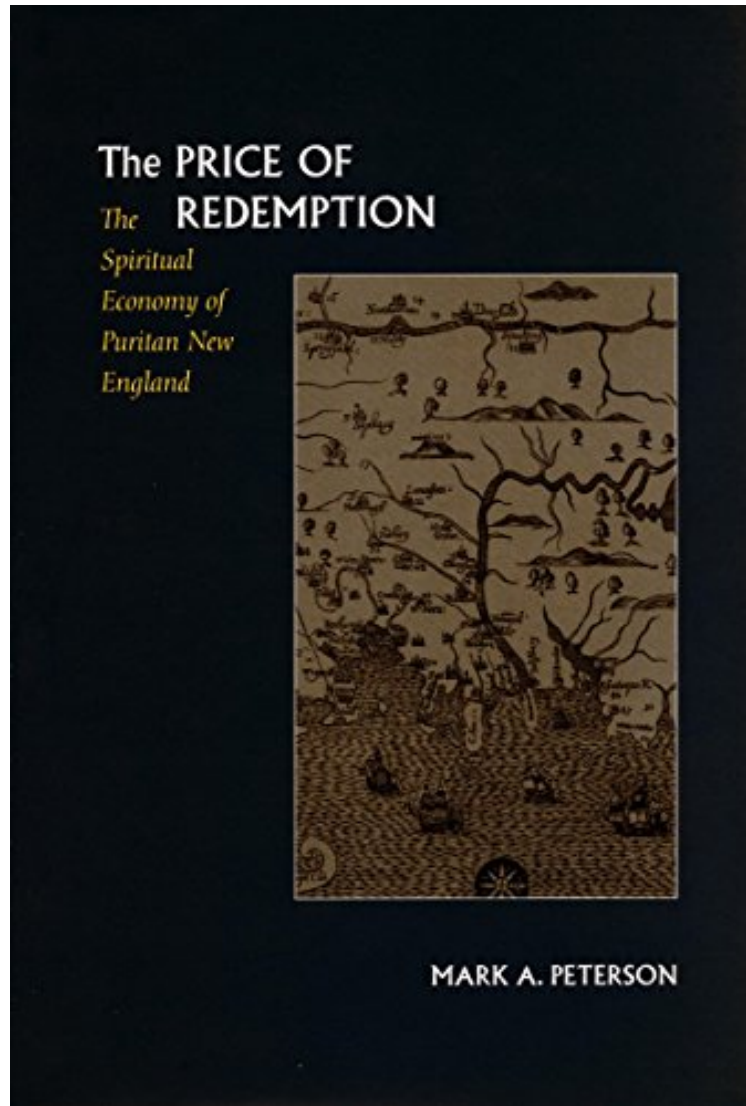


[Free] The Price of Redemption: The Spiritual Economy of Puritan New England

The Price of Redemption: The Spiritual Economy of Puritan New England

Mark A. Peterson

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Mark A. Peterson : The Price of Redemption: The Spiritual Economy of Puritan New England before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Price of Redemption: The Spiritual Economy of Puritan New England:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Substantial work with new insights, but a flawed comparison By John B. Carpenter Peterson's work was key for changing my mind about the "half-way covenant" (the "compromise" solution the Puritans decided on around 1662 about what to do with children of other-wise moral and orthodox church

attendees who had not experienced grace.) Before I read Peterson, I thought the half-way covenant was a sign of decline, an example of starting down the slippery slope of losing Puritan convictions. Peterson convinced me, though, that it was rather an expression of authentically evangelical concern for the world that made Puritanism so potent. Peterson uses two churches as case studies: Boston's third church (I believe) and Edward Taylor's Westfield church. The Boston church embraced the half-way covenant; Taylor did not. Peterson then contrasts these two churches to demonstrate that Taylor's sleepy Westfield church had little impulse to reach the outside world while the Boston church was showed a genuine sense of responsibility for the spiritual welfare of its society. Peterson believe that this shows that the half-way covenant was an expression of that evangelical sense of social responsibility. He convinced me. However, his comparison has its weaknesses: the Boston church was, obviously, urban and led by active, cosmopolitan members; Westfield was rural and Taylor was an introverted poet (so introverted he never published his works as long as he lived!). It maybe these factors, rather than the adoption (or not) of the half-way covenant which was decisive. Or, perhaps the adoption (or not) of the half-way covenant was merely a symptom of these other factors. Nevertheless, Peterson made some substantial contributions from which I profited greatly.

