuals' weaknesses and "his descriptions of what might be called clerical melancholia — William Thomson's physchosomatic distempers, Nathaniel Mather's suicidal depressions, Ezekiel Roger's morbid sense of isolation from man and God - may well have influenced Hawthorne's portraits of the Puritan minister" (p.2). Third, Mather's accounts of the material successes of the individuals not only substantiate Puritanism's promise of both spiritual and temporal prosperity but it also negates the criticism levelled against the Magnalia as a collection of sacred exempla. Bercovitch argues that Mather's descriptions of the individuals' remarkable progress from poverty to prosperity rightly entitle him as the originator of the "rags to riches" or the "American success story". Finally, Mather's Magnalia is valuable as "chronicle history" in the way it connects "his heroes sequentially, in the framework of an on-going historical enterprise. Throughout the work, his selection of key events shows a marked sensitivity to the nature of New England's development" (p.3).

Bercovitch points out that Mather's historicism stems from contemporary trend in biographical technique which insisted on a close and extended examination of the person and the events. This was in sharp contrast to the biased, allegorical presentation of medieval hagiographers who showed total disregard for fact. Thus, Bercovitch asserts that successive biographies in the Magnalia connect the lives of the heroes with major events of the period in a manner that reflects the socio-political development of New England. Moreover, the narrative itself can be seen as a golden mean between hagiography and modern biography which Bercovitch terms as exemplary biography with a didactic function. Although Mather's narrative is full of detail his didactic intention propels the details into the structure of the ideal with the explicit purpose of teaching through example.
Bercovitch explains that Winthrop's Americanness emerges not only from his being a part of the New World venture but also because it highlights his status as Governor to disclose his individuality; and as Nehemiah, he is an individual who is also the *exempium* of good statesmanship. Thus, the implications of *Nehemias Americanus* as *exempium* emphasizes the unique traits of Winthrop as an individual and a good magistrate. Mather, through various biblical and classical correspondences, thrusts him

Furthermore, Mather's concept of *exempium* gathers strength from the biblical principles relating to the exemplary magistrate "who protects the chosen people, ensures their place of refuge and exalts them by his righteousness" (p.5). Winthrop is also presented in the Reformed tradition, as one of the elect who reflects the Puritans' twin concept of calling or "the inward call to redemption and the summons to a social vocation imposed on man by God for the common good" (p.6).

Bercovitch argues that the conjunction of the spiritual with the secular calling broadens the *exempium* of the good magistrate to envelop the whole personality of the man. The source of this biographical practice is traced to the funeral orations of early Christians like Gregory Nazarianus which greatly influenced colonial biographers. The structure of the life of Winthrop conforms to the Gregorian model with "an opening encomium, a description of endowments, a list of achievements, and a rendering of the death scene, followed by a public-exhortation" (p.6). Bercovitch points out that Mather employed the form of the funeral oration to unite the concept of calling with the ideal of a just government. In this way, Mather remolds the good works of the Governor into the *visibilia* of the saint. Furthermore, by alluding to Job, the suffering servant of God, Mather attributes the trials and tribulations of New England and the vicious detractors of its
Governor to the covert machinations of Satan. The immense faith and fortitude with which the American Job-Nehemiah surmounts these afflictions is

a lesson of our Lord, teaching us that every believer must endure conflict and temptation as Christ did. It is a lesson that not only transcends the ideal of the good governor but transmutes history itself into a drama of the soul (p. 8).

Bercovitch argues that the transmutation of history does not obviate historical facts but helps these facts to "become a higher end, a vehicle for laying bare the soul or, more accurately, the essential landmarks in the soul's journey to God. And the journey of the soul thus abstracted provides a guide for every man . . ." (p. 8).

Bercovitch points out that while the Catholic hagiographies portrayed the extraordinariness of the individual who could only be venerated as Saint and not taken as a model for emulation, the Reformed biographers universalized the individual and offered the opportunity of faithful imitation. The Reformers argued that "the Catholics were distorting the very essence of belief, barring mankind from even the prospect of hope; they were inducing Christians to expect salvation from works rather than faith" (p.9). Hence, they took recourse to Luther's doctrine of Sola fidei which offered a kind of imitatio that gave prominence to the spirit behind the Saints deed and not to the deed itself. Thus, from the doctrine of Sola fidei the Puritans conceived exemplum fidei by asserting that "behind every experience of the saint stood Jesus Himself Exemplum Exemplorum for both the believer and the organic body of believers. The way to salvation lay in an internalized, experiential reliving of His life" (p. 10).

The reformers unlike the Catholics did not acknowledge the exemplariness of any man but imitated only that man who himself imitated Christ in his
own life. The Catholics claimed themselves righteous by an inheritance of Grace acquired through good works, but the Reformers, in the words of Edward Taylor, identified the entire human race as "accursed, poisonous, ruinating, dismal, woeful, miserable, and forlorn, excrable, beyond the relief of all created help whatsoever" (p.16), and totally incapable of meriting grace through works. Bercovitch asserts that it was the Puritans who, being the most activist of the Reformers, took upon themselves the task of investigating, explaining and regimenting the self.

It is important to note that the Puritans' understanding of the concept of Self originated in Augustine's concept of history in his De Civitate Dei or the City of God (426) wherein it is argued that since the first rebellion of man against God"two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self" (Walker 1959:167). The development of this theory led the Puritans to identify Self with Satan and as a detriment to the soul's journey towards perfection. The Puritans felt more so because of the strong influence of Calvin's doctrine of innate depravity which emphasized human worthlessness while exploring man's sinfulness before God's holiness.

Cotton Mather echoes this rationale rather mildly:

A Christian ought always to think humbly of himself, and be full of self-abasing and self-abhorring reflections. By loathing of himself continually, and being very sensible of what are his own loathsome circumstances, a Christian does what is very pleasing to Heaven (Greven 1977:67).

While equating self-denial with love of God and words like self and own with Satan and sin, they insisted at the same time that man's primary concern should be with nothing else but the perfection and well-being of his own soul. The dilemma of
Puritan identity thus arises from the intense struggle, on the one hand, between the Puritans' self-denial to attain Christ and on the other hand, his effort in this direction which is once again a confirmation of self-assertion. The entire corpus of the Puritan personal writing reveals this self-civil-war or, in Bercovitch's terms *Auto Machia* which gave rise to

a relentless psychic strain; and in New England, where the theocracy insisted upon it with unusual vigor - where anxiety about election was not only normal but mandatory - hysteria, breakdowns and suicides were not uncommon (p. 23).

This state of constant perplexity, in the mind of the Puritan regarding his identity is, according to Bercovitch, resolved by recourse to exemplary or spiritual biography. When taken as a guide to the Puritans' aspiration towards godly living this not only lessened the psychological strain that the process involved but also brought into close proximity the imitable example of Christ. Thus, the biographies of exemplary figures provide a model for men's lives and bridge the chasm that separates Self from Christ by drawing imitable parallel from human precedents like Nehemiah rather than from Christ himself directly. Bercovitch argues that

the term *Nehemias Americanus* implies that the American is like Christ because he is like Nehemiah; the same formula applies to most of Mather's biographical allusions and to those of virtually all Puritan lives (p.25).

