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A Pillar Pluckt: The Body in Funeral Sermons of Colonial New England

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“A PILLAR PLUCKT”: THE BODY IN FUNERAL SERMONS
OF COLONIAL NEW ENGLAND

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments.....	iii
Abstract.....	v
1. INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY.....	1
2. PURITAN FUNERAL SERMONS.....	28
3. FUNERAL SERMONS AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NEW ENGLAND.....	48
References.....	72
Biographical Sketch.....	78

ABSTRACT

This study examines clergy in colonial New England and how they depicted dead bodies in their funeral sermons. Whether it was second generation Puritan ministers like William Hubbard and Samuel Willard, or third generation ministers like Benjamin Colman and Benjamin Wadsworth, ministers imagined their resting subjects as a "pillar," "shield," "withering grass," or "vapor." I argue their language of the body, such as the use of specific terms within certain contexts, reflected social and religious trends in New England, from its Puritan origins to its welcoming of moderate Christianity in the eighteenth-century. Chapter Two observes Puritan funeral sermons and their relation to King Philip's War and second generation perception of natural depravity. Chapter Three discusses funeral sermons and their reflection of the third generation's shift toward English intellectualism and religious optimism.

In conclusion, I argue funeral sermons and their generational developments spoke to more than specific superlatives of the dead. With the body of the dead as their canvas, New England ministers illustrated prevailing mentalities about religious and cultural thought. They spoke to how authority was mediated and to what extent human nature could be trusted. New England clergy entered into public discourse about the inherent abilities, or disabilities, their congregations were defined by. Through their imaginative definitions of dead bodies, they ventured to define survivors and their place in the Church.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY¹

In 1894, Alice Morse Earle, a well-known nineteenth-century author, historian, and Massachusetts native, published her study *Customs and Fashions in Old New England*. Earle, clearly confident in the breadth of her research and base of knowledge on the subject matter, did not shy away from many topics. Through the course of nearly four-hundred pages Earle provided readers with an array of perspectives on “old” New England, from the “rude means of transportation” and the “glorious” booktrade in Boston to Puritan-approved methods of amusement. This was not all she discussed, however. Her final chapter explained what the end of life looked like in colonial New England.²

Dying in New England meant a lot of work for surviving family and friends, Earle noted. “In Londonberry, N.H., and neighboring towns that had been settled by Scotch-Irish planters,” she recorded, “death was a signal for cessation of daily work throughout the neighborhood” so the arrangement of funerary procedures could be aided. Both sexes offered “[k]indly assistance,” at the residence of the bereaved family, with women helping prepare the funeral feast and men bringing gifts and “all the advice and help that was needed” that day. As Earle wrote, death often also meant the enjoyment of certain libations. “Much New England rum was consumed,” Earle highlighted, both before and after the funeral procession. So much, in fact, that the “funeral rum-

¹ Note about the text: unless stated otherwise, I have quoted all primary sources as they appeared in their published format. All original italics, punctuations, spellings, and capitalizations have been retained when possible.

² Susan Reynolds Williams, *Alice Morse Earle and the Domestic History of Early America* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 1; Alice Morse Earle, *Customs and Fashions in Old New England* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1893), 184, 236-7, 258.

bill was often an embarrassing and hampering expense to a bereaved family for years.” For many in New England, disposal of the dead eventually meant “strong drink” and “an outbreak of grisly jollity” for the grieving. Although, this was not the case for some of the original colonists.³

“The earliest New Englanders had no religious services,” when they buried their dead, Earle noted. Far from an occasion for drunken frivolity, Earle described her Puritan predecessors as hushed and stoic during funerals. They “said no words, either of grief, resignation, or faith,” Earle observed, “but followed the coffin and filled the grave in silence.” During his visit to New England in 1640, English lawyer Thomas Lechford noticed much of the same when he attended early colonial funerals. “At Burials,” Lechford pointed out, “nothing is read, nor any Funeral Sermon made.” In the place of any graveside eulogizing, guests simply came “together by tolling of the bell, and carr[ied] the dead solemnly to his grave, and there st[ood] by him” as the corpse was buried. While in many ways the scenes Earle and Lechford described changed greatly over the course of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries, this project is concerned with the development of one particular death practice: printed funeral sermons.

While historians such as David Stannard have noted how funerary practices in early New England shifted from the constrained approach discussed in Earle and Lechford’s chronicles to an array of material expressions, not enough attention has been paid to the specific ways in which funeral sermons changed over time or the extent to which such changes reflected broader shifts in New England Christianity. My project seeks to unearth the body from funeral sermons, particularly those created by colonial clergy.⁴

³ Ibid., 369, 370. It is unclear, but it appears Earle is referencing Nathaniel Hawthorne in her mention of “an outbreak of grisly jollity.”

⁴ Ibid., 364; Thomas Lechford, *Plain Dealing, or News From New England* (Boston: Wiggin & Lunt, 1867), 87, 88; David Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death: A Study in Religion, Culture, and Social Change* (New York City, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1977), 111-3.

This study observes how second and third generation clergy referenced bodies in their funeral sermons. I begin with an examination of godly clergy like Joshua Moodey and Samuel Willard between the 1670s and 1690s, and how the dead were rhetorically transformed into “pillars” and “shields”—metaphorical objects that suggested physical strength, endurance, and protection. Then, I turn to third generation ministers like Benjamin Colman and Benjamin Wadsworth and how they turned their resting subjects into “withering grass” and “vapor,” underlining the ephemerality of the dead. While my project highlights difference between colonial ministers, I do not mean to overstate contrast or divergence among the two generations. Both generations plucked terms from a shared source, the Bible, and from one another. Their propensity for sharing language neuters the historian's search for blunt disparity. Instead, I interpret the sermons within their respective historical contexts and argue this bodily aspect in funeral sermons reflected social and religious trends in New England, from its Puritan origins to its welcoming of moderate Christianity in the eighteenth-century.

Regardless of their word choice, however, we will see that the body was used by all ministers in their sermons upon the departed. References to the body facilitated clerical definitions of human nature, community, and good doctrine. Sometimes it illustrated the worrisome corruption of mankind, while other times it depicted optimism in the “publick spirit” within everybody. Sometimes it was testimony to the endurance of the historical Church despite human depravity, while other times it spoke to the power of individual goodness.

“Change” has long been a theme throughout the canon of New England Puritan scholarship. Many historians have considered the fluctuations of a range of topics within Puritan New

England, such as households, economics, theologies, sermons, and communities. Philip J. Greven's 1970 monograph is a generational study of colonial Andover which charts the development of the town's families, their impactful socio-religious practices, and how their changes signaled broader cultural and intellectual evolutions in New England. As he puts it, "the slow and subtle" shifts in household relationships should even be considered in the American colonies' War for Independence. Greven's overarching theme of growing individuality and independence, one my project draws on, is illustrated by his examination of relationships between fathers and sons. First and second generation sons were "remarkably rooted" to Andover, Greven has noted, committed to a system of Christian patriarchy that discouraged the mobility of sons whose personal choices rested upon the accessibility of their inheritance. This changed, however, in the third and fourth generations. As men married younger, actively sought their inheritances earlier, and land became scarce, mid-eighteenth-century Andover families "accepted the early independence" and "marked increase in the geographic mobility" of their sons. New England was warming to individual movement and discernment.⁵

Published a year after Greven's work, Robert Middlekauff's *The Mathers* focuses much more on the generational arc of New England religious thought among its clerical elite. As the title suggests, the monograph is occupied with the intellectual influence of the region's patriarchs of Puritanism: Richard, Increase, and Cotton Mather. Middlekauff's study of the Mathers elucidates the progression of the specific Reformed traditions brought to New England by initial settlers like Richard, who resisted Archbishop William Laud's "Romish" influence upon the

⁵ Philip J. Greven, *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), 280, 40, 123, 272-4. Greven later notes that even once sons lived on their own, they "remained economically dependent upon their fathers, who usually continued to own and control the land upon which their sons had settled." For more on familial dependency, see 36-7, 39, 98.

Church of England. *The Mathers'* generational account of Massachusetts Bay's leading Christian thinkers lays foundational context about the first generation's emphasis on saintly "anxiety," church exclusivity, and reformation; the second generation's worry about the "decline" of their New Israel; and the third generation's tensions with "rational religion" and individual opportunity. This last point, the religious and social contestations between second and third generation ministers and their churches, is one of the primary lenses through which I examine funeral sermons and the body.⁶

Any study of Puritans, particularly in terms of their preaching, must engage with Harry S. Stout's 1986 *The New England Soul*—a comprehensive survey of sermons, culture, and intellectual tradition in colonial New England. Stout's investigation spans the first four generations of settlers—from the early seventeenth-century to the American Revolution—in order to unearth the powerful cultural and religious instruction that regularly took place in Sabbath, weekday, and occasional sermons. Though Stout does not extensively discuss funeral sermons, he valuably describes the overall growth of published occasional sermons beginning in the second generation and where funeral sermons fit therein. In addition, *The New England Soul* importantly documents impactful shifts in social, religious, and intellectual spheres between the second and third generations that are of great interest to my study. Stout illustrates the "anglicization" of New England churches, colleges, and theologies in the eighteenth-century. As he notes, moderate Anglican ministers such as John Tillotson and English Enlightenment intellectuals like John Locke became increasingly popular among established Puritans and

⁶ Richard Middlekauff, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728* (New York City, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1971), 22-4, 6, 98, 296-7.

newly-minted Harvard ministers, encouraging “cosmic vastness,” intellectual diction, toleration, and the “enablement of reason” in their sermons. This generational shift is critical to my work.⁷

Less concerned with carrying the “rhetoric of failure” in their sermons, third generation ministers were generally more optimistic about human nature. I draw on John Corrigan’s 1991 *The Prism of Piety* for expansion on this development, one he’s referred to as “a movement . . . from anxiety and pessimism” about human nature to “confidence in the rational order of the universe, and a human capability to detect that order.” Corrigan analyzes New England “catholick,” Harvard-trained ministers such as Benjamin Colman, Ebenezer Pemberton, and Benjamin Wadsworth for their embrace of English rationality, de-emphasis of original sin, and re-positioning of God as “compassionate,” not wrathful. Though I will diverge from some of Corrigan’s arguments about Puritan and catholick perceptions of the body, his study is nevertheless critical to this project for its coverage of intellectual and cultural evolutions seen in eighteenth-century New England.⁸

⁷ Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York City, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1986), 1, 5, 70, 161, 127, 33.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 63; John Corrigan, *The Prism of Piety: Catholick Congregational Clergy at the Beginning of the Enlightenment* (New York City, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1991), vii, 3-7. Corrigan posits that catholick ministers found the human body, and responsibly enjoyed “pleasures of the flesh,” to not only be safe but spiritually rewarding—a considerable departure, he argues, from their Puritan forebears who saw the body as “menacing to morality” (38, 42, 88, 96). While I agree that Puritans and catholicks differed greatly in their thoughts on human nature, I argue it was Puritans, not their successors, who appeared friendly to the body. Puritan Leonard Hoar’s 1680 funeral sermon for a Lady Mildmay did not describe the body as corruptive, but as “so dearly affected to the soul.” By contrast, in 1712 catholick minister Ebenezer Pemberton, even after illustrating the natural ability for men to do “Publick Good,” described the body as a “gross lump of clay” and an “Imbodyed Estate” that impeded full knowledge of God. For more on their comments on the body, see Leonard Hoar, *The Sting of Death* (Boston: 1680), Early American Imprints, I, 6; Ebenezer Pemberton, *A True Servant of His Generation Characterized* (Boston: 1712), Early American Imprints, I, 12, 17.

More recent works, such as Abram Van Engen's 2015 *Sympathetic Puritans*, Martha Finch's 2010 *Dissenting Bodies*, and Mark Valeri's 2010 *Heavenly Merchandize*, have given this thesis essential familiarity with other historical contexts in colonial New England. Van Engen's study, though mostly focused on first generation Puritans absent from my work, provides crucial up-to-date interpretations of the tension between English latitudinarianism and American Puritanism in the eighteenth-century. He notes the "anti-Calvinism" of moderate Anglicans challenged Puritanism's focus on a sinner's anxiety about regeneration and emphasized the "moral life and solid conscience" inherently possible in all—a critical point for my discussions on third generation "publick" action.⁹

Finch's monograph necessarily establishes the significance of the body, and how understandings of it changed, in colonial New England. Concerned with the two bodies of Puritans, "one imagined, the other lived," Finch demonstrates the metaphorical, theological, and lived importance of bodies in early New England. As she notes, despite notions of Puritan anti-materialism pervasive in scholarship, the "human body was, in fact, at the center of the English Protestant dissenters' theology." It was the conduit, and reflection, of God's sanctifying presence (or lack thereof). Through its actions, appearances, and disciplines, it was the outer representation of inner realities. Proper (English) clothing, settlement patterns, farming techniques, and labor, all of which were predicated by the actions of bodies, defined the godly as distinct from the ungodly, such as Native Americans and the uncultivated New England wilderness. Finch's explanation of the body's social and cultural centrality, particularly among

⁹ Abram Van Engen, *Sympathetic Puritans: Calvinist Fellow Feeling in Early New England* (New York City, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2015), 212-3, 216.

Puritans, aids my study's arguments about dead and imagined bodies and their gravity in sermon discourse.¹⁰

Valeri's work on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New England commerce, similar to Greven's generational study of Andover, helps this thesis position its subjects within broader societal developments that impacted the thought of second and third generation colonists. Valeri notes how Puritan ministers went from monitoring business transactions in the name of Christian neighborliness to arguing that individual wealth, no longer a threat to community, was a sign of God's providential favor. As he argues, third generation ministers such as Cotton Mather tied communal godliness to financial fortune, that one could not better "observe the Prosperity of the Town, in all its Affairs, than by Endeavouring that the *Lord's Day* may be exemplarily *Sanctified*." Though my project does not deeply engage with commercial practice, it does rely on the work of Valeri for a better understanding of how second and third generation ministers differed in their ideas on individual choice, human nature, and their impact in Christian community.¹¹

In many of these monographs on Puritanism, as I stated earlier, "change" is the historical concern. Whether the context was economics, households, or religious thought, many of the scholars I lean on for this project were conducting discussions about how New England's "hotter" Protestants got from one place to another. I am also interested in this big question, but I

¹⁰ Martha Finch, *Dissenting Bodies: Corporealities in Early New England* (New York City, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2010), xi-xii, 3, 38, 47-8, 84-5, 88.

¹¹ Mark Valeri, *Heavenly Merchandize: How Religion Shaped Commerce in Puritan America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), 112-3; Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (London: 1702), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, 36.

hope to interrogate it in a way that builds upon, not mimics, the important works listed above. I am still interested in how Puritan neighborliness paved the way for individual choice; how natural wickedness evolved into inherent goodness; and how the doctrines that ministers attempted to establish in their respective generations adapted to time and place, but I want to more fully investigate how the body figured into these issues. For example, what was the significance of Puritan William Hubbard referring to his deceased subject as a “shield”? Why did his generation emphasize images of permanence, structure, and defense when the next generation more often related the dead to “grass” and “vapor”? What about the minister's mission changed between generations, and how was it reflected through the body?