Beginning with the first colonists and continuing down to the present, the dominant narrative of New England Puritanism has maintained that piety and prosperity were enemies, that the rise of commerce delivered a mortal blow to the fervor of the founders, and that later generations of Puritans fell away from their religious heritage as they moved out across the New England landscape. This book offers a new alternative to the prevailing narrative, which has been frequently criticized but heretofore never adequately replaced. The authors argument follows two main strands. First, he shows that commercial development, rather than being detrimental to religion, was necessary to sustain Puritan religious culture. It was costly to establish and maintain a vital Puritan church, for the needs were many, including educated ministers who commanded substantial salaries; public education so that the laity could be immersed in the Bible and devotional literature (substantial expenses in themselves); the building of meeting houses; and the furnishing of communion tables all and more were required for the maintenance of Puritan piety. Second, the author analyzes how the Puritans gradually developed the evangelical impulse to broadcast the seeds of grace as widely as possible. The spread of Puritan churches throughout most of New England was fostered by the steady devotion of material resources to the maintenance of an intense and demanding religion, a devotion made possible by the belief that money sown to the spirit would reap divine rewards. In 1651, about 20,000 English colonists were settled in some 30 New England towns, each with a newly formed Puritan church. A century later, the population had grown to 350,000, and there were 500 meetinghouses for Puritan churches. This book tells the story of this remarkable century of growth and adaptation through intertwined histories of two Massachusetts churches, one in Boston and one in Westfield, a village on the remote western frontier, from their foundings in the 1660s to the religious revivals of the 1740s. In conclusion, the author argues that the Great Awakening was a product of the continuous cultivation of traditional religion, a cultural achievement built on New Englands economic development, rather than an indictment and rejection of its Puritan heritage.

"Peterson has produced an uncommonly well-written and appealing scholarly work that makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the post-Restoration experience of the New England Puritans." (Seventeenth-Century News)"Peterson's intriguing study . . . appears to be a new 'commercial' paradigm of Puritan development in New England that has far-reaching implications." (in American History)From the Inside FlapBeginning with the first colonists and continuing down to the present, the dominant narrative of New England Puritanism has maintained that piety and prosperity were enemies, that the rise of commerce delivered a mortal blow to the fervor of the founders, and that later generations of Puritans fell away from their religious heritage as they moved out across the New England landscape. This book offers a new alternative to the prevailing narrative, which has been frequently criticized but heretofore never adequately replaced. The authors argument follows two main strands. First, he shows that commercial development, rather than being detrimental to religion, was necessary to sustain Puritan religious culture. It was costly to establish and maintain a vital Puritan church, for the needs were many, including educated ministers who commanded substantial salaries; public education so that the laity could be immersed in the Bible and devotional literature (substantial expenses in themselves); the building of meeting houses; and the furnishing of communion tables all and more were required for the maintenance of Puritan piety. Second, the author analyzes how the Puritans gradually developed the evangelical impulse to broadcast the seeds of grace as widely as possible. The spread of Puritan churches throughout most of New England was fostered by the steady devotion of material resources to the maintenance of an intense and demanding religion, a devotion made possible by the belief that money sown to the spirit would reap divine rewards. In 1651, about 20,000 English colonists were settled in some 30 New England towns, each with a newly formed Puritan church. A century later, the population had grown to 350,000, and there were 500 meetinghouses for Puritan churches. This book tells the story of this remarkable century of growth and adaptation through intertwined histories of two Massachusetts churches, one in Boston and one in Westfield, a village on the remote western frontier, from their foundings in the 1660s to the religious revivals of the 1740s. In conclusion, the

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