We might recall at this point that Luther's doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* had not only facilitated every Protestant to be his own exegete but had also unleashed the danger of wilful exegesis. The reformers imposed strict control on exegetical practice by laying emphasis on a christological reading of the Scripture. They believed that
the sum of the whole Bible, prophesied, typified, prefigured, exhibited, demonstrated, to be found in every leaf, almost in every line, the scriptures being but as it were the swaddling bands of the child Jesus (Packer, 1991:135).

In Mather's narrative, Bercovitch beholds the perfect blending of the personal and biblical with the christological: the first situates Winthrop by comparing him successively with Nehemiah, Moses, Job, Solomon and Jacob within the framework of Scriptural history. Next, he correlates the Old Testament framework with that of the New Testament or the spiritual biography of Jesus. Thus, Winthrop, the saint at one end, is linked through the long line of the biblical Patriarchs, to Christ the Saviour at the other end. The entire process of the regimentation of Self is centred on the Puritan's Christic identity and thus, Winthrop as micro-christus becomes the representative Puritan saint.

Bercovitch concludes that in *Nehemias Americanus*:

the process of association illuminates the intricate threelfold rhetorical pattern which unites all the narrative elements of the biography, the personal and biblical tenets entwined in the christological. In that pattern, the *auto-machia* is so situated as to call forth, from experience itself, the image of the *exemplum fidei* in the final act of self-effacement (p.33).

Thus, after delineating through the biblical parallel of Nehemiah the progressive interpretation of Winthrop as *exemplum, exemplum fidei* and representative Puritan saint, Bercovitch examines the implications of Mather's use of typology in *Nehemias Americanus*. It is instructive to note that Calvinist theology gave central role to typology and much of Christian writing shows the infusion of Christian meaning into
the Old Testament. Subsequently, the use of typology came to be extended to post-biblical period. It was applied to the Church, and to the life of the devout Christian.

Bercovitch states that Mather's use of typology is an extension of the Puritan exegetical practice of interpreting *Exemplum fidei* as a type of Christ and on the premise that such a type was related to both biography and history.

Thus Nehemiah was a "personal type" of Jesus, and the Israelites' exodus from Babylon a "national type" of his triumphant agon. . . . In this view Christ the "antitype" stood at the center of history, casting his shadow forward to the end of time as well as backward across the Old Testament (pp. 35, 36).

From this perspective, Bercovitch explains Mather's comparison of Winthrop with Nehemiah on two levels: biographically, Winthrop and Nehemiah become correlative types of Christ; historically, the travails of the New England Saints with Christ working wonders through them in the New World become types of the ancient Israelite story. Thus, while christology identified the Saint with scriptural heroes, typology incorporated, the Saint's life into Bible history.

Although Winthrop is presented as a generous, kind and suffering servant, just magistrate and a reformed Christian, Mather sums up his life as embodying a test of faith and asserts that what ultimately dominates in all the biblical allusions is the *figura*. The typological parallels of Old and New Testament show the foreshadowing of New Testament persons and events in the Old: Exodus/Jesus' wilderness temptations; Manna/Feeding of five thousand and so on. This pattern when imposed on the New England Magistrate
in his wilderness, providentially overcoming 'his' trials, providing for 'his' often ungrateful people — *figura* that emerges bespeaks the furthest moral, spiritual and eschatological reach of Winthrop as *exemplum fidei* (P.39).

Again, Bercovitch argues that since typology primarily dealt with *littera-historia* the hermeneutics that universalizes Winthrop and thrusts him out of time and place retracts him and resituates him in time and place as "*Americanus*". Consequently, Winthrop's *figura* continues to be a part of secular history. Bercovitch explains that the aim of Mather in his figural technique is to relate literal history to redemptive history or secular history to soteriology.

It is instructive to note that Bercovitch refutes the simplistic view that Mather was merely a providential historian. To explain the distinction between various types of providence as reflected in Puritan thought, he uses the words of John Beadle:

Some acts of God are acts of common providence, and so he feeds us, and cloaths us, he doth as much for the creatures; so he feeds the Ravens. . . . Some acts of God are acts of special priviledge; and thus he gave Abraham a child in his old age, and made David of a Shepherd a King. Some acts of God, are acts of pattern; and thus he shewed mercy to Menasse....

Some acts of God are acts of wonder: it is a wonder that any soul is saved (1656:59-60).

It is obvious that of all the providences listed above, the last is the greatest because it directs the soul's ascending journey towards salvation. Bercovitch argues that while the "acts of God" that pertain to the welfare of temporal life constitute secular providences or providential history the "acts of special priviledge" and "mercy" that over-rule the lives of the elect -- from Abraham to David to Nehemiah to Winthrop —
based on prophesy and promise constitute the material of redemption or figural providences.

It is noteworthy that in the City of God providential history in Augustinian terms concerns the earthly saga of the "City of Man". But Augustine did not subscribe to the pagan concept of the world coming into existence through chance and asserted that the reason and cause behind everything in this world is God. Augustine's primary concern was with the "City of God" which led him to refute the pagan idea of history as cyclic — implying the repetitive ebb and flow of Man's fortune — and taught that history unfolded as a widening spiral rising towards universal redemption. He applied the Covenant of Grace to Christianize Hebrew eschatology and described God's redemptive plan as ascending from "Ararat, Sinai, and Golgotha forever upward toward the Holy Mount of New Jerusalem" (p.42).

Against this background of the Augustinian concept of history, Bercovitch distinguishes providential and redemptive history as secular history and soteriology where secular history remains essentially providential pertaining to the here and now, while soteriology is otherworldly and a "mode of identifying the individual, the community or the event in question, within the scheme of salvation" (p. 43). Therefore, in Winthrop, Americanus unites providential history and soteriology, earthly and heavenly, and "as representative American, he stands at once for citizen and saint, state and church," history of New England and history of the Church (p.44).

Bercovitch points out that Mather's synthesis of providential history with soteriology gains greater clarity and significance when the Magnalia is compared to the separatist historian William Bradford's Of Plymouth Plantation (1650). Bercovitch argues that while Bradford envisaged the Separatist settlement at Plymouth as a secular
act overruled by providence, Mather, on the contrary, perceived the congregationalists’ New England venture as an extension of ecclesiastical history and the attendant providences as part of a predetermined, divinely ordained plan moving towards universal redemption. Therefore, just as christology merged the personal with the divine in exemplum fidei, historically, the Governor and colony conjoined to facilitate God's redemptive work.

The entire narrative of Nehemias Americanus consolidates the confluence of personal and communal redemption because, as Bercovitch contends, Winthrop's genealogy establishes New England's ties to the reformation; at the end, his death predicates the glories in store for New Israel; the experiences which bring him from one point to the other, from sacred past to promised future, illuminate the progress of the colony (p.48).