The remainder of this chapter is concerned with the character and presence of funeral sermons within the broader colonial New England readership and how the genre's relevance among readers corresponded with developments in its contents. These sermons became an integral part of clerical discourse by the mid-eighteenth-century, but they did not have a public audience until second generation ministers diverged from their fathers and considered the significance of published “occasional” sermons—those for non-Sabbath events, such as elections, fasts, and funerals. Despite their print initiation in the 1670s, funeral sermons remained in relative obscurity for the rest of the century. Third generation ministers, as they did with the themes they employed in the sermons, split with their forebears and brought more funeral sermons into public consumption.¹²

¹² Stout, *New England Soul*, 70; Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death*, 80. Stannard points out that Samuel Wakeman's sermon upon the death of John Tappin in 1672 is the “earliest extant funeral sermon preached in New England.”

The print history of these sermons directly reflects the contrasting ways in which New England ministers referenced dead bodies. Funeral sermons were part of the second generation's initiative to publish non-Sabbath sermons that recalled the exemplary faith and covenantalism of the first generation. As offspring of this anointed collection of saints, second generation sons and daughters could share their parents' providential preservation if they honored their covenantal expectations. God would guide them through the New England wilderness, like He did for their parents, and keep them as "a people in Covenant," those who "the Lord builds his Expectations upon." Through sermons on elections, thanksgivings, fasts, and funerals, ministers sought communal conservation through what Harry S. Stout has referred to as a "sacred mythology" that exalted the founders as New World church fathers and called for the participation of their offspring. On the heels of numerous reported natural disasters between the 1660s and 1670s and the Synod of 1662's condemnation of New England's churches, occasional sermons referred to the example of the first generation to encourage solidarity.¹³

In many ways, the nascent print history of these sermons underscores broader themes of the body that I discuss in subsequent chapters. The small number of published funeral sermons, and the relative dearth of non-Biblical reading in the colonies, spoke not only to the lack of resources for local publishing, but the mistrust of individual human nature held by clergy. Though it was not full-proof, ministers asserted their authority in order to limit the availability of corruptive popular literature or seedy texts that could exploit the fallenness of readers. This is not to suggest that funeral sermons would have been considered dangerous reading (other than the potential for excessive grieving), but that their contents, particularly their emphasis on inherent sin, were emblematic of clerical hopes of a Biblical, insulated reading culture. Just as their

¹³ William Stoughton quoted in Stout, *New England Soul*, 69, 70.

caution regarding humanity's wickedness led to clerical surveillance of imported readings, it also informed their funeral sermon rhetoric and language of the body. Playing off of local covenantalism, "sacred mythology" of church exemplars, and original sin of survivors, second generation ministers turned dead bodies into objects, like "pillars" and "shields," that exhibited protection and strength deriving from godliness. Bodies of the dead convicted sinners of their failings, their sole need of redemption through Christ in the scriptures, and confirmed the durability of the historical Church. Like the bodies that second generation ministers created, the earliest printed funeral sermons represented covenantal anxiety, conviction, and deference to pious exemplars.

Unlike their predecessors, third generation ministers used bodies and printed funeral sermons to illustrate the inherent goodness inside mankind. The dead, still praised for their godly example, were described like "grass" or "vapor." Such language spoke to ephemerality of the dead and the ability for survivors to replace and emulate them instead of mythologizing their piety. This shift came during the eighteenth-century, after the revocation of the colonial charter in the 1680s, the subsequent installation of a royal governor, and the embrace of European rationality among ministers. Human nature was becoming less of a threat to the sons of the second generation. Individuals were not as vulnerable to sin and were capable of responsible decision-making, good morality, and public virtue. Instead of using bodies to convict churches of their depravity, they were used to encourage public charity and common virtue. The proliferation of printed funeral sermons—the most printed sermons in New England by the 1730s—among the third generation not only reflected the increased means for local publishing, but represented what ministers tried to communicate through dead bodies—trust in individuality. Less concerned with the dangers of the New England wilderness, the corruptibility of humanity, and non-Biblical

literature, third generation ministers composed and published funeral sermons at a higher rate and often with encouragement to pursue sources of liberal education. As pastor Ebenezer Pemberton put it in his 1712 funeral sermon for John Walley, there was a public necessity for engagement with “Good Literature *among a People*,” whether it was an approved theological treatise or a Greek classic. When clergy were beginning to use bodies to express trust in individual ability, they also used the expansion of the sermons themselves to express their confidence in humanity and their pursuits in rational intellectualism alongside devotional readings. In either generation, the publishing of funeral sermons were reflective of their contexts, contents, and references to the body.¹⁴

American Puritans eventually warmed to funerary practices, including sermons, that honored the dead. After the first few decades of colonial settlement, bodies were being embalmed so that preparations for intricate funerals could be carried out; church bells rang to signal funeral processions; and attendees adorned themselves with “mourning robes.” By 1660, David Stannard has noted, funerals became much more ceremonial and materialistic with the proliferation of grave markers styled with “death’s-heads, scythes, [and] hourglasses.” Samuel Sewall, a prominent second generation Boston merchant, repeatedly mentioned in his diary how funeral invitations included rings and gloves, as well as public spectacles of processions and burials. Overall, by the late-seventeenth-century, New England Puritans no longer quickly discarded dead bodies or memories of the lives lost. Instead, they materially pursued remembrance and memorialization. Funeral sermons, no longer shunned as idolatrous or harmful, served as another

¹⁴ Ibid., 161; Ebenezer Pemberton, *A True Servant of His Generation* (Boston: 1712), Early American Imprints, I, 7.

outlet to address communal loss and, instead of ignoring, frequently discussed the body of the dead. Before the first funeral sermons were published in Puritan New England, however, the body was a familiar social metaphor seen in the writings of laity and clergy.¹⁵

Bodies, real and imagined, helped define society in early New England and set the precedent for bodily language later seen in funeral sermons.¹⁶ Bodies were the template for Puritan neighborliness and the location of godliness, or lack thereof. With reference to the apostle Paul's letter to Corinth, John Winthrop's 1630 lay sermon to passengers of the *Arbella* expressed how believers "must be knitt together by [a] bond of love," and as the "body of christe," in their American mission.¹⁷ In 1637, Boston courts condemned Anne Hutchinson's home meetings, in part, because of her body, noting how such assemblies were not "fitting for [her] sex." In 1638, a failed pregnancy further linked her body to her wickedness and confirmed a "vindication" of her excommunication and exile. Bodies also served as evidence of godliness and community. Puritans' "affective bodies" expressed the presence of God and tied neighbors together. As Abram Van Engen has noted, "the Puritans of New England were united to their

¹⁵ Stannard, *Puritan Way of Death*, 111-3, 116-122; Samuel Sewall, *The Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674-1729*, Volume II, ed. M. Halsey Thomas (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), 945, 1008.

¹⁶ Social anthropologist Mary Douglas discussed the body as a "symbol of society," that which represented the "powers and dangers credited to social structure." For more on the body and society, see Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York City, N.Y.: Routledge, 2003), 116.

¹⁷ Paul often likened the Church to a human body. Though there are different parts, processes, and responsibilities, each component necessarily contributed to the functioning of the individual body. "For as the body is one, and hath many members," Paul stated, "and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." 1 Corinthians 12:12 (King James Version); John Winthrop, "Christian Charitie. A Modell Hereof [1630]," in *For the Record: A Documentary History of America, Volume I: From First Contact Through Reconstruction*, Third Edition, eds. David E. Shi and Holly A. Mayer (New York City, N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 27-8.

English kin through their very bodies—through bowels, affections, and tears.” New England ministers often combined their emphasis on the body with their specific preaching style, as well. As Ann Kibbey has shown, first generation Puritan ministers such as John Cotton relied on “verbal images” and “rhetorical imagination” in their sermons, and this often led to metaphors involving bodies—God’s “visual art” of the Church. Symbolism allowed clergy to communicate literal, Biblical concepts in ways that retained their spiritual veracity while appealing to the creative facilities of their congregations. From this Puritan context of the socio-religious body and metaphorical preaching emerged the topic of this project: imagined bodies in New England funeral sermons. When saints passed away, clergy spoke to their audiences through bodies they rhetorically crafted for the dead.¹⁸

While this project is primarily concerned with the created bodies in funeral sermons, it is important to emphasize how important sermons, of all types, were to colonial New Englanders. Harry S. Stout notes that the sermon was the “central ritual of social order and control” for the faithful. An ordinary churchgoer seemed to always be present at an occasion involving the words of their minister. It is estimated a congregant consumed seven-thousand performed sermons in a lifetime, whether it was a “normal” one done on the Sabbath or one wrought by an election, fast, or funeral. Put another way, this would have amounted to nearly fifteen-thousand hours of “concentrated listening” to preaching. Sermons prefaced and mediated almost every significant

¹⁸ “November 1637, The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson at the court at Newtown,” in *The Puritans in America: A Narrative Anthology*, eds. Andrew Delbanco and Alan Heimert (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001), 156; Francis J. Bremer, *First Founders: American Puritans and Puritanism in an Atlantic World* (Durham, N.H.: University of New Hampshire Press, 2012), 86; Van Engen, *Sympathetic Puritans*, 135, 139; Ann Kibbey, *The Interpretation of Material Shapes in Puritanism: A Study of Rhetoric, Prejudice, and Violence* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 45, 66, 11.

event for New Englanders. It was “the only regular voice of authority” for the cloistered and parochial communities of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries.¹⁹

Teachings from the pulpit were critical to believers and preachers. For godly congregants, pastors were not simply well-educated religious men explicating scripture and good lessons. They were instruments of God’s sovereignty and wisdom appointed to shepherd the church. Historian Baird Tipson describes this well when he writes that “God spoke through the minister’s speech” and “used the medium of the preached word to soften or harden the hearts of those who heard it.” Attending church and listening to your minister was to witness God’s will for your life and your community’s mission. For the minister, as many of them expressed, it was an effort to dissolve the illusory comforts the material world offered and remind them of their communal covenant with the Lord. While the Puritan sermon, particularly the funeral sermon, was utterly dedicated to straight-forward delivery of appropriate Reformed theology, it was often just as devoted to registering a spiritual “gut-check” throughout its audience.²⁰

Samuel Willard exemplified these themes in a sermon give October 7, 1683 for the death of John Hull. He spurred ornate and confusing theology for meticulously planned scriptural interpretation that sobered the audience to the importance of their spiritual lives. In typical Puritan style, Willard began by systematically enumerating Biblical truths relevant to the death of Hull. “1. God hath his Saints in the World,” Willard posited, even “as evil and degenerate as the world is grown, yet there are some Holy Men in it.” Further, “2. God’s Saints must dye” because, no matter the person, there “is no Bail against a bodily death.” Before, in between, and

¹⁹ Stout, *The New England Soul*, 3, 4.

²⁰ Baird Tipson, *Hartford Puritanism: Thomas Hooker, Samuel Stone, and Their Terrifying God* (New York City, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2015), 220-1.

after his step-by-step instructions for the sermon are sprinkled-in references from numerous Biblical sources, including Isaiah, Numbers, and Psalms to supplement his explication of death for the audience. Through the death of Hull, Willard discussed the spiritual state of the community as a whole. “But God hath taken him from us,” Willard noted, “and by that stroak given us one more sad prognostick of misery a coming: when there are but a few Saints in the World, and those die apace too, what is to be thought at the door?”²¹

The simplicity and directness of Willard’s sermon was common among his generation. Such style and delivery were emblematic of New England’s first two generations and their mission for further reformation of the Church of England. Along with prescribed use of *The Book of Common Prayer* and priestly vestments, pretentious sermon methods were something colonial Puritans sought to revise. Many ministers in early modern England debated whether sermons should be preached in Hebrew, Latin, or Greek, and whether it should be translated for the church audience. It was not uncommon for a seventeenth-century English sermon to include a plethora of elite intellectual themes, such as references to the work of Church Fathers in Greek or Latin and quotations of Herodotus, Cicero, and Homer. This was largely deplorable among colonial Puritans and something they tried to remedy with plain-style and by making content mostly Biblical. In their view, sermons, including ones for funerals, were opportunities to correct weak teaching, pedanticism, and a lack of scriptural authority.²²

²¹ Samuel Willard, *The High Esteem Which God Hath of the Death of His Saints* (Boston, 1683), Early American Imprints, I, 2, 18.

²² Noam Reisner, “The Preacher and Profane Learning” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, eds. Hugh Adlington, Peter McCullough, and Emma Rhatigan (New York City, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2011), 73.

Whether it was the second or third generation, ministers lauded their dead subjects in funeral sermons. Puritan clergy highlighted the elevated piety of the newly-deceased community member to draw attention to the group's loss. Quite often, particularly in the seventeenth-century, the death of an important community member was a harbinger of God's judgment upon a sinful people and a call to reform their churches. Harry S. Stout has referred to Puritan funeral sermons as a way to "commemorate the faith of New England's first native-born generation" and the historical covenantalism embedded in their communities. As we will see in the remaining chapters, many of the themes above changed drastically into the eighteenth-century with moderate ministers like Benjamin Colman. Instead of a desperate warning and conviction, third generation ministers discussed the dead in order to legitimate the virtuousness inherent within all of the survivors, as it had been in the dead subject. Instead of Puritan plain-style and exclusive Biblical simplicity, later clergy referenced ancient Roman history and the importance of "Liberal Education."²³

From its earliest colonial settlements, New England contained an intensely literate people. This did not immediately lead to a plethora of genres being consumed in popular reading, however. Outside of the pastor's library, much of seventeenth-century New England was a "literate but nearly bookless society" that consumed a very limited scope of writings, and an even smaller number from local publishers. English Bibles, for example, were not printed in America until the Revolution. From the arrival of a press in 1638 to the end of the century, the Massachusetts Bay governing body dictated not only the amount and location of presses, but also the literature they

²³ Stout, *New England Soul*, 122; Pemberton, *A True Servant*, 7; Benjamin Wadsworth, *Mans Present State Compar'd to Withering Grass and Flowers* (Boston: 1715), Early American Imprints, I, 14.

produced. As Frank Lambert has noted, local printing was an arduous task given the costs of importing materials such as paper and the lack of a developed consumer base. By 1677, New England boasted only two local printers who published only fifteen works, combined. By the first part of the eighteenth-century, however, the number of colonial printers jumped to sixteen. Local publishing, communication, and consumption increased in the eighteenth-century, and so did the presence of funeral sermons.²⁴

This section of the chapter seeks to illustrate the early New England print culture and how funeral sermons existed therein. Specifically, I study probate court records, wills, and advertisements for book sales to determine how these particular printed sermons were acquired and owned. Additionally, I hope to present a set of examples that creates a representative example of popular readership that reveals how funeral sermons were situated within the broader New England literary landscape.

