
The Fight Continues

New England changed in significant ways during the middle of the seventeenth century. Increasingly, the population consisted of men and women who had been born and raised in the puritan laboratory that was New England. These individuals had not experienced the temptations and challenges that their fathers and mothers had faced in England. They were not as likely to have as deep a sense of their sinfulness as men like John Winthrop and Thomas Shepard, both of whom confided to their diaries occasions on which they had succumbed to the temptations that surrounded youth in their native land. They were not torn by the question of compromising with an imperfect church that had troubled John Cotton and John Davenport in their English ministries. Growing up in New England, where they had not had to suffer and fight for their faith, they perhaps took it more for granted.

At the same time, New England was attracting more individuals who did not share the orthodox puritan vision but who were drawn to the region by burgeoning economic opportunities and other factors—though this was less so with New Haven. This included Baptists and Quakers, but also entrepreneurs who were opposed to puritanism and resentful of how the various colonies excluded them from political influence.

As the colonies dealt with these changes, they did so without many of the leaders who had defined the puritan experiment. Thomas Hooker had died in 1647; John Winthrop, in 1649; Thomas Shepard also died in 1649; John Cotton died in 1652; Thomas Dudley, in 1653; Connecticut's Governor John Haynes, in 1654; Plymouth's Edward Winslow, in 1655; Nathaniel Rogers died in 1655 as well; Edward Hopkins, another Connecticut governor, in 1657; Plymouth's William Bradford, also in 1657; Theophilus Eaton, in 1658;