Bercovitch emphasizes that Mather's main reason for laying stress on figural providence, or soteriology, was to exact a sacred telos on the Great Migration. It was this mode of perception which inspired Mather to write the ecclesiastical history of New England as Magnalia Christi Americana, - the wonderous acts of Christ in America -- constituting decisive stages in the redemptive scheme of God. Furthermore, the untoward incidents, trials and calamities that beset the New England Puritans, were accepted by them as divine chastisement which, they believed, all the more confirmed their role in redemptive history:

The dealings of God with our Nation . . . and with the Nations of the world is very different: for other Nations . . . God doth not punish . . . until they have filled up the Measure of their sins, and then he utterly destroyeth them; but if our Nation forsake the God of their Fathers ever so little, God presently cometh up on us with one judgement or other that so he may prevent our destruction. (Increase Mather 1674:26-28).
Therefore God's retribution of the Puritans' shortcomings in New England were considered as corrective afflictions which indicated His unfailing commitment to world-wide redemption through the sole agency of their community. Bercovitch argues that the teleology of Mather imposed on New England is based on the Reformers' interpretation of biblical prophecy (Book of Daniel). They justified themselves as divinely commissioned deliverers of the new chosen people from the Romish whore just as Nehemiah had called out the ancient Israelites from Babylonian captivity:

Prophecies in the Old Testament . . . help in the belief of New Testament prophesies, many of them being already accomplisht, others also of them agreeing with those in Revelation (ie: they remain yet to be accomplished). . . . Prophecie is Historie antedated and Historie is post dated Prophecie: the same thing is told in both . . . Therefore the Historie of Old Testament is example to us. . . . Such accomodations will be easy to New England; seeing there is such considerable similitude and agreement in the circumstances (Noyes 1698:43-45).

Thus, the New England Puritans, Bercovitch argues, appropriated biblical prophecies to not only justify their own New World experience but also to proclaim themselves as the spiritual descendents of ancient Israel and the harbingers of universal redemption who would soon rock the foundations of Christendom. They, therefore, found Nehemiah particularly appealing because he typified a number of exoduses which were not only successive but also progressive -- going even beyond history itself into the realm of soteriology. Bercovitch points out that Mather, in his identification of Winthrop with a long line of biblical prophets, ending with himself, was extremely conscious of the inescapable current of sacred time and so:

As the public and private meanings of his biographical parallels converge, they form a soteriological exemplum of astonishing breadth and coherence. Mather's Winthrop is a man representative of his profession, of his society of sainthood, of his biographer, and, as Americanus, of the
conjunction of all of these with the providential wonders, the *miracula apocolypse* that demarcates the forward sweep of redemptive history (p.71),

Furthermore, Bercovitch analyzes Mather's unique use of the term American in *Americanus* by tracing the source and development of the English concept of national election and explains its significance to the New England Orthodoxy.

III

The preceding chapter has explained that the concept of national election denoted in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* was seminal not only to the Puritan immigrants' sense of sacred mission but also to their identity as God's elect who were predestined to consummate the final act of redemptive history. It was also noted that Foxe's narrative was a combination of spiritual and chronicle biographies which, together, constituted English identity. Thus, Foxe developed the idea of England as the elect nation by metaphorically equating England with the conjunction of the two types of history: spiritual/redemptive/ ecclesiastical and chronicle/secular/providential.

Bercovitch argues that Cotton Mather appropriated and applied Foxe's rhetorical formula of national election in his *Magnalia*, but, unlike Foxe, for whom "'Englishman' was a metaphor for the temporary conjunction of sainthood and nationality" Mather perceived "'Americanus' as an 'enduring' symbol of their fusion: a federal identity not merely associated with the work of redemption, but intrinsic to the unfolding pattern of types and anti-types, itself a prophesy to be fulfilled"(p.89).

Therefore, according to Bercovitch, the New England Puritan "discovered his personal identity as Puritan by recourse to Christology; now he overcame the problem of his American identity by recourse to soteriology by imposing upon the communal effort the prophetic type (at once fulfillment and *figura*) of the Messiah's advancing millennial army". (p. 103).
Furthermore, all the trials and environmental hazards of the New England Puritans were seen as merely corrective afflictions of God visited upon them to prepare them to be better instruments in the realization of His redemptive promise. Bercovitch explains that after lifting America out of its secular context and placing it within the framework of sacred history, Mather applies to it the standards of spiritual biography. And so, just as the saint constituted the elect community, America constituted the elect community's inner call to redemption with its inherent tests and trials.

Bercovitch asserts that the idea of national election -- which had led Luther to urge fellow Germans to transform their kingdom into a model evangelical domain and had convinced Foxe's generation that England would spearhead the battle against the Roman Antichrist - now led the New England Puritans to accord America the status of visible sainthood . . . it contributes significantly to the link between New England and the American Way, to the usurpation of American identity by the United States and to the anthropomorphic nationalism that characterizes our literature - not the secular anthropomorphism of parenthood (British homeland, German fatherland), but the eschatological anthropomorphism of spiritual biography: American dream, manifest destiny, redeemer nation, and, fundamentally, the American self as representative of universal rebirth. (p. 108).

Thus, the New England Puritans' concept of national election gained strength from Christology which made the Puritans visible saints; and soteriology which defined their errand as the last step towards universal redemption and the rhetorical confluence of these two modes of thought consolidated the Puritan vision of the New World as the American City of God.

Mather's inversion of traditional hermeneutics bespeaks the substitution of secular history for scriptural text as the source of meaning for his exegesis and the
rhetoric. This was commensurate with his sense of sacred mission and destiny which, Bercovitch argues, developed into a "symbolic mode" and persisted as an indelible part of American imagination.

We need to note that Roger Williams (1604-1683) arrived in New England in 1631 and became a severe critic of the Puritan establishment at Massachusetts Bay. He launched a scathing attack against colonial rhetoric and the Puritans' identification of the New England theocracy with New Israel. He endorsed the immigrants' theocratic claims which were based on a federal covenant with the implicit anticipation of secular rewards. But what he found utterly unacceptable was their claim to spiritual blessings too. He argued that Israel, in its spiritual sense was a unique figura of the spiritual state, while America not unlike other nations, was steeped in sin. To him, equating the New World to New Israel was an unpardonable sin and to insist prophesies were being fulfilled through the New Englanders meant a terrible degradation of the Trinity by subjecting it to the essentially sinful nature of man. Thus, Roger William, Thomas Morton and others were bitterly opposed to the unorthodox and unholy hermeneutics of the New England Puritans which enabled them to discover new meaning in scripture and apply it to their own New World situation. Therefore, the New England theocrats, after discovering America in scripture moved the focus of their hermeneutics from the thing to the thing signified from Noah to Abraham to Moses to Nehemiah to Americanus — from biblical to secular history.

Bercovitch asserts that the shift in focus stemmed from the prerogatives as American exegetes . . . and when they announced that "America" was a figural sign, historia and allegoria entwined, they broke free of the restrictions of exegesis. Instead of subsuming themselves in the sensus spiritualis, they enlisted hermeneutics in support of what amounted to a private typology of current affairs (p. 113).
As Puritans they first conceived of themselves as the spiritual heirs of the ancient Israelites and then as "American Israelites", they claimed themselves to be "the sole reliable exegetes of a new last book of scripture" (p.113). Further, they conceived their transatlantic voyage as the antitype of the biblical exodus narratives i.e., their defiance of godless Kings, unholy institutions, denigrating fellows; their migration from oppression to the freedom of a second promised land; their braving the travails of another exodus with God's over-ruling providence and so on. To reiterate their sacred identity and prove it to the world at large they took recourse to a symbolic interpretation of their venture: Atlantic crossing as spiritual baptism, Old World as second Babylon; New World as a second New Canaan; wilderness to Edenic paradise and so on.