The first funeral sermon was printed in New England in 1672, and nearly five-hundred were published by 1792. As many as eight to ten were printed per year between 1730 and 1750. They do not appear to have been overly popular (as they were in England) at first. The seventeenth-century only produced fourteen “complete” printed funeral sermons in total and they were certainly not published with profit in mind. In most cases, early funeral sermons were not printed for widespread sale. With a few exceptions, printed funeral sermons had a weak market and were

²⁴ Stout, *New England Soul*, 32; David D. Hall, *Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 42; Hugh Amory, *Bibliography and the Book Trades: Studies in the Print Culture of Early New England*, ed. David D. Hall (Philadelphia, P.A.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 107-8; Frank Lambert, *“Pedlar in Divinity”: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 97.

supported solely through patronage of an interested party. Often the family or congregation of the deceased were fully responsible for the physical production of the sermons. This mourning gesture seems to have been limited to a very specific type of person.²⁵

Not surprisingly, men dominated as subjects. Between the first printed funeral sermon and the end of the eighteenth-century, about 70% of the sermons discussed males, specifically those with prominent roles in the community, whether they were a minister or public servant. Further, about half of the ones printed in memory of a woman were wives of ministers. At least among the generations studied in this project, this medium was mostly reserved for well-known community members ministers could reasonably portray “as saints and as patterns for emulation.”²⁶

There were numerous ways in which a funeral lecture could reach print. Normally, a minister would provide a manuscript copy of the sermon to the desired printer. However, it was not strange for live sermons to be recorded by assigned (and unassigned) audience members who could then provide their notes to a printer. In any case, early funeral sermons appeared to have been a personally financed memorial piece with a limited readership. But this did change. At the dawn of the eighteenth-century, funeral sermons became the “most numerous print sermons in New England.” As print technologically advanced and became more accessible in places like Cambridge, Boston, Hartford, and New London, there was a “torrent” of occasional sermons being printed.²⁷

²⁵ Lonna Myers Malmshemer, “New England Funeral Sermons and Changing Attitudes Toward Women, 1672-1792” (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1973), 8, 30, 31, 32.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 30-1, 137; Stout, *New England Soul*, 122.

Studying libraries, court records, wills, and advertisements provides perhaps the most insightful information regarding funeral sermons and their use. All of these sources point to funeral sermons, and printed sermons in general, being a type of literature whose readership only became measurable in the eighteenth-century.

Writing in 1907, historian and Yale University administrator Franklin Bowditch Dexter depicted the seventeenth-century New England library as largely limited in its scope. If a person left behind a collection of books at that time, it was usually filled with Bibles, a “psalm book,” and possibly theological tracts of prominent Puritans such as Richard Sibbes. It was considered an “unusual treasure” for a normal library to have works pertaining to law, “natural history,” or arithmetic. Even if they did, Dexter noted, “[m]ost generally” library catalogues of an undistinguished community member lacked much detail beyond a vague description of there being “old bookes.” For example, after Hartford’s Robert Day, “the progenitor of a noble line,” died in 1648, he neglected to offer much specificity regarding his library in his estate except for mentioning “one pound of bookes, and sakes, and ladders.” If printed sermons were in the libraries of seventeenth-century colonists, it was not explicitly expressed.²⁸

A compilation of estate records, and wills, for Suffolk County between 1639 and 1670 references close to twelve-thousand people, including subjects and their relevant beneficiaries, and makes hardly any mention of published sermons. The last will and testament of Robert Keayne, a prominent merchant and churchman in Boston who died in 1656, was preserved in these records and mentions Keayne leaving behind a diverse inventory of print material. It states

²⁸ Franklin Bowditch Dexter, *Early Private Libraries in New England*, American Antiquarian Society (Worcester, 1907), 3-4, 5.

he passed down “many printed bookes, both great and smalle, Devinitie, Hystory, Military bookes, &c Some written Sermon bookes.” Keayne, despite the strife he aroused in Boston because of his profit-mindedness, was well-known for voraciously taking notes on godly sermons from John Cotton, John Wilson, Hugh Peters, and John Davenport, but that did not translate to extensive ownership of printed sermons.²⁹

Similarly, Captain William Tyng’s estate records do not suggest a significant presence of published sermons. Before passing in 1653, Captain Tyng left behind a will that detailed an impressive wealth of land and real estate and relatively expansive collection of readings. He had in his possession, among many others, theological titles on “Childrens Baptisme” and “Doctrinall & Morall instructions” and numerous works on commercial practice. However, despite the detail devoted to his other volumes, Captain Tyng’s mention of sermons is cursory at best, simply noting them as “Forbes 4 sermons” in his will. Hardly any seventeenth-century estates in the New England reported the possession of printed sermons. Between 1635 and 1664, the probate court records of Essex County documented only one estate that explicitly listed the possession of physical sermons. Salem’s Emme Mason, who died in 1646, left one “sermon booke” at her death. This trend continued in Essex County estates between 1675 and 1681. Probate records from this period reveal, yet again, only a single instance of the deceased denoting printed sermons in their estate. Freegrace Norton, who passed in 1676, was the only documented instance of somebody passing on a collection of sermons in Essex County those six years. Throughout four volumes of Hartford probate court records between 1635 and 1687, there is

²⁹ Judith McGhan, *Suffolk County Wills: Abstracts of the Earliest Wills Upon Record in the County of Suffolk, Massachusetts (1639-1670)*, The New England Historical and Genealogical Register (Baltimore, M.D.: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1984), 74; Meredith Marie Neuman, *Jeremiah’s Scribes: Creating Sermon Literature in Puritan New England* (Philadelphia, Penn.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 59-60.

only one instance of printed sermons mentioned in an estate. In 1694, Elizabeth Brunson passed down a “sermon Booke” to her grandson, Joseph Wilcox. Without any distinction, it was mentioned alongside her “old Clothes and hose,” “a brass Candlestick and painted Box,” and “a skillett.”³⁰

There is very little evidence in seventeenth-century probate and estate records that suggest sermon ownership was a practice prevalent among first generation and second generation New Englanders. The five total examples here extracted from probate courts point to a conclusion that mid- to late-seventeenth-century lay colonists either did not own many printed sermons, did not find them to be valuable, or felt little need to explicitly detail such ownership. This raises interesting questions regarding the printed funeral sermon and the popular reader. Did they consider it too personal, or too insignificant to document? If the minister’s preaching was so vital to their spiritual lives, why did those forming wills not devote more effort to cataloguing specific sermons? While it currently seems New Englanders found them to be negligible, book sale records and newspaper advertisements into the new century suggest printed sermons (of all kinds) had a place not only in the library of divines, but as commodities for potential buyers.

In eighteenth-century New England, there was a consumer base for printed funeral sermons. When a library owner died, particularly if they manned a pulpit before death, one could expect an extensive list of literary topics in which funeral sermons were included. Additionally, as soon as the colonies began production of print journalism, funeral sermons were littered throughout

³⁰ McGhan, *Suffolk County Wills*, 355; *The Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1635-1664*, Volume I (Salem, Mass: 1916), 58; *The Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1675-1681*, Volume III (Salem, Mass: 1920), 53; Charles William Manwaring, *A Digest of the Early Connecticut Probate Records: Hartford District, 1635-1700*, Volume I (Baltimore, M.D.: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1995), 414.

the text in different advertisements and community announcements, indicating that profit-minded book and pamphlet salespeople found there to be an existing readership for such literature. These records reveal printed sermons referred to much more frequently than seventeenth-century probate documents. Where wills and estates often glossed over their sermon collections, book sale lists and newspaper advertisements employed a much higher level of specificity and nuance.

When the “late Reverend and learned” Samuel Lee, a Boston Puritan, passed away in 1691, he left behind a plethora of readings in his library. In 1693, bookseller Duncan Campbell advertised the sale of Lee’s catalogue, boasting of its “choice variety upon all subjects,” including mathematics, divinity, and history. In Lee’s collection were over one-thousand titles ranging from Biblical commentaries to “*Bacon’s Natural History*” to Homer’s *Illiad*. Particularly useful for the purposes of this study, Lee also found it important to collect printed sermons and Campbell found it important to specify the details of each sermon (or collection of sermons) for buyers. Campbell noted Lee’s possession of “*Strong’s sermons*,” “*Sedham’s sermons*,” and “*Fern’s sermons*.” Where earlier owners of sermons simply noted their “sermon booke,” or something equally ambiguous, Campbell intentionally denoted the authors of each printed oration. It is worth noting, however, that Campbell’s description retained a nebulous character. Though we finally get some level of detail regarding sermons, we are not told whether or not they were for the Sabbath or occasional lectures. Further into the century, this changed substantially.³¹

Like the cargo Campbell was unloading, Boston bookseller Samuel Gerrish had an extensive list of readings to sell after the death of Reverend Ebenezer Pemberton in 1717. Books

³¹ Duncan Campbell, *The Library of the Late Reverend and Learned Mr. Samuel Lee* (Boston, 1693), Early American Imprints, I, cover, 1-16.

and pamphlets of all kinds, including philosophy and poetry, were to be sold by auction July 2, 1717, at the Crown Coffee-House in Boston. A well-rounded bibliophile, Pemberton left behind works ranging from sacramental theology to John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. He also owned an array of printed sermons Gerrish listed for sale. To note a select few, Gerrish's catalogue included references to "Hammonds Sermons," "Clarkesons Sermons," "Dr. Horton's 100 Sermons," "Farindon's Sermons, 2 Vol.," "Sermons of Dr. Jeremy Taylor," "Mr. William Bridges Sermons," "Wadsworths 5 sermons," and "The Spirit of the Lord, in 3 sermons." In total, there were close to thirty distinct and explicitly mentioned listings of sermons in Pemberton's library, including ones for funerals.³²

Pemberton owned a number of printed funeral sermons that were advertised for sale by Gerrish, and they often came with insightful descriptions. Gerrish specifically highlighted "Miscellanies of Funeral Sermons," "Mather's Funeral Discourses," and "Mather's Funeral Sermon on Mr. Bayley." Also mentioned was "Dr. Mather's Funeral Sermon for John Foster Esq; and Madam Foster." Here, we finally see specified possession of printed funeral sermons. While they belonged to an especially-literate divine, who undoubtedly had more access and means to attain non-Biblical literature, it is still notorious that he owned them and Gerrish found them worthy to advertise for sale.³³

Much of the same is seen in another advertisement from Gerrish, this time for the library of deceased minister George Curwin in 1718. Unlike his seventeenth-century predecessors, Curwin boasted a thick profile of printed sermons and Gerrish made sure to denote as much

³² Samuel Gerrish, *A Catalogue of Curious and Valuable Books, Belonging to the Reverend & Learned, Mr. Ebenezer Pemberton* (Boston, 1717), *Early American Imprints*, I, cover, 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 15, 18.

³³ *Ibid.*, 8, 15, 26.

specificity as possible for each one. There were “eleven Sermons upon Gen. 2. 18 to 22. And 5 Sermons upon Luke 16. 19. To 26.” Further, Curwin owned “*Dr. Maxey’s Sermons*” among at least twenty-five explicitly listed printed sermons. Like Pemberton, Curwin also possessed printed funeral sermons.³⁴

Without the name of a specific minister or author, there were “Three Sermons occasioned by the Sentence of Death on a Woman for Murther,” “*Dr. C. Mather’s* meat out of the Eater: Or Funeral Discourses,” “*Willard’s Sermons*, before a Woman condemned for Murther,” and “a funeral sermon on the Death of Mrs. *K. Henry*.” Again, we are given the authors and subjects of funeral sermons, a far-cry from probate and estate records. We have to assume there was purpose behind Gerrish’s indexing of funeral sermons. Some, like one of the compilations in Pemberton’s lot, differentiated greatly in their listing. While some were referred to in obscurity (e.g., “Miscellanies of Funeral Sermons”), others were precisely reported (“*Dr. Mather’s Funeral Sermon for John Foster Esq*”). It behooved Gerrish to employ distinction for particular sermons over others. Some would be more attractive to sell than others. Such an approach is drastically different than the previous century where descriptions were broadly vague and limited. This eighteenth-century transition crossed into printed newspapers, as well.³⁵

The first continuously published American newspaper, *The Boston News-Letter*, notified patrons about published funeral sermons. In the mid-July 1705 issue, the *News-Letter* advertised that there were “now Published, Some Observable Passages in the Life and Death of Mr. Wigglesworth: With a Funeral Sermon Preached for him at Maldon, June 24th, 1705.”

³⁴ Samuel Gerrish, *A Catalogue of Curious and Valuable Books (Which mostly Belonged to the Reverend Mr. George Curwin, Late of Salem, Deceased)* (Boston, 1718), Early American Imprints, I, 4, 9-10.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7, 9

Occasioned by the death of Increase Mather in 1723, Benjamin Colman's funeral sermon was advertised for sale "at the North End, the Corner of scarlet's Wharff." Specifically, the paper noted, the printed sermons would be sold by Nathan Belknap for "price 8 d. single, or 6 s. per Dozen." In 1727, Samuel Gerrish alerted readers of the *New-England Weekly Journal* of the funeral sermon for Ebenezer Pemberton, noting that it was printed "in London, on Superfine Paper, very neatly Bound and Gilded." On the same page advertising nails, silks, and land, *The Boston Gazette* announced the "Funeral Sermon of John Jekyll ... Preached by the Reverend Mr. Commissary Price, on the 5th of January 1732." It was to "be Sold by D. Henchman at his Shop near the Town-House, and B. Green at his House in Newbury-Street Boston." Boston news publications made it a point to disseminate information regarding funeral sermons, whether they were published or unpublished, colonial or transatlantic. If a notable, local community member or English aristocrat passed, Boston newspapers found it relevant to publish information regarding the funeral, whether or not there was a funeral sermon performed, and if the said sermons was available for purchase. In short, the eighteenth-century was a time in which funeral sermons were considered significant, or worth consideration, to anybody who could obtain a book sale list or newspaper.³⁶

³⁶ "Advertisements," in *The Boston News-Letter* (Boston, Mass.), July 16 to July 23, 1705. America's Historical Newspapers; "Just Published," in *The Boston News-Letter* (Boston, Mass.), October 18 to October 24, 1723. America's Historical Newspapers; "Advertisements," in *New-England Weekly Journal* (Boston, Mass.), November 20, 1727. America's Historical Newspapers; "This Day is Published," *The Boston Gazette* (Boston, Mass.), January 29 to February 5, 1733. America's Historical Newspapers; *The Boston News-Letter* (Boston, Mass.), August 12 to August 19, 1717. America's Historical Newspapers; *The Boston News-Letter* (Boston, Mass.), September 20 to September 27. America's Historical Newspapers.

Though their readership took time to mature, it is undoubtable that printed funeral sermons became a recognizable literary genre in New England by the eighteenth-century. While, at first, they were largely a non-profit memorial relic for those close to the deceased, printed funeral sermons eventually reached a marketable status worthy of listing in book sale lists and newspaper advertisements. Along with Biblical commentaries, psalm books, and regular lectures, funeral sermons were promoted for sale and distribution. Given this, and their apparent presence in the popular reading culture, printed funeral sermons must be considered as a legitimate source for studying changes in colonial New England.