The New England Puritans used symbology to not only prove the eschatological significance of the New World but also to recast the New World locale into a desert -- garden *allegoria*. Bercovitch argues that the very basis of New England's justification rested on the interpretation of these symbolic accounts as typological truths and not as simple spiritualization or extravagant exaggeration. The colonists insisted that the Observer, in order to comprehend the true nature of his surroundings, must first recognize the sacred implications of the New World and then as an American he must harmonize personal and communal salvation within the context of American destiny. They adopted this method for transforming secular into sacred identity and to project the New World as America *microchrista* or, in other words, they founded their colony in the form of a saint. Through their rhetoric of inversion they transformed the concept of *exemplum fidei*, which denoted the elect community, not only to widen and encompass the entire Church-State of New England but also elevate the landscape of the New World to the status of visible sainthood - as can be seen in numerous histories of the Colony which take on the meaning of spiritual biography.

Bercovitch points out that "Mather's use of personal experiences to impute grace to state and country alike mirrors the inverted figural pattern of the narratives upon
which he draws" (p. 118). He dilates this assertion by explaining with examples a few representative works of New England Puritans which transform the New World's secular entity into sacred identity: For example, Edward Johnson's *Wonder-working Providence of Sion's Saviour* (1654) portrays the geographical features and developing stages of the New England settlement as the physical features of a saint advancing like a Christian *soldier* and Joshua Scottow in his *Narrative of the Planting of the Massachusetts Colony* (1694) traces the development of the colony as the gradual growth and maturation of a regenerate adult from his embryonic stale. Thus, the Colonists' rhetoric of inversion prompted them not only to consider the advancement of the colony as the pilgrimage of a saint but also transform their exposition of the doctrine of grace into an expression of corporate welfare. Significantly the histories, Jeremiads and personal literature of colonial divines like Thomas Hooker, John Norton, Thomas Shepherd, John Cotton, Peter Bulkeley, Mary Rowlandson and others signify this mode of inversion in their efforts at presenting contemporary problems of the saints as an indication of God's displeasure with them.

Bercovitch argues that a singularly explicit example of Mather's mode of inversion is the transformation of the traditional standards of the conversion-experience. The popular belief that conversion checked degeneration and facilitated man's salvation was replaced with the literal experience of the Atlantic Ocean - crossing

The swelling waves have dashed, and raged, and roared; the rude billows have been going over us, and we have been ready to sink. But just then our compassionate Lord Jesus Christ has awaked for our safety and marvellously calmed our circumstances! Oh thou land, strangely saved by the Lord, say now as in Psal. CXXXVI, 23, "O give thanks unto the ... because his mercy endureth for ever'. (Mather 1967, 11:674-75).

The pattern of treating the Atlantic as a more perilous Red sea, the voyage as baptism, and the New World as new life informs all the autobiographical writings of the Puritan immigrants. Therefore, the Puritan immigrant is in a state of progressing
transition from Old world sinfulness and temptation to New World rededication, from promise of paradise to paradise regained. Their identification with such a sacred venture not only fructified but also confirmed their sainthood.

Similarly, Bercovitch argues that the treatment of death in the Magnalia exemplifies yet another aspect of the New England Puritans' pattern of inversion i.e., the transformation of bereavement into an assertion of the community's uninterrupted progression. The colonial elegies, by moving from personal to communal concerns translate the significance of the protagonists' elevation to eternal glory into an affirmation of the community's triumphant future. This persistent stress on community, as a constituent part of federal hagiography, helped create the legend of the Founding Fathers which reveals the immense potential of the New England Puritan imagination. Bercovitch asserts that

Less than thirty years after the Arbella landed, before all the leaders of the Great Migration had died, there evolved the Legend of a golden age, one that effectually transported all the archetypes of biblical and classical antiquity to the Massachusetts Bay shores. Its sustained intensity, its coherence, and the rapidity with which it grew, amounts to an astonishing, possibly unrivalled cultural maturation (p. 122).

Bercovitch points out that in theory, the New England Puritan rhetoric, by transforming secular into sacred identity had excluded the "anxiety of process" but it could do little to alleviate the uncertainties of practical life like "planting and reaping, suppressing schismatics, raising children, fighting Indians, maintaining order in an increasingly complex and heterogenous society"(p. 120). The discrepancies that crept between rhetoric and fact, and the prospect of the theocracy's declension, led the Puritans to conceive strategies that would preserve and consolidate the discovered sense of their hermeneutics. They were quick to recognize that only their rhetoric could address the threat of their theocracy's deterioration. Therefore, instead of looking for new meanings they attributed the emergent inconsistencies to a flaw in their hermeneutical
understanding. They attuned their rhetoric to turn condemnations of the disquieting situation into a reaffirmation of their vision by recalling the legends of the past and the promise of a glorious future. Bercovitch declares that the strategy surprisingly did succeed and flourish "not because the facts conform but because the rhetoric compels. What remains, finally, is the vision of the errand as it had been ingested, spiritualized and made manifest in the mind and art of the regenerate Americanus" (p. 125).

Bercovitch argues that although Edward Johnson's biographical poems in Wonder-Working Providence, written half a century before the Magnalia, illustrate the same method of inversion as that of Mather, his portrayal of the American reveals an attempt to synthesize two different points of view. "one is allegorical: the colony as saint, advancing by 'scripture light' to 'lasting blisse'; the other is historical: the saint as colonist, poor, despised'; burdened by anxiety, nostalgia, and doubt . . . and always in need of rhetoric to goad him on" (p. 128). The Lives of Johnson, Bercovitch argues, assert that the exegesis of America relied on the saints' future accomplishments, Mather's biographies, on the other hand, significantly preclude such reliance by inverting the corporate progress of the long line of saints to symbolize the history of America. Mather, declares that "whether New-England may live anywhere else or no, it must live in our History" (1967, 1:27). Bercovitch asserts that Mather's affirmation of representative identity, which marks the farthest stretch of New England Puritan hermeneutics, renders "American identity a rhetorical (rather than a historical) issue, make Mather's proofs our monument, his vision our history, and to perceive anywhere else as a synonym for meaninglessness" (p. 132).

Mather's major intention was to immortalize the sacred beginnings of America and the heroism of the Founding Fathers. The epic presentation of the Lives in the Magnalia converge into an exclusive mythical mode, with himself being cast in the role of the communal spokesman by an act of self-assertion. Bercovitch argues that "traditionally the epic hero culminates the myth-making process . . . Mather's heroes, on the contrary delineate the myth in process. Considered in this context, they are the
successive harbingers of the *Theopolis Americana* at hand. Each of them, in his distinct historical situation, emerges an emblem of destiny manifest" (p. 134).

Bercovitch claims that the Puritan myth of America, quite successful in its attempts to eliminate the contradictions between vision and untoward history, was "the invention of expatriate idealists who declared themselves the party of the future, and then proceeded, in an implicit denial of secular history, to impose prophecy upon experience" (p. 133). He states that the Puritan myth eventually projected the United States of America, as foreshadowed in the New England Way, and perpetuated New England Puritan rhetoric as a constant source of strength for subsequent American spokesmen and writers in its ability to control and resolve grave national conflicts.

The presentation of the protagonist in Mather's biographies follows the same pattern as that of mythography wherein the community arrogates the "superindividual" image of the hero and through ritual reenactment of his legendary feats converts biography into "a form of history of a higher power than itself. But in the *Magnalia*, Mather's "superindividual" is "America itself, microcosm of the worldwide work of redemption, and macrocosm of the redemptive work underway in each of its chosen people". Thus, he obviates history by inverting it into a still higher form of personal narrative, which Bercovitch terms as "auto-American-biography, where the central term `American', referring as it does to a futuristic ideal, transform the tribal ritual from a social mode of personal fulfilment, into a personal mode of social fulfilment. In sum it reconstitutes national prophecy and spiritual biography as prophetic autobiography" and concludes that "American Puritan hermeneutics begins by asserting the unique status of the community; it finds its amplest expression, at the end of the theocratic experiment, in the unique powers it confers upon the solitary true perceiver" (p. 134).

The Puritan myth of the New World, Bercovitch explains, continued to survive even after the decline of the theocracy to become a dominant part of American
imagination. It "prepared the re-vision of God's country from the 'New England of the type' into the United States of America" (p. 136). The New England Puritans' vision of themselves and of the New World not only offered but also directed the development of a unique linguistic mode. Bercovitch argues that this mode of expression, exemplified in the Magnalia as auto-American-biography, was variously adopted by successive custodians of American culture, from Edwards to Emerson, in their efforts to address ongoing adversities in contemporary society.

Bercovitch asserts that the impetus behind the New England Puritans' rhetoric, as opposed to that of other New World colonists, lay in their vision of America as the land of apocalypse. The continent was generally considered by the emigrants as an Edenic paradise and a perfect place offering immense opportunity to establish ideal human institutions unlike the corrupt ones left behind. But the New England Puritans' approach was sacred not secular, their vision was millennial and not Utopian. They devised a hermeneutics which enabled them to not only appropriate the land as their own inheritance but also claim visible sainthood by according to it the status of New Cannan and a fulfilment of scriptural prophesy. On the whole, they cast their venture as part of extended Bible history and considered themselves, as the New English Israelites, to be the decisive instruments in realizing God's redemptive plan for mankind.

The non-Puritan colonists, on the other hand, with their pledged allegiance to their respective monarchies occupied the New World from largely political or missionary motivations. But when these colonies gained independence they experienced a sudden disruption in their historical-cultural connections with their mother countries. Citing the example of the Spanish colonists, Bercovitch argues that the Creoles could never begin an American literary tradition like the Puritan Colonists because the cessation of their dependence on Spain evoked a deep identity crisis in the successors of the colonisers. Bercovitch states that the Southern American also, after the Civil War, was left, in a similar predicament of being helplessly isolated between past and the future, between a dream that was defeated and a future that was unacceptable. But for
the post-revolutionary North American, the intermediacy was gainfully bridged by the myth of America created by the New England Way. Because

there it entailed a mythical mode of cultural continuity: Hawthorne's Endicott, the iron-breasted harbinger of the Revolution; the hero of Franklin's Autobiography, whose success story at once recapitulates the nation's past and predicates its future; Natty Bumpo on the prairie transcending all contradictions of race and culture because, as our representative American, he synthesizes the values of nature and civilization (p. 143).

Bercovitch argues that even though these examples are far from identical they still attest to the concept of "American selfhood as an identity in progress advancing from prophesies performed towards paradise to be regained" (p. 143). It is interesting to note that the same mode of hermeneutics and federal eschatology, as seen in the Magnalia that elevated America from secular to sacred history as Theopolis Americana also inform Sylvester Judd's Margaret (1843), Edward Johnson's Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Saviour in New England, (1654), Jonathan Edward's Some thoughts concerning the present Revival of Religion in New England (1742). Numerous other celebrations of America as "The Great Nation of Futurity" echoed up to the end of the Nineteenth Century and foretold the imminence of "the American Way spreading over the face of the earth" (p. 144).

In order, to buttress his argument of the persistence of millennial anticipation and the unflagging rhetoric and method of the New England Puritans, Bercovitch offers representative extracts of the Revolutionary era one such example is Samuel Sherwood's The Church's Flight into the Wilderness, wherein he conveys the Puritans' firm belief that America's triumph would herald the beginning of the millennium:

Let your faith be strong in the divine promises. Although the daughter of Zion may be in a wilderness state, yet the
Lord himself is her Light. The time is coming when Jehovah will dry up the rivers of her persecuting enemies, and the Ransomed of the Lord shall come with singing into Zion, and Everlasting Joy (1776:49).

Similarly, the statement of George Ripley, the founder of Brook Farm, that "the heavenly Jerusalem was in the clouds, waiting to descend . . . the [American] disciples were gathered; the iniquity of the world was full; the angel had put the trumpet to his lips" not only brings to mind the apocalyptic scenario of the Revelation but also the sense that Ripley did not see his farm as just a trial in Romantic socialism but something much more than that (Frothingham 1882:111).

Significantly, the apocalypse myth also helped in precluding the threat of the cyclical view of history, which presaged that sooner or later corruption would overtake America also. The New England Puritans had already replaced secular with sacred history and had interpreted America eschatologically as the final step leading towards world-wide redemption. Bercovitch argues that the Utopian literature that flooded the Nineteenth Century differed from the European genre in three basic ways: the site is at once America and not some unspecified place, the community does not attempt to materialize some philosophical theory but actually effects the forward sweep of history, and the rhetoric is essentially biblical.

IV

According to Bercovitch, Edward Bellamy's Postscript in Looking Backward: 2000 - 1887 (1926) which sets forth the author's prophetic proclamation of the imminent dawning of a new age, offers a new consideration of Utopian imagination. From this point of view, the concept of Utopia redefines itself to signify an expanding redemptive scheme which became a persistent theme in American culture. According to Bercovitch, this theme is extensively argued by not only Mather in the Magnalia and
The Wonders of the Invisible World (1693) but also by Thoreau, Emerson, J. Sullivan Cox, David A.Moore and others who as self-proclaimed latter-day Nehemiahs urge the nation onwards to its ultimate destination of New Jerusalem. Bercovitch asserts that for all these writers Utopia signified America and to be Utopian was to be a model of

the United States of America - bounded on the north by the North Pole; on the south by the Antartic Region; on the east by the first chapter of the Book of Genesis and the west by the Day of judgement....

The Supreme Ruler of Universe ... has marked out the line this nation must follow and our duty must be done.

America is destined to become the Light of the World (Bird 1899:7-8,234).

Bercovitch argues that the tradition of national biography evolved from the Puritan view of intermediate American identity in auto-American-biography. Beginning with the Revolutionary era, the Lives of popular leaders conjoined to portray America as an advancing spiritual biography, The Biographers were far less engaged with moral disposition or historical narrative than with the ideal American who personified the true spirit of the people and the country as a whole. This point of view pervaded every form of biographical writing from folk narratives to the campaign biographies of political aspirants. The same method was practised by the Romantic historians who depicted the hero as "an idealization of American motives" reflecting "all that is noble in the American character" (Levin 1959:52, 73). Thus, as in Mather's concept of Americanus the American hero emerges as a prophetic model of the country embodying the perfect blending of universal virtues with exceptional qualities of national leadership.