By examining book sale lists, newspaper advertisements, wills, and probate court records, we find a print history that changes over the course of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries. As they came into print in the last decades of the seventeenth-century, funeral sermons became an established placeholder in the libraries of divines and the lists of booksellers. At least some of them, for one reason or another, were desired, possessed, and (presumably) consumed. They made their way into the popular reading culture of New England. Given this growth in advertisement and detailed possession, we can begin to approach their content critically. In the next two chapters, I will examine these published sermons, their use of the body, and how such observations can tell us more about changes in New England Christianity between the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries.

CHAPTER TWO

PURITAN FUNERAL SERMONS

Second generation Puritans like Increase Mather saw their settlements bound to the Lord as a “new Israel.” God providentially anointed believers to safety and success in their New England “wilderness,” but conditionally. Mather and others preached a “covenantal” Christianity in which people were paradoxically held to the moral requirements of the originaive Covenant of Works none could ever fulfill, desperately in need of membership in Christ’s Covenant of Grace none could ever deserve, and always subject to God’s direct punitive dispensations when the contracts were trespassed. Because of their inheritance of Adam’s corruption, everybody failed to uphold God’s original decree of obedience but were nevertheless expected to strive for it through devotional efforts. When congregants fell short, which happened often, ministers often saw consequences in the material world. God was inclined to serve His judgment directly to impious violators, many clergy warned, upon those who instigated the “great and visible decay of the power of Godliness” in New England.³⁷

In numerous ways and at various times, Puritans of New England found challenges to the establishment of God’s ideal earthly society—the lived body of Christ tightly bound by a unifying faith in Jesus, rigidly secured by saintly sympathies for one another, and covenantally safeguarded by God. Whether it was Native attacks on Puritan bodies, properties, and Englishness; accusations of witchcraft; natural disasters and illnesses; communal backsliding; or the unfastening of local governments from religious responsibilities, second generation New

³⁷ Charles Cohen, *God’s Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (New York City, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1986), 56-62; Middlekauff, *The Mathers*, 108; Increase Mather, *The Necessity of Reformation* (Boston: 1679), Early American Imprints, I, 2.

Englanders were familiar with adjustments to their mission. King Philip's War, the deadliest in American history, ravaged New England lives and buildings between 1675 and 1676. Increase Mather and William Hubbard both constantly recorded the Indian invasion, "firing," and sieging of English buildings. Mather viscerally remembered Native forces pressing upon the town of Quabaog, "burning all the Houses therein down to the ground." The English death toll, estimated by observers to be between 600 and 800, was more than eight-times that of the American Revolution in proportion to population size. Many surviving colonists did not convey serene deaths for their fallen, either. Nathaniel Saltonstall's account from July 1676 described English deaths as "*exquisite Torments, and most inhumane Barbarities.*"³⁸ Edward Wharton's 1675 *New-England's Present Sufferings* spoke of the war as

great Calamity and distress upon most part of *New-England*; For the Natives are risen in great wrath and fury against the *English*, breaking in upon many places with firing of Houses, and torturing of sundry persons with several sorts of Tortures: And it is reported they hang up some alive in Iron Crooks by the under Jaw until Death, burning some alive by degrees, and Skinning others alive.

King Philip's War produced mangled and dismembered bodies, razed buildings, and fear of trespass. As Jill Lepore has noted, when Native Americans attacked English Bibles, English bodies, and English property, they attacked English identity.³⁹

³⁸ Quote of Nathaniel Saltonstall from Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York City, N.Y.: Vintage, 1999), 71-2.

³⁹ Van Engen, *Sympathetic Puritans*, 53-4; Lepore, *The Name of War*, 5-18, 71-4, 94-5; Stout, *New England Soul*, 20-21, 75; Increase Mather, *A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New-England* (Boston: 1676), Early American Imprints, I, 6; William Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Indian Wars in New-England* (Norwich, 1780), Eighteenth Century Collections Online 174, 201-4; Kyle F. Zelner, *A Rabble in Arms: Massachusetts Towns and Militiamen During King Philip's War* (New York City, N.Y.: New York University Press, 2009), 201; Edward Wharton, *New-England's Present Sufferings* (London: 1675), 1, 4.

There also appeared to be an influx of illnesses, deaths, and disasters aside from the war. As Harry S. Stout notes, colonists reported numerous droughts, crop infestations, fires, and smallpox epidemics between the 1660s and 1670s. Ministers often tied such events directly to God's providential judgments upon communities. Written in 1662 amidst a New England drought, Puritan poet and minister Michael Wigglesworth's *God's Controversy with New-England* noted the inflow of "colds and coughs; Rheums, and sore-throats" because believers did not turn toward God. In 1680, Increase Mather described a "mortal Contagion" that had "swept away five or six hundred before it, in this one Town." Further, Mather asked his audience, had "not God rendered his Rebukes in flames of Fire upon thee *Boston*" as a "*Sign of his Holy and Righteous Displeasure?*" Puritan security, in many ways, was threatened. At the loss of lives, crops, and identity, ministers urged congregations to "fear the Wolves" skulking about their gates. Clergy constantly warned congregants of their weakened walls, shrinking strength, and dissolving security. In response to so much material loss, and the sinful state it indicated, ministers channeled their rebuilding efforts through the dead. Before communities they illustrated as enfeebled, ungodly, and vulnerable, Puritan preachers often looked to the flesh of a resting saint to imaginatively erect a "pillar" that might hold them for a bit longer.⁴⁰

This chapter analyzes funeral sermons authored by second generation Puritan clergy in New England, specific ways the godly ministers of this time period referenced the body of the deceased, and how such descriptions can offer insight into religious thought, community, and authority in Puritan America. Consistently, early published funeral sermons referred to the dead subject as a "pillar," "hedge," or "shield." Expired men of status, such as attorneys, militiamen,

⁴⁰ Stout, *New England Soul*, 75; Michael Wigglesworth, "God's Controversy with New-England (1662, 1871)," ed. Reiner Smolinski, *Electronic Texts in American Studies*, No. 36 (2007), 11; Increase Mather, *Heaven's Alarm to the World* (Boston: 1682), Early American Imprints, I, 28; Mather, *Necessity of Reformation*, 2.

and ministers, personified and represented inanimate objects that emphasized extraordinary security, boundary, and stability now physically absent from the grieving community. Threatened internally by backsliders who had forgot the “errand” and externally by belligerent Native Americans, Puritan clergy responded and spoke to their congregants through dead bodies, sending visceral reminders of proper authority, rampant depravity, and the urgent need to restore holy order. By turning the dead into “pillars” of piety, clergy countered the destruction of war and illness with imagery of staunch materiality that simultaneously reminded audiences of their fallenness and offered hopeful evidence of the godly scaffolding that the Lord used to maintain His Church over time. When English buildings, bodies, and security were compromised, ministers answered by building imaginative “fences” and “shields” through dead saints—symbols that confirmed both the wretchedness of congregants and the resiliency of the embattled Church. In their sermons occasioned by death, Puritans spoke to their flocks with more than words of proper theology, biblical teaching, and spiritual wisdom. They used bodies, both corporeal and imagined, of the absent faithful to speak to congregants. This section of the project will examine specific examples where these bodily terms and themes are seen in funeral sermons by Puritans, their intimate relation to the New England milieu in which they were produced, and, ultimately, prepare for a larger comparison with sermons by third generation clergy.⁴¹

Whether it was Joshua Moodey referring to the dead saints as the “Studs and Staies” of the community, William Hubbard describing them as the “the *Pillars* and the *Shields* of the Earth,” or Samuel Willard likening them to a “Tabernacle and Temple,” second generation

⁴¹ Second generation Puritans were the first to have published funeral sermons in New England, beginning in the 1670s and 1680s with ministers like James Fitch, Samuel Willard, and William Hubbard. For more on early Puritan funeral sermons and their publishing, see Malmsheimer, “New England Funeral Sermons,” 8, 30; Mather, *Necessity of Reformation*, 1; Urian Oakes, *A Seasonable Discourse* (Cambridge: 1682), Early American Imprints, I, 22.

Puritan ministers imaginatively utilized the bodies of their deceased subjects to profess human frailty, emphasize the importance of exclusive authority, and the need for enclosed community. By transforming the body of the resting believer into an inanimate object which supported, bolstered, or protected the ailing body of Christ from the impending New England wilderness and internal ungodliness, Puritan funeral sermons contrasted exceptional exemplars with depraved survivors and conveyed the impending doom awaiting them. This was reflective and emblematic of the second generation's milieu. Second generation funeral sermons, synod records, and significant chronologies reveal loyalty to Calvinist mistrust of human nature. They also indicate clerical commitment to maintaining a strictly bound community of saints which guarded against Native Americans and lax devotion. Puritan ministers reinforced this particular Reformation principle—the survival of the visible body of Christ—through conceptualizations of the bodies of dead saints.⁴²

As I will show in the final chapter, this language changed over time. By the 1730s, American-born and Harvard-trained Congregationalist ministers such as Benjamin Colman, Ebenezer Pemberton, and Benjamin Wadsworth adapted the themes of their Puritan predecessors when lecturing upon the dead. They still imaginatively appropriated the body and used the occasion to steer their audience toward Christ, but with different terms and applications. When Benjamin Wadsworth compared a subject to “*Grass, and the Flower of the Field,*” he, like the previous generation, reflected the cultural scene in which he preached. Though covenantal community was still prioritized among third generation clergy, the emphasis upon protection of the enclosed community of saints changed. Instead, their language of the body served as a

⁴² William Hubbard, *The Benefit of a Well-Ordered Conversation as it Was Delivered in a Sermon* (Boston: 1684), Early American Imprints, I, 153; Joshua Moodey, *The Heads of a Sermon Preached Upon the Occasion of the Death of Capt. Thomas Daniel, Esq.* (Boston: 1697), Early American Imprints, I, 6; Willard, *The High Esteem*, 5.

vehicle to discuss the “Great, Publick Services” and “Internal Endowments” characteristic of their resting exemplars *and* the survivors—an important change. In their funeral sermons, third generation ministers harnessed the imagined body of the dead to discuss examples of “benign Influences” and “Acts of Duty & Love to the Publick” those left behind could realistically aspire to. Their use of the body, and descriptions of the dead, were emblematic of what Abram Van Engen describes as “an influx of anti-Calvinism” and moderate Anglicanism in eighteenth-century New England. Specifically, there existed less of an emphasis on personal depravity and its threat to Christian community. In its place was a latitudinarian approach which depicted human nature in a more universally good, morally capable light—a considerable departure from second generation ministers who stressed vigilance against inherent impiety. This part of New England’s milieu, I argue, was evident in the third generation’s funeral sermons and their imagining of the body.⁴³

In sum, this project posits that an in-depth textual analysis of funeral sermons offers a new means for studying Christianity in colonial New England. More specifically, I argue these sermons’ themes and language of the body, and careful study of their changes, provide a fresh tool for observing historical change. In the second generation, this meant constant exploitation of a specific catalogue of terms in an effort to reinforce Puritan understandings of exclusive community, personal depravity, and irreplaceable exemplars. In the subsequent generation, ministers largely replaced such descriptions of permanence with an emphasis on the body’s

⁴³ Wadsworth, *Man’s Present State*, 2, 4; Stout, *The New England Soul*, 7; Thomas Foxcroft, *A Brief Display of Mordecai’s Excellent Character* (Boston: 1727), Early American Imprints, I, 3, 18; Van Engen, *Sympathetic Puritans*, 212-3.

temporality (like “withering grass”), the virtue of their subject, and the ability for all in the audience to imitate and replace the dead. This project is an examination of how second and third generation ministers referenced the body of the deceased in colonial New England, how it changed over time, and how observing such changes reveals creative methods in which ministers defined the nature of their audiences and how audiences were expected to define themselves.

Second generation funeral sermons harnessed the body of dead saints to accomplish three objectives: (1) establish the singularity of the dead’s religious and public life, (2) illustrate the depraved human nature of the surviving congregation, and (3) depict the community’s nearing devastations after the loss of the irreplaceable, resting exemplar. Exposure to war, disease, internal friction, and “scientific rationalism” conditioned Puritan ministers to constantly consider the state of the relationship between their churches and God, and funeral sermons served as an ideal outlet for clergy to reinforce authority, chastise congregations, and remind them of their fallenness. Godly ministers like Joshua Moodey, William Hubbard, and Samuel Willard responded to these obstacles by turning to the body of the dead and the messages they could convey through them.⁴⁴

When a leading public official or minister perished, they were transformed into a “shield” or “pillar”—an object that signaled individual strength or protection for others. Anointed for great earthly service by God, the dead were unique in their devotion and abilities and nearly impossible to replace by human efforts. The deaths of such figures, underscored by the objects they came to personify, were often depicted as providential judgments on those they left behind. In his 1682 funeral sermon for Major Daniel Denison at Ipswich, William Hubbard described the

⁴⁴ Middlekauff, *The Mathers*, 173.

loss of this “sure Foundation” and “Rock of Ages” as God’s reckoning “upon an unthankful World.” A year later, minister Joshua Moodey similarly contended the death of Captain Thomas Daniel was “a great Judgment from God” and evidence that sometimes such “Studs and Pillars” were taken to punish the ungodly. In either sermon, as was the case with most others in the seventeenth-century, the dead were made into exceptional communal bastions while the survivors were depraved “ordinary Mortals” who were “ready to be devoured by every Enemy that appears.”⁴⁵

The theme of individual depravity was emblematic of a pervasive theological tradition amongst the second generation and is critical context for understanding how they used bodily imagery in funeral sermons. As Charles Cohen has noted, Puritanism “dwelt on human frailty,” ways in which congregants were “enfeebled by the Fall,” and their helplessness in receiving God’s grace. This recognition of inherent ineptitude corresponded with desperate desire for inclusion among the elect, anxious self-examination for indications of Christ’s redemptive mark (or lack thereof) upon themselves and their neighbors, and disciplined meditation upon the Bible and preaching in hope of moving nearer to God.⁴⁶ These were lifelong practices as even those with full church

⁴⁵ Hubbard, *Well-Ordered Conversation*, 150, 151-2, 155; Moodey, *The Heads of a Sermon*, 4, 12.