Bercovitch asserts that when the Magnalia was printed in America in 1820, it appeared, to its readers, as though American history was unfolding itself according to the spiritual design of scripture, In 1834, when Jared Sparks began to prepare a Library of American Biography he declared that the lives of leading
Americans, from Winthrop to Washington, not only reflected a comprehensive history of America but also revealed Christian virtues of the highest order and thus, offered an agenda for the future course of mankind. Sparks' method, Bercovitch claims, can be considered as the American form of Romantic biography: for example, by drawing parallels between Moses and Washington, the biographers projected Washington not only as the successor of the ancient patriarch but also as the greater "hero of America" who is appointed to deliver his people from the "worse than Egyptian bondage of Great Britain" through a "sea of blood" (Hay 1969:784-91). Similarly, the Lives of other national leaders like Adams, Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Jackson, Monroe, Fisher Ames can also be cast in the same heroic mould to substantiate the Puritans' concept of hero as representative of national mission.

Bercovitch argues that another interesting feature of the emerging tradition of national biography is exemplified in James Russell Lowell's projection of Abraham Lincoln as the creation of the New World nature and the paragon of subsequent generations of Americans:

And, choosing sweet clay from the breast
Of the unexhausted West,
With snuff untainted shaped a hero new,


Bercovitch contends that in calling Lincoln the "first" American, the poet did not mean either "earliest" "greatest" or "most Christ-like" but "most like America" because nature had created him in the country's own image. Lincoln appeared as an embodiment of the "supreme climax in the history of civilisation ... heralding the close of a dispensation ... from which is emerging the mystical dawn of a new day" (Ibid:85-86) and the martyr-chiefs "new birth of a new soil" not only connected him to the long procession of representative Americans reaching back to the Great Migration but also presented him as both antitype of the Patriarchs and the forerunner of future Americans.
In addition, Bercovitch asserts that

Nowhere is the Puritan vision more clearly in evidence than in the hermeneutics of the American landscape, and nowhere else is the Puritan concept of intermediate identity more strongly affirmed than where intermediacy, we recall, indicates not a historical limitation but a comprehensive prophetic selfhood (p. 157).

In keeping with the Christian tradition that knowledge of God can not only be derived from the revealed word of God, i.e., the Bible but also from the study of Creation, the Romantics considered nature as the temple of God. As adherents of natural theology, Bercovitch explains, they perceived America as the temple of nature, where temple, contrary to its tropological sense took on the exegetical meaning of the conjunction of Christology and sacred history. It is interesting to note that the Lutheran doctrine of Sola Scriptura, which, had spearheaded the Protestant cause, was gradually replaced by Sola natura in the post-Renaissance, New Science period. While Sola Scriptura facilitated the Reformers to confirm the inferences of natural theology with Scripture, Newton's law of gravitation oriented the Deists to perceive the Universe as the mind of God and for the Romantics, imagination in consonance with nature became the touchstone to accept or reject the teaching of scripture.

Bercovitch situates New England in this tradition to highlight the method of American writers in aligning their natural theology to a reaffirmation of the Puritan vision of America as promise and fulfilment of paradise regained. He cites Cotton Mather's Christian Philosopher (1720) which, he argues, appears as a treatise on Ptolemaic natural theology: The regenerate perceiver is placed at the centre of a complex structure that unites "the processes of personal salvation, scientific understanding, and sacred history" which actually contextualized Mather himself and the colonial undertaking he represented (p. 153). In "Biblia Americana", Mather, according to Bercovitch, portrays the redemptive process in twelve successive discussions: The first part gives a historical account of Jerusalem during Nehemiah's period and the second
recalls the end-time, already consummated, occurrences. But the middle section is devoted to correspondences between scriptural prophesies and the New Science discoveries. Bercovitch argues that Mather accorded this central section to natural theology to illustrate "the blessings of Christ on the Labours of an American" (Mather 1710:163). Thus, the Puritans' conception of their errand led them to relate natural theology to federal teleology, more so because of their belief that "Right perception is a measure of personal regeneration, and personal regeneration a measure of one's commitment to the establishment of the New World Kingdom" (p. 153).

Similarly, Jonathan Edwards, in Personal Narrative (1736), attributes his growing love of nature and deep interest in end time prophesies to the beginnings of the experience of grace. Edwards also like Mather, was not only convinced that he alone could comprehend the future of the New World but also ascribed the exercise "to the labours of the blessed self-reliant American Observer" (p. 153). A good example of Edward's method is his exegesis of the phrase "new heavens and new earth" from Revelation which not only indicated conversion and the apocalypse but also provided the norms for comprehending nature as a representation of heaven.

Bercovitch points out that Edwards' imagery: "this New World is probably now discovered that the new and most glorious state of God's Church on earth might commence there" and "When God is about to turn the earth into a paradise, he does not begin his work where there is good growth already, but in a wilderness" reflect his millennial soteriology and Christology. The conjunction of these concepts in the parallels between the development of mind, soul and Church, not only indicate the revelation of a renewed nature but also reassert Edwards' fundamental exegesis of "new heaven and new earth", as the wilderness-to-become paradise is America (Miller 1948:53-54).

Furthermore, it must be noted that the first week in the first chapter of Genesis was conceived as figura, i.e., God's creation of the Universe out of a void typifying the appearance of the New World after much Old World chaos, and the invocation of this figure is indicative of the Puritans' federal eschatology. Edwards
proclaims the Great Awakening with an evangelical clarion call indicating "the morning of the glorious times... God shall say, Behold, I make all things new, and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth", and the exultation of the Angels will far exceed the one at creation, when the Son of God, "the Sun of Righteousness, the sun of the new heavens and new earth, ... shall rise in the west, contrary to the course of ... things in the Old heavens and earth, ... until it shines through the World" disclosing America "a brighter type of heaven" (Heimert 1966:236). Bercovitch asserts that not only Mather and Edwards but also William Hubbard, Samuel Sewall and many others directed their natural theology in the reaffirmation and celebration of the Puritan vision of America.

Bercovitch argues that the conviction of the colonial Puritans that New England had a central part in the execution of God's redemptive plan led them to the assumption that nature perceived in super-natural terms would reveal the wonders of Christ in America. Edwards explained that

when God redeemed his people from their Babylonian captivity, and they rebuilt Jerusalem, it was... a remarkable type of the spiritual redemption that is to... take its rise from this new world, [to] wonderfully alter... the course of nature [and] the first fruits... the progress and issue of it shall renew the world (1742, IV:368,356,357).

Further Edwards, as the representative exegete, interprets America as a type of Leah to set forth the temporal and redemptive benefits of the millenium:

the changing of the course of trade, and the supplying of the world with its treasures from America is a type and forerunner of what is approaching in spiritual things when the world shall be supplied with spiritual treasures from America (Miller, 1948: 102).

Edwards' depiction of spiritual abundance nestled in the embrace of nature is a foreshadowing of Emersonian thought i.e., a new man in an Edenic paradise of the New World. Bercovitch argues that Edwards as well as Emerson shared the same conviction that the vision of the New World infused the regenerate observer with the
wonder of a rising millennial splendour and that the observer by changing himself into the image of the New World must demonstrate proof of his regeneration.

Just as Luther had raised the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* to defeat the evils of Popery, Emerson, according to Bercovitch announces his doctrine of *Sola natura* which he believed not only negated Old World corruptions but also assured regeneration for an incomplete people:

The land is the appointed remedy for whatever is false and fantastic in our culture, the continent we inhabit is to be physic and food for our mind as well as our body. The land with its tranquilizing sanative influences, is to repair the errors of a scholastic and traditional education and bring us into just relations with men and things (1888:627).

... we must regard the land as a commanding and increasing power on the citizen, the sanative influence, which promises to disclose new virtues for ages to come ... The Genius or Destiny of America is ... a man incessantly advancing, as the shadow on the dial's face, or the heavenly body by whose light it is marked ... Let us realize that this country, the last found, is the great charity of God to the human race (Ibid: 628 and 1904 xi:537, 540).

Emerson's concept of national mission evolved from the Puritans's image of America and Bercovitch points out that just as in Mather's *Christian Philosopher* and Edwards' *Images or Shadows*, the image in *Nature* is also veiled, but leaving enough scope, as in other works, for deducing the American context. Bercovitch points out that Emerson's optimism, stemming from the "living, prospective, titanic American nature" and the august "feeling which the geography of America inevitably inspires" reappears through out his writings, providing a sharp contrast to the obseleteness of the old world (Porte 1973:97-98).

Likewise, Bercovitch argues that
For Puritan and Transcendentalists alike, etymology is a form of exegesis, a clue to sacred signs, self-discovery and higher laws, the literal yields the spiritual meaning by linked analogies that are inherent in the divine text (p.238, 34)

The section on language in Nature provided an insight into Emerson's delineation of American natural theology wherein he points that "Words are signs of natural facts" and "particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts" and together they constitute "the symbol of the spirit" (1888:552). The perceivers negation of his subjectivity enables him to comprehend the true meaning. Nature itself must not only become the medium of his thought but the natural fact must also confirm the manifestation of the spirit and the perceiver's adaptation to nature identifies him with divinity. In other words, the perceiver's response towards nature commensurates with his personalization of its spirit and his symbolizing of nature depends on the extent to which he adapts himself to it. "The same symbols are found to make the original elements of all languages . . . This immediate dependence of language upon nature, this conversion of an outward phenomenon into a type" expresses "perpetual allegories" and the "axioms of physics translate the law of ethics" to transform men into models of virtue par excellence (Ibid: 552-554).

Emerson's method is evocative of the standards of New England Puritan hermeneutics and it reflects his teleology of American nature: "The fundamental law of criticism" is that "every scripture is to be interpreted by the same spirit which gave it forth", and "a life in harmony with nature, the love of truth and virtue, will purge the eyes to understand her text. By degrees we may come to know the primitive objects of nature, so that the world shall be to us an open book, and every form significant of its hidden life and final cause" (Ibid: 554).

Reminiscent of the colonial Fathers, Emerson reiterates that Americans could never aspire to build their New World Jerusalem until and unless they had crossed the moral wasteland before them. He conjoins the Puritan and Romantic principles of
salvation to proclaim that the millennium was already underway thereby dismissing the tensions arising out of the divergence of fact from vision. Bercovitch contends that Emerson is convinced that the American had only to submit himself in

*Obedience . . . to the guiding of . . . great rivers and prairies . . . Never country had such a fortune . . . as this, in its geography . . . Resources of America! Why, "the Golden Age is not behind but before you". Here is . . . the Genesis and the Exodus . . . America should speak for the human race. It is the country of Future. . . . sublime and friendly Destiny by which the human race is guided . . . has infused itself into Nature. . . . to prepare new individuals and new races.... The population of the world is a conditional population; . . . there shall yet be a better, please God . . . which should lead that movement, if not New England? who should lead the leaders but the young Americans?*(Quoted in P O, p. 160)

Bercovitch points out that Emerson's vision of America reasserts that of the Puritans in the way that he relates American landscape to redemptive history. It is emphatically representative of Edwards' portrayal of the redeeming potential of the material and spiritual "treasures" of America. Emerson's method is also reminiscent of Mather's transformation of "geography" into "christianography" in his description of the transatlantic voyage of the Ark of "the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, was compared unto a ship, that is now victoriously sailing" to its New Jerusalem (Mather 1967, 1:42, 43).

V

Erich Auerbach distinguishes type from symbol in the following terms: "figural prophecy relates to an interpretation of history . . . while the symbol is a direct interpretation of life" (quoted in P O, p.57). While the symbolist derives meaning from the reciprocity between experience and imagination, the figuralist finds it in a sacred plan that is not only free of, but also antecedent to the self. Bercovitch argues that the American opposition to this distinction led to typological symbolism, as Ursula Brumm
calls it, and that "peculiar self-consciousness which makes the symbolic process itself the center of attention", which, according to Bercovitch, became the mainstream of American literary tradition (Lynen 1969: 45).

Bercovitch contends that for Thoreau, Walden Pond as symbol or type, is significant of both the redemptive nature of the baptismal font and the Lethean quality of the Atlantic which erases all remembrance of the Old World. Similarly, he asserts that Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass (1855) evolved from his belief that the New World offered Americans the potentialities of a new verbal expression. This belief led Whitman, according to Bercovitch, to display his self conscious symbolizing as a prototype of national self-fulfilment. Thus, Bercovitch argues, Leaves of Grass along with Walden (1854) and Moby Dick (1851) became the most exemplary works of American symbolism in the middle of the Nineteenth Century. Furthermore, Bercovitch argues that in Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, (1850) the letter 'A' emblazoned across the nightsky is an example par excellence of the typological symbol in the literature of the times which

prefigures both personal and historical redemption, lending "another moral interpretation to the things of this world than they had ever borne before. . . . as if'it were the light that is to reveal all secrets, and the daybreak that shall unite all who belong to one another" (p. 162).

Bercovitch concludes that Whitman, Melville, and Hawthorne, however different they may be one from another, followed Emersonian thought in its ability to use Romantic natural theology as an expression of the national hopes and millennial aspirations. Bercovitch argues that Emerson not only widened but also transformed the tenets of colonial hermeneutics into the tenets of modern symbolism. He contends that while the Puritans combined orthodoxy with secularism, Edwards laid emphasis on the secular side of their rhetoric by identifying colonial progress with post millenialism - and finally Emerson not only maintained but also strengthened Puritan hermeneutics with the Romantic doctrine of sola natura.
According to Bercovitch, American Romantic symbolism, as represented by Emerson, did not merely depart from Puritan exegesis in its substitution of nature for the Bible but went so far as to recast the Puritan concept of personal identity. It may be recalled that the Reformers used *sola fides* to free the individual from doctrinal constraints but at the same time they curbed the danger of subjection with the concept of *exemplum fidei*. The Romantics differed from the Reformers in their reversal of the reformed terms of personal identity by subsuming the concept of *exemplum fidei* in the doctrine of *sola fides*. Thus, according to Bercovitch, the Romantics not only facilitated the individual to select his identity but also to exact his personal models upon experience. In other words, the Romantics conceived of the inspired perceiver as their model of selfhood.

Bercovitch says that Emerson adapts the doctrines of Romanticism to those of early New England rhetoric which, in terms of identity, meant that "the self sought was not only his but America's, or rather his as America's, and therefore America's as his." (p. 165). Emerson, as a true American, carelessly acknowledged and celebrated the sense of sacred mission and manifest destiny as set forth in the writings of the Founding Fathers of New England. Bercovitch delineates Emerson's teleology, first, in his consideration of the Migration of 1630 as a model of the biblical exodus with its implicit equation of the Old World past to the enormity of the Egyptian captivity. The second aspect of Emerson's teleology, according to Bercovitch, is his desire to cast himself in the role of a latter-day John the Baptist heralding the advent of an American genius who would bring to fruition the delayed hope of the world.