⁴⁶ Cohen, *God’s Caress*, 7, 11, 13; Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, “Practical Divinity and Spirituality” in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, eds. John Coffey and Paul C.H. Lim (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 195, 203. It is important not to indulge on the concept of Puritan helplessness. While the godly certainly saw themselves stained by Adam’s sin, inclined to evil, and utterly reliant upon God’s sovereign dispensations of grace, they did not “despair,” as Janice Knight has pointed out. Complete hopelessness would contradict God’s mercy and His transformative presence in Scripture and preaching. For more on Puritanism and sin, see Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1994), 72-4.

membership carried an uneasy awareness of the “remnants of corruption” left upon all believers, no matter their progress in sanctification. Humanity’s natural deviance did not remain a private or contained matter, either. Ministers often linked the sins of their churches to public misfortune or disaster.⁴⁷

In his 1673 *Useful Instructions for a Professing People in Times of Great Security and Degeneracy*, Samuel Willard noted how “Times of publick Calamity” were God “shewing some part of his severity toward” believers. There was a “great disease” of faithlessness in New England, one so deplorable “God hath begun in his judgements to visit” them. For those hoping to ameliorate God’s displeasure with them, Willard instructed, “Let every private person look at home, take an account with his own heart, and he shall see enough to mend there.” Similarly, in his 1679 *A Call From Heaven*, Increase Mather described the “*present Generation in New-England*” as “*lamentably degenerate.*” Previously, the faith of New England’s first generation assured God’s favor and provided colonists “a sun shine of prosperity.” Now, however, the lamentably degenerate offspring of earlier saints had earned God’s providential punishment: “general and killing diseases,” a “long continuing warr,” and “mischief upon mischief.” When illness, drought, or battle descended upon a community, ministers underlined the corruptive nature of their flocks. The extent to which this corruption impacted clerical views upon the physical bodies of their churches is not always clear, but nevertheless important to engage with

⁴⁷ Cohen, *God’s Caress*, 13. Though the anxious spiritual reflection Cohen and others describe was emblematic of the doctrine Puritan ministers wanted established, I do not mean to suggest it was totally accepted by congregations. Despite the depravity second generation ministers announced in their sermons, David D. Hall has noted, laity drank wine at funerals and ordinations, playfully fired guns in the street late at night, and had extra-marital sex. My objective is to study how ministers used dead bodies to define authority and human nature; not how effective they were among their churches. For more on popular religion in New England, see David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

before assessing how ministers used them in funeral sermons. In our brief look, we might consider that Puritans did not mistrust their bodily habitations as much as has been suggested.⁴⁸

As Cohen notes, the perpetual mistrust of the sinful self, and concern it might lead to betrayal of their agreement with God, was in part due to their understanding of the “flesh.” The flesh was for Puritans the inherited impression of original sin upon all of humanity. This stain remained throughout the believer’s life, even after they were freed “from the compulsion to sin,” until final glorification. However, despite the bodily connotation the term suggests, Puritan ministers did not totally align “flesh” with the literal bodies of believers. Put another way, as Cohen writes, the material body was not “inherently evil,” but instead the channel through which “sin catalyzes human wrongdoing.” In this sense, the body and soul shared in the legacy of God’s pure creation, but were now entrenched in battle with the flesh—the spiritually corruptive consequences of Adam’s sin. Historian Martha Finch has recently argued the Puritan body was not a spiritual impediment, but proof of God’s sanctification of a believer. God’s “divine grace entered a person’s soul through the physical sense,” Finch posits, “and inner grace, in turn, motivated one’s actions in the world.” The work of the Holy Spirit was not blocked by the body, but evident in its industry, “dress, speech, sexual activities, food consumption, and every other aspect of behavior.” Funeral sermons from the period and figures studied in this chapter further complicate the argument for the Puritan’s complete shunning of the material world.⁴⁹

In his 1680 funeral sermon for a Lady Mildmay, Leonard Hoar considered the “sting of death” to be its separation of the soul from the body. The soul and “precious body” were “two

⁴⁸ Samuel Willard, *Useful Instructions for a Professing People in Times of Great Security and Degeneracy* (Cambridge: 1673), Early American Imprints, I, 44, 75; Increase Mather, *A Call From Heaven* (Boston: 1679), Early American Imprints, I, 61, 62.

⁴⁹ Cohen, *God’s Caress*, 32, 34, 31-2; Finch, *Dissenting Bodies*, 1-2.

antient friends” who made up the “hardest knot, and the nearest and dearest Tye that ever was.” Similarly, in 1672, James Fitch’s lecture upon the death of Anne Mason held that “the Godly in this life have some beginnings of perfection” and that “*Every part and power of Soul and Body,*” not just the soul, were sanctified by God. Samuel Willard, in a 1683 funeral sermon, elevated the bodies of saints, stating they were “made Temples of the Holy Ghost . . . not now rejected as *worthless things*” upon death, but preserved in “God’s Cabinet, and that with far more tender care than we do the most estimable jewel; and Hence their Flesh resteth in hope.” In short, Puritan bodies were not dismissed easily, quickly discarded as cumbersome husks for pure souls, or deemed completely sinful, in and of themselves. Bodies could act sinfully, but not necessarily as the source of sin.⁵⁰

Funeral sermons elucidated the sinfulness of their churches, described God’s penchant for personal punishment, and tied community sins directly to the dead at hand. Critically, ministers emphasized these points about sin and human nature by contrasting the resting saint and the corrupt survivors. Clergy visited the body of the dead to convey these critical points of the second generation’s theological milieu.⁵¹

Samuel Willard’s 1679 funeral sermon for John Leverett, a prominent magistrate and soldier in the Massachusetts Bay, blamed the congregation’s impiety for the death. “*When*

⁵⁰ Hoar, *The Sting of Death*, 6-7; James Fitch, *Peace the End of the Perfect and Upright* (Boston: 1672), *Early American Imprints*, I, 2; Willard, *The High Esteem*, 9-10.

⁵¹ It is important to note the relevance of the source of these proclamations, as well. When ministers underlined the devastating sinfulness of their churches in their sermons, as Harry S. Stout has argued, they initiated New England’s most authoritative, “central ritual of social order and control.” For more on the centrality of preaching in Puritan New England, particularly its early development in the first generation, see Stout, *New England Soul*, 3-4; Tipson, *Thomas Hooker*, 220-1.

Apostacy hath opened a breach to let in misery,” Willard contended, “*it is a sad presage of great Calamity.*” Leverett’s death was not a misery and calamity simply because of his public contributions, but because he was the community’s anointed protector. Before his death, Leverett was “a sort of Fence,” a “gracious promise and Providence” of “divine protection” offered by the Lord to weaker believers. Figures like Leverett were able to “urge and perswade” religious reformation among backsliding churches and guard them from “devouring plagues [that] may come in.” Joshua Moodey, pastor of the Church of Christ at Portsmouth, similarly labelled the death of Captain Thomas Daniel as a harbinger for “the Evil to come,” an “awful Dispensations of Divine Providence” that warranted “an Ocean of Tears” in 1697. Those like Captain Daniel, the “Studs and Staies of a Place,” were taken by God to provide a “*warning to the wicked*, and as a means to awaken them” and remove the dead from their communities “*before the Trouble comes.*” In both examples, God had a chosen leader dedicated to supporting or safeguarding communities that were endangered by their own inherent fallenness. The ministers, once the impurities of the survivors were defined, could reinforce Puritan anxieties about sin-nature and empower their imaginings of the dead as protective mediators—in the form of pillars, shields, or fences—that blocked congregations from themselves, whatever lurked outside their walls, and God’s judgments. Churches had to know their sin was corporately experienced destruction. As William Hubbard put it in his 1682 elegy for Major Daniel Denison,

VWhen Pillars which the Building do upbear,
 Are ta’n away it’s Ruine’s very near.
 VWhen broken is the stay and staffe of Bread
 By which the People are maintain’d and fed;
 VWhen as the Mighty Man and Man of VVar,
 By fatal hand of Death removed are:
 ...
 Such changes sad do unto all portend

That peoples welfare suddenly will end.⁵²

This convicting approach was fortified by major events of the seventeenth-century and offered ministers more opportunity to emphasize the powerful consequences of their congregations' depravity and the need for prodigious leaders who could shield them from danger. While much of what second generation Puritan ministers said in their funeral sermons stemmed from a specific Reformed tradition, their conversations about God's judgments and human nature did not occur in an intellectual vacuum. In the last half of the seventeenth-century, New Englanders were acquainted with major bloodshed, property destruction, and communal fracturing that reverberated throughout clerical addresses.

Between the summer of 1675 and the fall of 1676, collections of Wampanoag, Narragansett, and Nipmuck Indians led by "King Philip," or Metacom, battled colonists across New England. Known for its costliness, both in lives and properties, the destruction of King Philip's War was easily the heaviest loss suffered by the covenantal colonists and engendered series of sermons dedicated to fasting, humiliation, and thanksgiving (once it was over). Historian Jill Lepore describes the colonial view of the war as a violation of core Englishness where Indian mutilation of cattle, homes, fences, and bodies weakened the distinction between European propriety and godliness and Native wilderness. When Indians stripped colonial casualties naked, burned their

⁵² Samuel Willard, *A Sermon Preached Upon Ezek. 22. 30, 31* (Boston: 1679), Early American Imprints, I, 2, 3, 6, 8; Moodey, *The Heads of a Sermon*, 4-5, 6, 11; William Hubbard, *To the Memory of the Learned and Worthy Gentleman Daniel Denison* (Cambridge: 1682), Early American Imprints, I.

homes, maimed Bibles, or decapitated victims, the line between “good” and “bad,” between the bound body of Christ and the dispersed Natives, was dangerously blurred.⁵³

Engaging with King Philip’s War, and the themes of providence, sinfulness, and communal endangerment its Puritan actors interacted with, is critical for understanding how ministers constructed their funeral sermons. As Harry S. Stout has argued, King Philip’s War “had the extremely important effect of establishing New England’s identity as a people of war,” particularly among the second generation. As a “people of war,” colonists were familiarized with the occasional necessity to “shed blood for the survival of Christ’s kingdom.” Evident in chronicles and sermons stemming from the war, this led to ministers emphasizing the critical need for bounded communities, surveillance of all potential threats of apostasy, and appeasement of God. I argue Puritan ministers responded to the war’s havoc, in conjunction with their underlying emphasis on humanity’s corruption and God’s intimate monitoring of it, by their imaginings of dead bodies in funeral sermons. With homes crashed, naked bodies sprawled in public, and Bibles left mangled, Native Americans threatened the stability and survival of Puritan settlements in New England. Reacting to the terror of indigenous belligerents and their lingering worry of “decay in piety,” second generation ministers turned to the bodies of their dead stalwarts to re-establish the reverence of authority and mistrust of human nature.⁵⁴

“For upon the 10th. day of *February*,” Increase Mather wrote in 1676, “some hundreds of the *Indians* fell upon *Lancaster*, burnt many of the Houses, kill’d and took Captive above forty persons.” In this “most awful Providence,” Reverend Joseph Rowlandson saw his “House,

⁵³ Stout, *New England Soul*, 78, 79; Lepore, *The Name of War*, 73-4, 85.

⁵⁴ Stout, *New England Soul*, 82; Middlekauff, *The Mathers*, 173.

Goods, Books,” wife, and children either destroyed or taken “away Captive before the Enemy.” Eight hopeful retrievers died and “were stripped naked by the *Indians*,” Mather noted, as they “ventured their lives to save Mrs. *Rowlandson*.” Mather argued to his audience that such events, of which he depicted as commonplace during the battles, were not solely the fault of attacking Indians. New England settlers had not been deserving of “so dreadful a judgment” like the war “until *the Body of the first Generation* was removed.” It was only when their inheritors, the second generation, had “risen up” and shirked “the blessed design of their Fathers, in following the Lord into this Wilderness” that the Lord showed such displeasure.⁵⁵

Puritan minister William Hubbard observed much of the same in his account of New England’s deadly series of encounters with Native Americans. In his widely read record of King Philip’s War, Hubbard gave colonists over three-hundred pages of details regarding the “bloody enterprize” colonists suffered under Native belligerents. Hubbard’s narrative tells of militiamen marching upon “newly burned” towns; discoveries of “newly torn” Bibles left by apostatic Indians; and “some heads, scalps, and hands cut off from the bodies of some of the English, and stuck upon poles near the highway, in that barbarous and inhuman manner.” Playing off the visceral themes of trespass, violence, and religious perversion described by Mather and Hubbard’s accounts, Puritan ministers responded through concomitant funeral sermons. They countered the troubling stories of burned houses, destroyed Bibles, and God’s displeasure through their stories of dead saints. They resisted the hostile disorder of King Philip’s War and convicted their sinful congregations by turning the dead into hedges, fences, and pillars who offered what was painfully absent: authority, safety, and faithfulness.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Mather, *A Brief History*, 22, 1-2.

⁵⁶ William Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Indian Wars in New-England* (Boston: 1775), Early American Imprints, I, 60, 62-3.

Samuel Willard's funeral sermon for John Leverett in 1679, just a few years after King Philip's War, sought conciliation of the chaos wrought by the series of skirmishes. By virtue of his godliness and public status, Leverett was "divine protection" and a "hedge" which helped form a holy perimeter around the body of believers protected by God's grace—concepts imminently threatened by indigenous enemies. Those who make up the hedge or fence, Willard detailed, must be like Leverett, a major-general for the Massachusetts militia during King Philip's War: "a leading man, *i.e.* a man in Authority, one that is a Ruler among his people, a man of power, and influence." According to Willard, a hedge was

properly a sort of Fence which is set about an Enclosure, for its safety & defence: the ends unto which it servs are chiefly ... that it may be kept in the owners propriety, & not lye common as also to keep out damage by Beasts which might otherwayes get in and do mischief.

Leverett was a "fence" which was "a care of Providence that none shall do" the community "any harm, either in keeping in, and restraining of wicked men," Willard stated, "(who are like the beasts of the Wilderness) from attempting of anything against it." "Godly and faithful Governours" like Leverett, protected their community by "keep[ing] off Judgments, by keeping of things in order." Not only did they guard their communities against "beasts of the Wilderness" like Native Americans, but against God's convicting punishments. Making up the hedge, as Leverett once did, meant standing "in between a sinning people, and a provoked God" as a pious mediator.

But, due to the "errors and heresies" of His people, there existed a "great *Gap*" in the fence; by His providence, the community's godly arbiter was taken "to make the way plain for [God's] Judgements." Willard used Leverett's metaphorical body to stress the sinful helplessness of his audience, as well as the comforting security realized through God's choicest believers.

There was hope in those fortifying “hedges” God appointed, and dreadful judgments—like King Philip’s War—without them.⁵⁷

William Hubbard’s 1682 funeral sermon for Major Daniel Denison, another leader of the Bay colony’s forces in King Philip’s war, depicted Major Denison as like “the bright glittering Stars” and “the Salt of the Earth” that guided and maintained the body of Christ from decay. As a protector against evil influence, Major Denison was one that “may be of use to fill up the sides of the building,” Hubbard noted, “or as Artifice to adorn the outward surface thereof.” Given his “Heroick” character, and his accomplishments as a “Commander [and] Counsellor,” he was one of the choicest saints who were “of far more choice and excellent use that serve as *Pillars*, to bear up the weight of the whole work, without which all would presently fall to the ground.” Further, those like Major Denison “are as the *Pillars* that bear up the Fabrick, and support the whole Building” of their communities. When such pillars fell, or when such stars lost their luster, the surviving “common People ... are but as sheep without a Shepherd, ready to be devoured by every Enemy that appears.” Like Willard’s sermon for Leverett, Hubbard used the body of Major Denison to clarify the audience’s vulnerability and the contrasting stability established through godly exemplars.⁵⁸

In another of Willard’s funeral sermons, upon the death of prominent Boston merchant John Hull in 1683, he stratified his subject and audience to discuss human depravity and the need for exceptional authority. Saints like Hull were “devoted to any special service of God” and “separate from common” believers. They were God’s chosen, a “Tabernacle and Temple, the Altar, the Vessels” of the Gospel on earth. They were as a “Jewel, a Pearl of great price” that

⁵⁷ Samuel Willard, *A Sermon*, 3, 6, 2-3, 4, 5, 11.

⁵⁸ Hubbard, *Well-Ordered Conversation*, 153-4, 155.

were only taken from earth when “*they are despised or undervalued in the World,*” when evil was “*hastening upon the place where they live.*” Deaths like Hull’s, when there was “a Pillar pluckt out of the Building” and “a Foundation Stone taken out of the Wall,” signalled a “sad prognostick of misery a coming.”⁵⁹

Upon the 1672 death of Anne Mason, Norwich minister James Fitch described the death of significant community members as “*heart-awakening strokes*” of God’s providence. Fitch compared Mason to saints throughout history whose godly example was a “Tree of life” through their godly example, who God took away “from the evil to come” and “dreadful storm at hand.” Another one of Samuel Willard’s funeral sermons continued these themes. William Stoughton, a colonial magistrate in the Massachusetts Bay best known for serving as a judge during the Salem trials, died in 1701 Willard saw it as “Prognosticks of impending calamities.” Like the previous funeral sermons, Willard emphasized Stoughton’s public stature and importance when discussing the impact of his death. Those like Stoughton, where “goodness and greatness meet together in a man,” serve as “main pillars in the building, and do mightily strengthen it as long as they stand in it.” Stoughton, though now “plucked out of it,” served in “the hedge to keep off Judgments,” instill piety, and bar sinful infestations. The loss of Stoughton meant “a wide gap made in our hedge,” and when “such *Cedars fall*, the whole Wood must *Echo* the resentment of it.” Given his “*more publick Station,*” his death was “*still more influential*” and one that removed effective safeguards against sin.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Samuel Willard, *The High Esteem*, 5, 8, 11, 18.

⁶⁰ Fitch, *Peace the End*, preface, 9; Samuel Willard, *Prognosticks of Impending Calamities* (Boston: 1701), Early American Imprints, I, cover, 17, 31-2.

Fitch, Hubbard, and Willard utilized the bodies of Major Denison, Hull, Leverett, Mason, and Stoughton to warn colonists of the consequences of their inherent sinfulness, remind them of their covenantal arrangement with God, and urge fledgling congregations to cleave to the protective stewardship of exceptional leaders. They made their appeals through the bodies of dead saints. By transforming the resting godly into pillars, trees, and hedges, Puritan clergy answered the tumult stemming from King Philip's War and ministerial fears of devotional laxity. Ministers embedded the dead in imaginative metaphors which offered symbolic references to their earthly singularity and transcendence from their communities. In doing so, survivors were reminded of their natural wickedness, the danger their sin initiated, and their utter reliance upon the exclusive safety emanating from ordained and lay elite. The bodies of the dead became the mortar from which ministers tried to fortify endangered churches, define proper authority, and illustrate the threatening relics of Adam's sin within everybody.

Between battles with Native Americans and omnipotent concerns about human nature, New England ministers saw plenty of opposition to their reformatory communities and funeral sermons of the era reflect as much. When authority and covenantal "hedges" were disputed by Indian attacks and weakened from God's judgment of colonial communities, second generation clergy examined the dead bodies of elite congregants to counter such interrogations. They relied upon, and reinforced, ideals of "godly magistrates" and "Christian commonwealths" when they metaphorically transformed dead attorneys, judges, and militiamen into invaluable "pillars," "fences," and "shields" barricading the body of Christ from New England's wilderness. The literal body of dead colonial elite, and the imaginative body composed by Puritan ministers, served as a graphic monument to godly authority and security for troubled and trespassed

audiences. However, the ways in which New England ministers spoke in funeral sermons did not remain static into the eighteenth-century.

Well before the end of the century, Puritan New England was changing, and not in the form of a precipitous decline instigated by a clear villain to the covenant. Population growth, commercial development, and developments in the church-state relationship posed new challenges to the expectations for the community of saints established by first generation, and carried by second generation, Puritan settlers. By the 1670s, Cotton Mather proposed clergy remove themselves from law enforcement, particularly regulation of trade, and place more power upon appointed civil leaders. Civil servants and government officials, Mather held, had unique abilities and obligations, apart from the instituted church, to further God's kingdom on earth. It was no longer particularly conducive to holiness for pastors to be "Gospel Lawyers" who tried to "handle" legislation instead of preach the good news. As the next chapter will show, these and other changes, like the events noted in this section, were reflected in the funeral sermons of New England Congregationalist ministers like Benjamin Colman, Ebenezer Pemberton, and Benjamin Wadsworth.⁶¹

⁶¹ Valeri, *Heavenly Merchandize*, 100-1.

CHAPTER THREE

FUNERAL SERMONS AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NEW ENGLAND

By the beginning of the eighteenth-century, “Puritan” New England’s namesake was being directly challenged. With the revoking of the Massachusetts Bay’s original colonial charter in 1684; the aggregation of New York, New Jersey, and every New England colony into the “Dominion” of New England; the Crown’s appointment of colonial magistrates; and the rule of Sir Edmund Andros between 1686 and 1689, America’s Puritan divines were forced to adapt their reformatory tactics. New, non-elected royal officials were instituting foreign tax regulations, neutering local legislative authority, and implementing a more publically moderate religious attitude where the Church of England could be welcome. While Andros’ reign was relatively brief after a Boston “revolution,” Increase Mather’s 1692 return from England with a new charter included still another royal governor, Sir William Phips. Some of England’s most prominent eyes, and feet, were upon their valuable colonial holdings and enforced policies of Christian inclusion—not enclosure.⁶²

This chapter is concerned with how funeral sermons mediated cultural shifts among New England’s third generation. The eighteenth-century brought with it numerous new changes and challenges that influenced how ministers crafted their funeral sermons, the content of their narratives, and how they discussed the bodies of the dead. The second generation, who increasingly identified as a “people of war” after King Philip’s War in the 1670s, gave way to offspring less familiar with the cost of “blood for the survival of Christ’s kingdom” and the need

⁶² Frank Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 98-9.

for communal exclusivity. Harry S. Stout has described third generation New England, instead, as an “atmosphere of religious toleration” less concerned with guarding against lurking apostasy than with embracing European intellectualism and English moderation. With this did not come a dismissal of the previous generation’s covenantalism, but an adaptation. Particularly noticeable in the funeral sermons to be studied in this chapter, ministers were less likely to pit damnable communities against dead exemplars. As a result, individual ability and oft-mentioned “public spirit” became more of an emphasis among clergymen and their sermons.⁶³

Rather than underlining the danger each person posed to themselves and others due to their stain from the Fall, the milieu of third generation New England was more supportive of individual agency and human nature and less preoccupied with Puritan regulation of areas like publishing and economics. Where first and second generation New Englanders were almost exclusively readers of Bibles and psalm books, there was a growth in “powerful and extensive public communications” after the last quarter of the seventeenth-century that made goods and writings more available to the non-elite classes. As Frank Lambert has written, American publishing “had undergone a remarkable change” by the time of George Whitefield’s colonial landing in 1739. Though literary censoring was probably more of a clerical hope than reality in earlier generations, there was still a substantial rise in the work of local presses that allowed for greater public accessibility of different literature. In Boston, the number of local printers doubled between 1700 and 1740, thus reducing distributive and material expenses, and making media and consumer goods more attainable for non-elite colonists.⁶⁴

⁶³ Stout, *New England Soul*, 82, 119.

⁶⁴ Lambert, “*Pedlar in Divinity*”, 13, 35, 6-7.

Eighteenth-century colonists, including leading clergy, also became much more accepting of profit-mindedness and free business. As populations grew, commercial resources expanded (such as Boston's Long Wharf), tastes developed, and churches shrunk as regulatory bodies, individual prosperity became less a lurking menace and more emblematic of a shift in the autonomy of individuals in the body of Christ. As Mark Valeri has noted recently, leading clergy in the third generation applauded profitable as business, considered individual wealth a public good, and often preached with a commercial vocabulary. Boston minister Ebenezer Pemberton, in a lecture to the General Assembly in 1705, deftly equated "the Treasures of a Commonwealth" to the state's "Blood and Spirits" and lamented that when "Trade is damp't" the state's body became "Pale, Wan, and Paralytick." Reverend Benjamin Colman's 1717 funeral sermon for Grove Hirst talked of Hirst's "true Worth," "value," and "great *Industry and Diligence*." None could "tax [Hirst] with Idleness," Colman remembered, "or want of Application to his proper Business; whether it were in his *Store house* or in his *Publick Trusts*." Thomas Foxcroft's 1727 funeral sermon for Penn Townsend, a Boston merchant and public servant, utilized the body of its subject to make a similar point. "Our Glory is thin'd by the Loss of such," Foxcroft grieved, and "our Treasure is diminish'd." Townsend's departure was a "Stock out of the Bank" and the evaporation of a "*sweet Perfume*." While ministers still held certain standards of neighborliness and moral responsibility in matters of money, personal prosperity was no longer officially regulated by clergy; it was encouraged.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Valeri, *Heavenly Merchandize*, 112-3, 117; Ebenezer Pemberton, *A Sermon Preaced in the Audience of the General Assembly* (Boston: 1706), Early American Imprints, I, 8; Benjamin Colman, *A Funeral Sermon* (Boston: 1717), Early American Imprints, I, ii, 38; Corrigan, *Prism of Piety*, 4; Foxcroft, *A Brief Display*, 30-3.

As Philip Greven's eminently useful study of colonial Andover, Massachusetts shows, there were also developments in familial practices that fed into individual opportunity and empowerment. Where independent interests and mobility were largely prohibited in the name of Christian patriarchalism in the first two generations, Greven notes, third generation Andover sons signaled a significant embrace of personal initiative and enterprise. No longer "remarkably rooted" like their predecessors, third generation sons married younger, displayed an "increased readiness" to depart from home, and more quickly pursued their inheritances from their willing fathers. As Greven notes, 47 of 58 second generation Andover estates were transferred to their sons before their fathers' deaths, many of which were not landed property, but money or access to a "liberal education"—a significant development that encouraged individual mobility.⁶⁶

The discussions of Greven, Lambert, and Valeri about the third generation's changing milieu, particularly its trust in personal discernment and individual action, were reflected and mediated by funeral sermons from the same time period—an analysis largely absent from scholarship. Where their forebears reinforced the authority of godly elites by juxtaposing the community's debilitating depravity with the permanent piety of a dead "pillar," New England's third generation pivoted and encouraged those left behind. Where Puritans elucidated the lasting devotionism of attorneys, militiamen, and ministers by transfiguring them into a "rock" utterly irreplaceable by their corrupt neighbors, their inheritors displayed the dead as "withering grass" or fragile "flowers" who left behind fellow believers inherently empowered in the image of God to fill their place. Ministers began emphasizing the ephemerality, not durability, of the dead in their imaginings of the resting body. They underscored the inherent ability and "public spirit," not perversion, of their congregations. Through these funeral sermons, third generation ministers

⁶⁶ Greven, *Four Generations*, 222, 36-7, 39-40, 272-4, 131.

responded to a New England more welcoming of personal pursuits by amending the human nature of their audiences and commissioning them to public employment of their new found potential.

In this chapter, I argue this critical revision in funeral sermons was not only accomplished through ministerial encouragements of their congregations, but also through a new approach imagining the dead's body. No longer illustrated as a fixture of invaluable, permanent godliness, the dead became like "vapor." Their bodies became fleeting, brief, and often impediments between the dead's pure soul and its place with God. Where ministers previously appropriated dead bodies to underline the inability of survivors to take its place as a "foundation" for an entire community, later sermons emphasized the body's temporality, like "withering grass," to stress its relegation to the soul and the potential for all to assume a "public spirit" and replace it. Ministers harnessed the body of the dead to tell survivors what they could certainly accomplish, not how they would inevitably fail. Building off the historical foundation laid by the scholars above, particularly as it pertains to New England's warming to individualism, I devote most of my attention to the impact of English religious thought on colonial ministers in the eighteenth-century and how it was mediated by their funeral sermons.

For the remainder of the chapter, I examine the "anglicization" of religious thought in early eighteenth-century New England and how it was mediated by clergy's treatment of dead individuals in their funeral sermons. As John Corrigan has noted, there were New England clergy and lay leaders who "negotiated a tentative settlement between old ways and new" at the end of the seventeenth-century. By adapting the previous generation's theological tracts and incorporating the developments of moderate Anglicans like John Tillotson and Edward

Stillingfleet, many Congregationalist ministers outlined a theology attuned to the “profound social change”—such as population growth, territorial expansion, and the development of complex, transatlantic commercial networks—New England saw in the new century. I argue that this eighteenth-century intellectual shift, like the milieu of the previous generation, was reflected in funeral sermons and their descriptions of the dead. Of particular importance to this chapter is how “anglicized” Christianity altered clerical ideas of human nature, the growing confidence ministers had in the “publick spirit,” and how such changes were reflected through funeral sermons—an observation lacking in studies of New England religion.⁶⁷

Though useful as Christian models for other believers, “mortal men are fallible and uncertain guides, which if we follow to closely,” John Tillotson preached in 1686, “will sometime or other mislead us.” Tillotson, the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1691 to 1694, declared only “with great wisdom and wariness” should believers admire their colleagues in holiness because they “may fall into great errors and failings” and be “easily seduced” by ascribing them too much pious virtue in and of themselves. There was one indubious earthly example for the Church to follow, however.⁶⁸

Jesus took on earthly, fleshy habitations, Tillotson highlighted. Our “Saviour here on Earth, is the Life of God in the nature and likeness of Man; he was God as well as Man, and the

⁶⁷ Corrigan, *Prism of Piety*, 3, 3-4. Scholars have noted how eighteenth-century funeral sermons shifted toward the sentimental remembrance of an individual rather than addressing the sinfulness of a community, but not how such a change was intimately related to the influx of English latitudinarianism, developing ideas of human nature, and the resultant emphasis on public service. For more on the existing historiography of funeral sermons and the sentimental turn, see Emory Elliot, “The Development of the Puritan Funeral Sermon and Elegy, 1660-1750” in *Early American Literature*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1980), 151-164; Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death*.

⁶⁸ John Tillotson, “The Life of Jesus Christ Considered as our Example” in *Several Discourses*, Volume 10 (London: 1704), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, 4.

divine Nature is certainly the Pattern of all Perfection,” Tillotson noted. Though the incarnated God “had natural frailties and infirmities, and was subject to hunger and thirst,” Tillotson extolled, He did not succumb to the “evil inclinations, and sinful frailties” befallen the rest of God’s creation. Instead, He only reflected “all the moral Perfections belonging to Human nature”—an example whereby all followers of Him, by imitating it, might “correct the errors and deformities” of their lives. During His time enfleshed and on earth, Jesus’ life embodied “plain and honest practice of the solid and substantial Virtues of a good Life,” and He did so “in a low and mean condition, and a calm composure of Mind.” Despite the significance of Jesus’ moral perfection, Tillotson reminded his audience, there was “nothing in all this, but what lies open to every Man’s understanding” and inherent capability; made in the image of their Father, every person should know it was “easie to [their] practice and imitation, requiring nothing but an honest mind, and due care and diligence ... to tread in those steps in which the Son of God” did.⁶⁹

Tillotson’s theological themes of humanity’s inherent ability for good-doing, public virtue, and religious rationality represented an important change in New England Christianity. Tillotson, who Norman Fiering has termed “an extraordinary popular force” and “literary phenomenon,” authored some of the most read sermons in America between 1690 and 1750 and was a frequent contributor to clerical and college libraries in New England. The writings of Tillotson, among others, brought to New England a latitudinarian stream of Anglicanism that greatly contrasted the Reformed theology of the previous two generations by balancing “reason and revelation” when one was vaulted over the other.⁷⁰ While latitudinarian ministers such as

⁶⁹ Ibid., 5-6, 9-10.