In Bercovitch's analysis Emerson transforms Romantic autobiography into auto-American biography by identifying himself with his hero in order to establish himself as the symbol of a corporate teleology. He argues that Emerson, like Whitman, "vindicates himself by expecting the main things' from future Americans like Thorean, he confirms his rebirth by considering it to be only a morning-star, herald of the
ascendent western sun that ‘all the nations follow” (p. 170). Emerson follows Mather’s technique of interpreting the national past as both prophesies fulfilled and prophesies in the process of fulfilment. Bercovitch contends that as the inheritor of the rhetorical tradition of Puritan New England, Emerson attempted to overcome the disparities between history and the self in all its civic, natural and prophetic multi-dimensionality by projecting himself as the representative American. It is instructive to note that Emerson’s most significant writings on nature, the scholar and the religious teacher were written during, what he perceived to be, the most depraved period of the Jacksonian era. He discovered, in the Puritan tradition, that his rhetoric flourished in the face of misfortune. He was similar to Mather in formulating the method of self-renewal by arrogating to himself the meaning of America. Bercovitch argues that while the Romantics perceived all history to be biography, Emerson went further to declare that there was no biography but only auto-biography, that America was the only true idea and belonged to the best minds only.

Bercovitch contends that the American Romantics, including the most antinationalistic writers, adopt from Emerson the Puritan method of blending the personal with the national dream. For example:

Mather’s Winthrop is an American who has made himself a cornerstone of the New World Jerusalem, and therefore part of the author’s exemplary auto-biography. *Walden* is the archetypal Romantic autobiography of the self as “the only true America”. The bridge between these works is Emerson’s Scholar-Teacher-Natural philosopher, who compensates for political failure by collapsing nature and society, history, biography, and auto-biography, into the eschatological Now which is Emerson as the representative American (p. 174).

Bercovitch refutes the common but false notion that American Literature, upto Emerson, is Antinoman. He recalls that Anne Hutchinson was banished by the New England Puritans because she devalued the corporate mission and gave primacy to personal revelation. Bercovitch argues that even though Emerson did not condemn
Antinomianism as strongly as Winthrop, Mather or Edwards, his idea of representative heroism however precluded the principles of antinomianism. Emerson, according to Bercovitch, not unlike Mather, projected his hero as one who acquired his distinctiveness exclusively by virtue of the venture he represented. Emerson's call to greatness addresses the inherent ambiguity of American literature which, while on the one hand celebrates individualism, yet on the other seeks an ideal community. Bercovitch argues that Emerson's concept of self-reliance gains strength from both these extremities only to emerge as the best expression of a culture which exalts independence and rejects any kind of self-centred abnormality or exclusivism. This rejection, according to Bercovitch indicates Emerson's disinclination towards Antinomianism. No matter how fanciful the claims of the self-reliant American, he would firmly continue to be the leader and benefactor of the community.

Furthermore, Bercovitch cites Hawthorne's Hester Prynne as an ideal example of the representative American woman. He contends that Hester, in consonance with the biblical significance of her name, emerges from obscurity to shine forth as the symbol of the hopes and aspirations of a forthcoming new era. Bercovitch argues that The Scarlet Letter is an essentially American romance simply by virtue of its conflation of personal and federal eschatology:

Christologically, the A' she wears expands from "Adulteress" to "Angelic". Historically, as "the A for America", it leads forward from the Puritan Utopia to that "brighter period" when the country will fulfil its "high and glorious destiny" (p. 177).

According to Bercovitch, Hawthorne's heroine is an "intermediary prophetess" who is neither a completely "doomed Romantic dark lady" nor an entirely "world-redeeming Romantic saviour", but a "figura medietatis" holding forth the promise that future generations of New Englanders would more than justify their forbears and ensure the cultural continuities of legendary past to transcend to greater glory. Thus, Bercovitch points out, this representative characteristic of American Romantic heroism
shows the farthest extent of Mather's audacious *auto-American-biographical* techniques as seen manifest in the Magnalia.

Indeed, Bercovitch, contends that the concept of *Americanus*, as discerned by him in Mather, persisted throughout successive generations of the American literary tradition unto Emerson as a compensatory substitute to the untoward course of American history. He recalls Emerson's proclamation that "in this age of seeming, nothing can be more important than the opening and promulgation of the gospel of compensations to save the land" (Seals 1965:46) and asserts that the leading figures of every generation made use of this compensatory mode of identity. Mather provided compensation for the deceptiveness of contemporary life by anticipating the redemptive promises of the Theopolis Americana. Edwards did it by announcing that American destiny consisted in consummating the doctrine of the New heavens and the New earth, Whitman offered compensation for his times by investing his faith in the very idea of the New World.

Bercovitch perceives Whitman's Democratic Vistas (1871) as a profound expression of the New England Puritan Vision. He argues that Whitman's rhetorical strategy is similar to that of Mather in *Nehemias Americanus* and Emerson in *American Scholar*. He begins his Democratic Vistas with a review of ancient cultures which incrementally converge on America and its destiny of embodying the moral and political meditations of past ages. His representative poet like the American Scholar is presented as a descendant of the unique "birthstock" of the New World. He follows Mather in offering a pictorial promise of the New Jerusalem emerging out of the wilderness condition of the present. Bercovitch argues that the pattern Whitman adopted was conceived by Mather in the Magnalia and consolidated by Emerson. He states that "the American future which Mather proclaimed at the end of the Magnalia finds its fullest expression in the transcendental vistas, the democratic Magnalia Americana heralded in Emerson's essays of 1830" (p. 184). Both Mather and Emerson attempted to revive the nation in its most adverse moments through a strategy of compensation based...
on the redemptive promise of America. Bercovitch opines that for the Puritans as well as the transcendentalists the act of writing the history of the New World involved a combination of autobiography and spiritual biography. Thus Bercovitch defines auto-American-biography as a triadic composition which functioned simultaneously as an assertion of the self, a Jeremiad against a contemporary' socio-moral waywardness, a prophetic proclamation of a glorious future and a celebration of the regenerate Americanus.

Bercovitch concludes that the rhetoric of auto-American-biography, from Mather to Emerson helped in resolving countless conflicts inherent in the "free-enterprise" economy: "Spiritual versus material freedom, private versus corporate enterprise, the cultural 'idea', expressed by the country's purest-minds" versus the cultural fact embodied in a vast economic-political undertaking" (p 185).

In the final analysis, it can be concluded that Bercovitch's evaluation of Nehemias Americanus leads him to distinguish a symbolic mode in Mather's rhetoric which not only invested the term Americanus with immense redemptive potential but also created the myth of America which has ever since remained an inseparable part of the American Mind. As he himself admits, Bercovitch does not offer a reinterpretation of American Literature but only traces the origins, development and continuities of Puritan rhetoric in order to show the power of the New England Puritan Imagination in shaping the American exceptionalist Identity and its persistence in the nation's literary tradition.

In the next chapter I shall examine Bercovitch's argument that the Seventeenth Century New England Puritan imagination, through rhetoric, shaped the ideology of American consensus. The chapter will also analyze how the American ideology of consensus influenced the course of the country's history, the development of its culture and literary tradition by sustaining the national myth.
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