⁷⁰ Norman Fiering, “The First American Enlightenment: Tillotson, Leverett, and Philosophical Anglicanism” in *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (1981), 309; Harvey Hill, “The

Tillotson still emphasized the centrality of Christ, His transcendence, and everybody's ultimate need for His salvific propitiation of sin, their theology was far less rooted in Puritan themes of human depravity, intense personal examination, and discernment of regeneration. As a driving force of the Bay's eighteenth-century "anglicization," this prevalent iteration of Anglicanism modelled for New England clergy a type of Christianity that linked salvation to intellectual devotion, public virtue, and a more "universal" Church instead of the previous generation's exclusive community of saints. In many instances, eighteenth-century funeral sermons embodied Tillotson's style by highlighting the dead's ability to unlock their holy talents (often through personal intellectual exercises), their efforts at using them to serve their neighbors, and the duty all survivors had in trying to harness their own God-given goodness.⁷¹

Benjamin Wadsworth's 1724 funeral sermon for John Leverett the Younger exemplified many of Tillotson's points about individual capacity for saintliness, methods of its realization by believers, and the necessity of its public expression by survivors. All of humanity was identified as "God's Servants," Wadsworth, a 1690 graduate of Harvard, noted, "as they bear the signatures

Law of Nature Revived: Christianity and Natural Religion in the Sermons of John Tillotson" in *Anglican and Episcopal History*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (2011), 188. It is important to note that Tillotson and others pieced together this theological approach after the work of mid-seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonists, such as Ralph Cudworth, who were trained in the curriculum of Classical philosophy, reason, and a "spirit of moderation." Cudworth and others emphasized the role of an individual's rational faculties, believing ministers could "*perswade men to the Life of Christ*" by appealing to their intellect. Like the later latitudinarians, Cambridge Platonists established humanity's inherent ability to exhibit public morality and virtue from their inheritance of God's image, as well. For more on Cambridge Platonists, their theology, and their impact on latitudinarians, see Ralph Cudworth, *A Sermon Preached Before the Honourable House of Commons* (London: 1647), Early English Books Online, preface; S. Bryn Roberts, *Puritanism and the Pursuit of Happiness: The Ministry and Life of Ralph Venning, c. 1621-1674* (Woodbridge, U.K.: The Boydell Press, 2015), 26, 28-9, 31; Van Engen, *Sympathetic Puritans*, 212-3.

⁷¹ Van Engen, *Sympathetic Puritans*, 217-8, 216-7; Stout, *New England Soul*, 6; Middlekauff, *The Mathers*, 6.

of those Divine Perfections employ'd in forming them, so they shew forth God's praise." Given their natural inclinations and duties to "shew forth" an example of God, mankind should dedicate themselves to fruitful applications of their abilities. "*WE should be studious to acquaint ourselves with [God's] Mind & Will,*" Wadsworth declared, and "should endeavour to *know*" His purpose for us. Wadsworth's 1715 funeral sermon for Isaac Addington, a high-ranking Massachusetts Bay public servant, valorized Addington's "Internal Endowments" which he cultivated "by Early Study & Application of Mind." Addington's "Natural Abilities" in writing, thinking, and creativity were most useful, however, because of his dedication "to serve the Publick in *Civil Affairs*"—an example of godliness from which the Lord would "raise up Others and make them as Bright and Eminent as they were."⁷²

The "Good of Souls," Wadsworth stated in his 1715 funeral sermon for pastor Thomas Bridge, depended upon the continued support for "such Seminaries of good Literature, such means of Education." More specifically, consistent intellectual yearning for God instilled in believers, and particularly good ministers, "a Catholick Charity in Loving Good Men tho' of differing Sentiments." Godly men learned in the Scriptures and sciences should foster communal harmony instead of "raising or fomenting Strifes, Divisions and Contentions" based upon theological disagreements. Importantly, "in His own good time" God would faithfully replenish the community and raise up another individual with these qualities of charity and toleration. Wadsworth, like his clerical contemporaries, underlined mankind's natural abilities, how to access them, and the public goodness that could come from them.⁷³

⁷² Benjamin Wadsworth, *Surviving Servants of God* (Boston: 1724), Early American Imprints, I, 4, 14-5, 20; Wadsworth, *Man's Present State*, 4, 14.

⁷³ Benjamin Wadsworth, *Ministers Naturally Caring for Souls* (Boston: 1715), Early American Imprints, I, 27, 10, 28.

Benjamin Colman's 1717 funeral sermon for Grove Hirst also ennobled personal action and fulfillment of potential. Colman, trained both at Harvard and in England, emphasized his subject's devotion to study, exercise of the mind in his spiritual life, and public service. Colman, minister of Brattle Street Church, first qualified his eulogizing of Hirst by confirming his place "among the Faithful *Servants* and kind *Fathers* of their Country," favorably likening him to the "wise and religious *Prince*" Hezekiah in the Book of Isaiah. In addition to Hirst's professional accomplishments and work ethic, Colman highlighted how

He delighted much in *Reading*, and his *Bible* and Practical Treatises in *Divinity* were his profitable and pleasant study, whereby the Work of Sanctification was greatly advanced in him from day to day. He collected a fine *Library* of such *Authors*, to the number of about Two Hundred Books, many of them in *Folio*, and few (if any) of them were there which he had not carefully read thro.

Importantly, these commitments were not just for his own prideful accomplishments. Hirst's "inclinations to Diligence and Labour for the acquiring of profitable Knowledge [were] to serve his God and his Generation within it." His "Inclination to get knowledge," and "Capacity to receive it," manifested sanctifying results both within and outside of himself. It produced in him a "*great and publick Spirit to do Good*," made him "*rich in Good Works*," and led to his involvement in "*Charities* [which] were many abroad." While Hirst was a powerful example for Colman's sermon, it was not solely a personal memorial of the subject. Hirst's exemplification of godly study and public service served to "allure and charm, perswade and constrain others to come into the Imitation" of him. "[L]et us endeavour *our selves*," Colman stated, "to fill up well our Places, labouring to *equal* and excel them that are gone before us. Their worthy Deeds call us on, and should fire us with a holy ambition *to be* what they *have been*." Hirst's death was not

used as an opportunity for Colman to contrast the godly and sinful like their Puritan predecessors were accustomed to. Instead, he used Hirst's death to encourage imitation.⁷⁴

Ebenezer Pemberton, a Harvard graduate in 1691 and minister at Old South Church, devoted much of his 1712 funeral sermon for Major John Walley to explicating the importance and duty of public service while still on earth. Typical of the latitudinarian flavor, Pemberton was determined to enumerate how everyone, particularly those in leadership positions such as Major Walley, could serve their people and employ their God-given talents for the good of their community. Men who served were to tap into their "Intellectual Endowments, both Natural and Acquired to the Publick Good," and remain intentional about a "true *Publick Spirit*" that considered the needs of the commonwealth. A "true *Publick Spirit*" was when an individual thought of the community before themselves and sought "by all Methods to Study, and Advance the Good and Prosperity ... and truly valuable Interests of the People." The ultimate kernel Pemberton hoped his audience would extract from the sermon was that there existed natural faculties within all of mankind, by virtue of God's creative residue, and that all such talents should be publicly expressed.⁷⁵

By the eighteenth-century, third generation New England clergy found appeals to reason to be appeals to the soul. As Harry S. Stout has noted, ministers coming to prominence in eighteenth-century New England were American born and shaped by a "cohesive set of experiences" and intellectual trends at Harvard College—New England's eminent dispensary of clergy. Their engagement with English religious thought and European rationality, from the aforementioned

⁷⁴ Colman, *A Funeral Sermon*, vii, 1, 35, 39-40, 41, 128, 134.

⁷⁵ Pemberton, *A True Servant*, 12, 27, 4.

Tillotson, as well as Isaac Newton and John Locke, represented a warming to sermonic intellectualism (instead of Puritan plain style) and an “enablement of reason” when addressing their flocks. As David D. Hall has noted, streams of latitudinarian and rational Christianity entered the college and eschewed “much of the lore of wonders” and original depravity extolled by second generation ministers like Increase Mather; this gave way to emerging New England Congregationalists such as Colman, Pemberton, and Wadsworth who represented eighteenth-century church leaders “eminently liberal in their religious views.” These and other prominent ministers extolled a “catholick” theology, as John Corrigan has noted, that was more trusting of human nature and an “optimism about the possibility for unity” that fed into the topic of “publick spirit” discussed so often by eulogizing ministers. These deviations, particularly the new valuation of humanity’s godliness and the role of rational discernment in Christian practice, were not only evident in the funeral sermons already discussed.⁷⁶

In his 1700 *Reasonable Religion*, Cotton Mather stated his exhortations would no longer implore his audiences to “*Shew your selves Regenerate Christians*” but to “*Shew your selves Rational Creatures.*” The “All-Wise God,” Mather declared, “assign’d the Pre-eminence to *Man*, who was Created after his own Image” and given a “Rational Nature” that, despite its post-Fall weakening, still enabled mankind to fully embrace faith.⁷⁷ Similarly, in 1721, Harvard graduate

⁷⁶ Stout, *New England Soul*, 127, 133; David D. Hall, “New England, 1660-1730” in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, eds. John Coffey and Paul C.H. Lim (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 152; Josiah Quincy quoted in Corrigan, *Prism of Piety*, 4, 5-7.

⁷⁷ Cotton Mather quoted in Middlekauff, *The Mathers*, 296-7; Cotton Mather, *Reasonable Religion* (London: 1713), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, preface. A note is necessary on Mather and his appeal to the reason of humanity and religion. As scholars like John Corrigan and Richard Middlekauff have noted, Mather was a complicated figure whose views were not solely derived from second generation Puritanism or third generation latitudinarian moderation. He was sympathetic to religious rationality while also staunchly supportive of the Holy Spirit’s unpredictable revelations. He saw mankind as empowered by their God-endowed intellectual

Thomas Robie preached about the importance of personal intellect, not unpredictable revelation, in Christian practice. Robie, known prior for his 1709 work *An Almanac of the Celestial Motions, Aspects, & Eclipses*, hoped his sermon would “form a Discourse concerning the Nature of Preaching Christ, as well as Concerning the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ.” When describing the value of this particular lecture, Robie spoke of its reflection of “*the Lord JESUS CHRIST, whose Knowledge I would account most Excellent, and for the sake of which I would account all other things but Loss.*” Robie, like his peers, intimated that individual agency and attainment of knowledge was more integral to believers than before. There existed redemptive “knowledge” and truth in the world that man only had to search hard enough for. While the Bible was still often regarded as critical to the Christian life, works like Robie’s sermon and Mather’s *Reasonable Religion* underlined moral practice, individual interpretive abilities of the natural world, and mankind’s own mediating powers in establishing an understanding of God’s salvation—all of which constituted the “publick spirit” accentuated by the era’s funeral sermons.⁷⁸

Third generation ministers stressed the development of rational Christianity throughout their funeral sermons. It was the responsibility of good leaders to “*Promote Good Literature among a People,*” Pemberton pointed out in his sermon on Major Walley, and an exemplary characteristic of ancient Greeks and Romans known more for their “flourishing State of Learning” than anything else. Nathaniel Appleton also empowered the rational faculties of

faculties while also admitting God’s transcendence. For more on Mather’s complexity, see Corrigan, *Prism of Piety*, 3-10; Middlekauff, *The Mathers*, 302-3.

⁷⁸ Thomas Robie, *A Sermon Preached in the College* (Boston: 1721), Early American Imprints, I, preface; for biographical notes on Robie, see Beth Anne English, “Thomas Robie Letters, 1723-1725,” William & Mary’s Earl Gregg Swem Library, <http://scdb.swem.wm.edu/?p=collections/findingaid&id=7145&q=&rootcontentid=4617#bioghist> (January 25, 2017); Middlekauff, *The Mathers*, 296-7; Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, 18-9.

individuals and their guidance in understanding Christ's sacrifice in his 1727 funeral sermon for Colonel Francis Foxcroft. Appleton, a Harvard graduate in 1712 and Congregationalist minister, instructed his audience on how to "be righteous" by doing "Justice to our selves, [and] acting up to the Capacity, Dignity and Design of our Natures." Mankind must grasp their "Nature and Constitution" as "rational Creatures," Appleton implored, and submit all their "*inferior* Powers under the government of *Reason*" in order to reach their godly potential. For many third generation ministers, funeral sermons valorized the deceased's propensity for rationality and utilized their corpse as a site for emphasizing individuals intellectual engagement with God and the proliferation of educational opportunity.⁷⁹

Influenced by Anglican moderates such as Tillotson, Pemberton, Appleton, Colman, and Wadsworth placed a considerable amount of personal choice upon Christian individualism regardless of their one's state of regeneration by adjusting New England's Puritan-Calvinist emphasis on election, utter depravity, and exclusive communities of saints. This was not an obscure or negligible change. Increase Mather, perhaps the most famous Puritan minister of the Massachusetts Bay during his lifetime, even referred to Tillotson as "the great and good Archbishop" and questioned whether New England would have ever necessitated had Tillotson, and not William Laud, headed the Church of England when the first generation settled in the Bay. Responding to the eighteenth-century influx of anglicized Christianity, the ministers I have

⁷⁹ Pemberton, *A True Servant*, 7; Nathaniel Appleton, *Righteousness and Uprightness Recommended* (Boston: 1727), Early American Imprints, I, 7, 10. As a note, I recognize Appleton as being on the fringe, or just outside of, New England's third generation.

examined utilized their dead subjects to remind individuals of their “duty towards *God*,” or their “publick service,” and the religious significance of their rational faculties.⁸⁰

This section of the chapter engages directly with the body in funeral sermons of third generation ministers and how their appropriations of the dead’s body reflected the influx of moderate Christianity and individual empowerment in New England. Where their Puritan ancestors imagined dead bodies of saints as permanent “pillars” or “shields” to contrast their protective or supportive nature against the sinful community, third generation clergy described corpses in images of nearly opposite terms. For them, the dead were like “grass” or “vapor”—symbols of temporality, not fortitude. This critical divergence, yet to be properly considered in scholarship, reflected a response to changes in New England religion. Loyal to Calvinist understandings of original sin and the gulf between God and mankind, second generation Puritans *convicted* congregations of their natural depravity by using the body of the dead to highlight the unique, eminent strength of the deceased (e.g., like a “pillar”). Their eighteenth-century successors, influenced by Anglican moderation, *encouraged* congregations by downplaying the dead’s exceptionality and durability of the body (e.g., like dying “grass”). These changes in rhetoric corresponded directly with changes in how ministers defined their audiences and how audiences were allowed to define themselves. Between both generations, clerical language of the body in funeral sermons mediated the prevailing religious thought of the respective periods, acted as a site for instructing congregations, and clarified for individuals the extent of their agency.

Ministers like Colman, Pemberton, and Wadsworth used dead bodies to extol assurance in God’s

⁸⁰ Increase Mather quoted in Fiering, “American Enlightenment,” 314; Edward Stillingfleet, “Sermon II: Preached Before the King, March 13. 1666/1667” in *Sermons Preached on Several Occasions* (London: 1673), Early English Books Online, 25.

redemption of His followers, the natural ability for all survivors to live morally after the passing of a subject who suddenly “*Vanisheth away*,” and a general toleration of Protestant brethren. No longer did the falling of an irreplaceable “pillar” signal God’s dissatisfaction with His failing people. Instead, death served as a stage to voice the Lord’s gifts to His people and optimism for how He would “renew the Face of the Earth, and give a new Supply.”⁸¹

The gravity third generation ministers placed on moral behavior, like previous examples of economic and educational opportunity, was directly related to dead’s body. Many of this generation’s ministers eschewed the previous generation’s themes of imagined physical permanence, emphasized the earthly brevity of his subject’s body (both literally and metaphorically), and developed a new corresponding commission for the surviving community. Where second generation ministers such as Samuel Willard and Joshua Moodey utilized the dead’s body to erect the image of an enduring saint absent from a convicted and crippled community of sinners, third generation ministers continually underscored the dead’s earthly evanescence in light of the survivors’ inherent ability to quickly take their place.

In the few mentions he makes of Major Walley’s corpse, Ebenezer Pemberton discussed how every person’s “Life of Service will Expire in a Dissolution of their Earthly Tabernacle.” The quickness of physical life, far from a lamentable reality, was what “God has in his adoreable *Wisdom* as well as *Sovereignty* order’d.” In fact, God eventually treats His faithful by “destroy[ing] the whole body of sin” and freeing the soul from its “present Imbodyed Estate,” “from that gross lump of clay which unfits them for the Glory reserved for them.” Though perhaps difficult to comprehend, mourners should “long to be dissolved, that *Absent from the*

⁸¹ Wadsworth, *Man’s Present State*, 2, 19.

Body we might be *Present with the Lord*.” Major Walley’s recent dissolution, Pemberton noticed, was a “*strong Invitation to us all to be Zealous in Serving our Generation*.” All should “labor in [their] Sphere” and “pursue this good work” of filling in for the dead. In this example, Pemberton completely contradicted the approach of his forebears. The dead’s body was not enduring, but momentary. The survivors were not hopeless in replacing Major Walley, but earnestly pushed to embrace the hope of doing so. The body, for both generations, acted as the site of theological enunciation and definition of human nature.⁸²

In Benjamin Colman’s lecture after the death of Grove Hirst, the reverend consistently underscored the temporality of his subject’s body, both literally and imaginatively, to encourage moral behavior among his audience. “The present state of Man,” Colman noted, was one where all were “with infirmity and very defective.” He extended this theme by colorfully depicting Hirst’s heart so “*smitten and withered like Grass*” that he “*forgat to eat his Bread*” and physically weakened to the point that “*his Bones clave to his Skin*.” After illustrating the ephemerality of his resting subject, Colman underlined Hirst’s “uncommon Piety” and “Extraordinary Walk with God” which he simply could not “forbear commending . . . to the imitation of *Survivors*.”⁸³

Colman continued to evangelize through examples of physical degeneration in his 1729 funeral sermon for William Welsted. None can “*preserve the Body from Putrefaction*,” Colman stated, and that “on the last Day,” when believers are resurrected, they will “no longer live this animal, sensitive and earthly life again, but for a spiritual and incorruptible state.” Though God values His creation, especially the bodies of mankind, everybody’s earthly form is “sinful” and

⁸² *Ibid.*, 17, 24, 28, 29.

⁸³ Colman, *A Funeral Sermon*, 9, 32, 33.

“mortal.” In his discussion of the body’s impermanence and relative corruption, however, Colman encouraged individuals to harness their holiness before it was too late. “We ought so to think and speak and act here in the Body,” Colman asserted, “as realizing that we must shortly die and leave the Body to be buried.” Further, Colman dedicated each person’s corporeal faculties to assignments in godliness, saying “Our *Eyes* should be sacred to God to see Him in his *Works*” and “Our *Hands* should be devoted, active and diligent Instruments of Righteousness to God, ready unto every good Work of Piety and Charity.” Like Pemberton, Colman asserted humanity’s physical transience so as to alert individuals to their duties in godliness. Perhaps more than either Colman or Pemberton, pastor Benjamin Wadsworth did the same.⁸⁴

In his funeral sermons for Isaac Addington, Thomas Bridge, and John Leverett the Younger, Wadsworth constantly utilized the dead’s vanishing to articulate the new onus of morality placed upon the existing congregations. Following the passing of John Leverett in 1724, president of Harvard and son of the Bay’s eminent public servant John Leverett the Elder, Wadsworth underlined “Man’s short *uncertain Life* in this World,” how it was “compar’d to *Grass*, to the *flower of the Field*,” and “to *vapour that appears for a little time and then vanisheth away*.” Upon Thomas Bridge’s expiration in 1715, Wadsworth compared Bridge and other fellow clergymen to “Earthen Vessels” inherently victim to natural “Failings and Infirmities” of the body. Mankind was described as “a *Vapour*, that it appears for a little time, and *Vanisheth away*” in his 1715 lecture upon the resting body of prominent Boston court official Isaac Addington. “Man’s flourishing State and Life in this World is compar’d to *Grass*,” Wadsworth continued, “and the *Flower of the Field*; and everyone knows that their *Greenness* and

⁸⁴ Benjamin Colman, *The Credibility of the Christian Doctrine of the Resurrection* (Boston: 1729), Early American Imprints, I, i, 3, 20, 27, 28-9.

Beauty are very *Fading*.” Like Colman and Pemberton, Wadsworth exploited these transient and “fading” bodies of the dead to underscore the “Internal Endowments,” “Publick Services,” and “*Eminency*” all of mankind could enjoy and were responsible for implementing in their communities. God would “raiseth up others,” perhaps even themselves, “in their stead.”⁸⁵

These third generation sketches of bodies, either as fleeting or as blockades between pure souls and their Creator, points to an important shift in funeral sermons. In Chapter Two, I discussed the Puritan iteration of these occasional sermons and how ministers often imagined the bodies of dead as inanimate objects of permanence and protection that suggested communal endangerment, church exclusivity, and the reliance of devastated laity upon local exemplars of piety. These Puritan ministers also communicated a more trusting attitude of the corporeal bodies of saints. In his 1683 funeral sermon for John Hull, Puritan Samuel Willard, referring to the bodies of resting believers as “dust,” emphasized that their bodies were “*not reputed by [God] as common dust, but they are laid up by his care, kept under his eye and preserved by his powerful providence, as precious Relicks.*” Their “Bodies which were made Temples of the Holy Ghost,” Willard contended, “are not now rejected as *worthless things*, but are laid up in God’s Cabinet, and that with far more tender care then we do the most estimable jewel.” Similarly, in his 1680 sermon upon the death of a Lady Mildmay, Leonard Hoar lamented the divorce of the body and soul at death. While death for saints should be understood in terms of Christ’s victorious sacrifice, the “sting in death” was the separation of body and soul, the “strictest Union,” and how “the body is consigned over to a state of corruption” in the grave. The degradation of the saint’s

⁸⁵ Wadsworth, *Surviving Servants*, 11, 15; Wadsworth, *Ministers Naturally Caring*, 5; Wadsworth, *Man’s Present State*, 2, 4.

“precious body,” its post-mortem decomposition into “an abhorring and loathing” vestige, was a tragedy.⁸⁶

Between Puritans and their Harvard trained successors, we see a critical shift in how the bodies of dead were presented. As Martha Finch has pointed out, Puritans believed their bodies “reflected God’s image as the highest being in the created world.” Bodily discipline and orderliness, European dress, and physical industriousness—that which separated Puritans from godless and naked Indians—outwardly illustrated inward substance. It conveyed, not impeded, earthly union with the Lord. Charles Cohen notes that Puritans were well aware of the corruptive stain left upon human *flesh* by Adam’s sin, and the need for regenerative grace, but did not view *flesh* and *body*, simply their corporeal form, as analogous. The human body, derived from God’s own image and substance, represented Creation itself and what would one day be resurrected. The flesh, however, was spiritual degeneracy wrought by the Fall and that which could not “enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” Third generation ministers, though more trusting of human nature, took a different stance and were often quick to applaud God’s release of fallen saints from their “Animal State” which was “very decaying, changeable, perishing.” In no sense was the body inconsequential or mere background in eighteenth-century funeral sermons, however. Colman, Pemberton, and Wadsworth typically reminded their audiences of Christ’s eventual redemption of every believer’s body. But until then, every believer was encouraged to accept, if not celebrate, the soul’s extraction from the physical body when their last day came. In the meantime, while they were still residing in their “Imbodied Estate,” congregants were to use the death of an important individual as inspiration to harness their personal talents and abilities to

⁸⁶ Willard, *The High Esteem*, 10; Hoar, *Sting of Death*, 6-7, 11.

fill the new opening in their community while graciously awaiting their own dissolution of body and soul.⁸⁷

Whether they were authored by seventeenth-century Puritans or eighteenth-century moderates, New England funeral sermons spoke of much more than the memories and memorials of their resting subjects. Across generations, ministers utilized this sermon type to discuss relevant social issues and cultural shifts before their congregations. This has not been entirely ignored by scholars, either. As Emory Elliot and others have noted, these sermons evolved from Puritan lamentations on the “context of the life of the community” to eighteenth-century mourning orations on the departed individual. They convicted the sinful and ennobled the pious. They reminded audiences of the collective “ideal mission” and of individual purposes. They reminded of humanity’s fallen nature and of humanity’s ability to do good. They spoke to the community and to the individual. Though they changed greatly in some ways between second and third generation New Englanders, funeral sermons remained a channel for public discourse—an outlet through which ministers mediated substantial social commentary for their flocks. An important way in which this was accomplished, however, remains noticeably understudied: ministerial imaginings of the dead’s body.⁸⁸

This project has attempted to center the body, and how clergy appropriated it, in specific discussions of a particular sermon genre and the broader historiography of early American

⁸⁷ Finch, *Dissenting Bodies*, 45, 47-9; Cohen, *God’s Caress*, 31-2; Wadsworth, *Man’s Present State*, 2, 7; Pemberton, *A True Servant*, 17.

⁸⁸ Elliot, “The Development of the Puritan Funeral Sermon,” 152, 157; Melissa Mechling Knous, “Public Rhetoric of Death: Calvinism, Communal Anxiety, and Death Texts in Puritan New England” (PhD diss., Texas A&M-Commerce, 2012), 21.

religion. Though funeral sermons have found their way into numerous doctoral dissertations and journal articles, still little consideration has been given to how they, in and of themselves, offer historians a lens to observe “big picture” changes in colonial New England. Like studies in funeral sermons, there should be a demand for new work on the body in histories of colonial America and religion. Other than Martha Finch’s *Dissenting Bodies* and John Corrigan’s *Prism of Piety*, among few others, the body of European and European-descended colonists have been of little import to studies of early American religious history. This study seeks to contribute to the amelioration such a historiographical omission.

For second and third generation New England ministers, the dead body was a site where clergymen confirmed respective milieus and crafted cultural narratives for their audiences. For second generation Puritans, dead bodies acted as visceral sites where ministers transformed resting saints into irreplaceable “pillars” and “shields” providentially taken due to the community’s sinfulness. The dead, often known for their particularly intense piety and elevated social standing, were contrasted with struggling survivors who could only pray for God to someday replace such an invaluable church cog. Ministers reminded their audiences that mourning for the dead was grief misappropriated. Instead, they should mourn their own revealed deep-seated corruption, the absence of a God-appointed “pillar,” and the imminent dangers lurking about the depleted community.

While third generation ministers still made time to praise the dead individual, their significance to the community, and the survivors’ call from sin, their funeral sermons largely changed. Other than minute and quick instances, these ministers did not assume the same metaphorical style of their Puritan predecessors. Instead of the previous style, which emphasized inanimate permanence and protection, third generation funeral sermons illustrated how man was

like “grass” or “vapor”—images that underscored the exemplar’s impermanence. Corresponding with this change was a shift in how ministers addressed survivors. Unlike the older iterations that portrayed existing congregations as an “apostate people” before a “provoked God,” clergy spoke of their audiences in terms of their personal moral agency and their ability to fill in the “gap.” In the face of loss, many clergy implored, every person made in God’s image had *it* within themselves to improve their behavior and become the type of servant as seen with the dead exemplar. The death of a saint no longer meant damnation; it meant opportunity.⁸⁹

The divergence in funeral sermons studied in this project, in addition to broader cultural changes, speaks to the evolution of the individual in colonial America. With the body of dead believers at the center of this change, funeral sermons critically chart ministerial sentiments of authority between the second and third generations. For the earlier generations, churches were made up of “common People,” “sheep without a Shepard, ready to be devoured by every Enemy that appears.” Without their fallen generals, ministers, and councilmen, early inhabitants of the Bay were merely awaiting Indian savagery, heterodoxy, and internal hostilities. Seventeenth-century tragedies such as King Philip’s War, the Salem trials, and concerns about church commitment offered tangible events upon which eulogizing ministers could build their narratives of individual degeneracy and the utter necessity of eminent authority figures.⁹⁰

By contrast, third generation funeral sermons reveal clergymen confidently asserting how God, throughout history, “raiseth up others” after the death of a community leader. In his 1724 funeral sermon for John Leverett the Younger, Benjamin Wadsworth optimistically proclaimed that there were “commonly in *every Age*, some very *eminent Servants* of God.” Though a hole

⁸⁹ Willard, *A Sermon*, 5, 8.

⁹⁰ Hubbard, *Well-Ordered Conversation*, 155.

was left from the loss of prominent public figures, every individual was capable of filling it in with consistent application of good behavior, pious study in the Scriptures and literature, and devoted employment of the talents bestowed upon them by God. Survivors could look to themselves, as well as God, for the social refurbishment needed upon their latest loss.⁹¹

Funeral sermons, and their generational developments spoke to more than the dead saint's specific superlatives. With the body of the dead as their canvas, New England ministers illustrated prevailing mentalities about religious and cultural thought. They spoke to how authority was mediated and to what extent human nature could be trusted. In their descriptions of "pillars" or "withering grass," New England clergy entered into public discourse about the inherent abilities, or disabilities, their congregations were defined by. Through their imaginative definitions of dead bodies, they ventured to define survivors and their place in the Church.

⁹¹ Wadsworth, *Surviving Servants*, 15.

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