‘PIOUS INVENTORIES’ – COMPETENCY, VOCATION, AND CONSTRUCTION
OF THE VIRTUOUS SELF IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY NEW ENGLAND

by

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The religious and political conditions characterizing the daily lives of individuals comprising the English “Great Migration generation,” travelling to the New World from 1620 until the outbreak of the English Civil War over twenty years later have long received a heavy concentration of scholarly interest from a wide variety of academic fields, most notably those historians concerned with early American religious practice and belief. Theological developments in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Puritan East Anglia, as well as the literal “reshuffling” of populations within the late medieval and early modern English countryside as a result of long-standing social and economic tensions, have both served within historical analysis as powerfully influential episodes of early Anglo-American religious, economic, and political histories. This particular study attempts to offer a complementary interpretation of early American religious history, primarily concerning the development of practical piety and regulation of economic conduct within Puritan New England.

Such a project endeavors to analyze these specific facets of Anglo-American colonization while recognizing both the traditional devotional practices of early English families, as well as the concurrent economic and political changes within southeastern England, as widely influential factors in early American social development.
In addition, this study aims to identify and analyze particular aspects of late medieval and early modern English religious practice and modes of rationality which were both intellectually and practically informed by the Aristotelian and Augustinian traditions of moral theory and social discipline that had partially constituted the historical basis for many domestic and political policies of Western Christendom, factors often left underemphasized or unacknowledged within analyses of early New England history. Such an explanatory investigation of domestic piety, social construction, and virtuous economic conduct in Puritan New England, in light of their correlative indebtedness to certain customary methods of activity within Western Christendom, posits a supplementary exposition of those particular historical agents comprising “New England’s generation.” Puritan settlers living, working, and praying in seventeenth-century New England, this analysis argues, desired nor attempted to construct an environment religious, political, or economic separation from their collective English heritage – much less a “revolution” – but rather endeavored, in unforeseen yet historically traditional ways, to reassert the power and authority of historical moral custom dominated by overtly conservative Aristotelian and Augustinian methods of social composition, stratification, and regulation.
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis will identify and analyze the moral character and practical function of domestic piety, taking the form of a particular vocation or "calling," within the early stages of social and economic development of colonial New England. Such characteristics, this thesis argues, evince the interplay of distinct methods of cultural construction constituted by an English interpretation of the Aristotelian ‘good life,’ which specifically envisioned the patriarchal ‘visible saint’ as a primary pillar of the ethically prescriptive social order operating within sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed Protestant thought.¹ The theoretical relationship between the mandates of proper religious practice, customary daily activity, and a ‘culture of discipline,’ I will argue, is conceptually indebted not only to the shifting social and economic conditions of early modern England, but also to contextual understandings of Aristotelian moral theory, Augustinian perceptions of original sin, and the tenets of Continental Reformed theology as such traditions functioned within the bounds of medieval and early modern Western Christendom and its colonial periphery. Moreover, the cultural ideal of attaining a competency as it was understood in seventeenth-century New England – a specific mode of regulating and controlling the performance of labor which functioned at the practical interface of Anglo-American common law and traditional agrarian practice, ultimately aimed at the conventional embodiment of a particular social role within the bounds of historical tradition – remained implicitly informed by such established methods of moral inquiry and social discipline, conceptually rooted within certain classical Greek and

medieval Christian philosophies, as well as within a proximal history of practical application in both Continental and English Reformed thought.

The term 'competency' can be understood not only as the customary material goal of a particular type of 'good life,' expressive of a “degree of wellbeing both desirable and morally legitimate” and tangible evidence of a life properly lived and social role correctly performed, but also as a practical pursuit conceptually anchored within the medieval Christian interpretation and practice of 'vocation,' or the fulfillment of a divinely ordained and domestically regulated 'calling.'\(^2\) As opposed to investing a sense of moral authority within the socially constructed goals of clerical vocations and valuing rather the diligent exercise of an individual will, existentially bound only to divine mandate, the early modern Christian doctrine of the calling required of all Reformed Calvinist practitioners to become the primary composers of their own disciplined character and retainers of their own moral and ethical integrity through the calculated actions of a singular will towards a particular socially regulated end. The professed aim, therefore, of such controlled practical conduct was both to maintain collective obedience to and reverence of authoritative cultural constrictions and the demands of specific social roles, and to inculcate an essentially prescriptive ethic of communal responsibility for public welfare and piety, which included a particular desire and demand for logical and humble self-examination.

Such requirements of Christian 'civility' offered an alternative conception of piety in Old and New England, which endeavored to affirm the inherent sanctity of intimately disciplined forms of legitimate labor, a cultural development within Calvinism that is

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\(^2\) Daniel Vickers, “Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America” in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 47.1 (1990), 3.
commonly understood within moral philosophy as a type of approval, or affirmation, of the patterns and rigors of daily life. Within the practical application of such a concept, the dutiful rigors, demands, responsibilities, and rewards of customary daily activity were most effectively articulated as the pious pursuit of a competency, or the basic ability to provide and care for the material interests of oneself and dependent family members through the performance of morally sanctioned and domestically organized labor. While the possible attainment of a pious competency in late medieval and early modern England involved a complex yet inherently prescriptive series of systematic interactions between traditionally delineated social strata – ‘classes’ – each bound by its own matrix of privileges and responsibilities, unfamiliar and inexhaustible demands for adequate sources of labor and capital on the early New England frontier demanded contingent theoretical and practical definitions of pious work and the traditional ideals of competency in order to meet the fragile, unforeseen needs of seventeenth-century Anglo-American settlers.

The social and religious ideals illustrated within the concept of competency within early New England can be conceived of with the greatest degree of historical accuracy, therefore, as particular expressions of devotional activity specific to the moral regulation and domestic efficacy of the Puritan family unit. According to traditional English social mandates and Puritan moral duty, the reality of ‘competency-as-vocation’ was the only plausible model of labor, acceptable in the eyes of God, by which to organize and discipline relatively scarce sources of human labor within the bounds of the untamed, “uncivilized” American landscape, to develop an ethic of personal discipline and familial obligation within younger generations of settlers, and to properly educate
children and servants regarding the necessary demands of pious and well-ordered English civility.

The central concern facing “New England’s generation” was the proper domestication of the uncultivated New World landscapes, particularly informed by historically authoritative English social ideals, predicated upon the conception of ‘a competency’ as the individual fulfillment of customary demands and responsibilities inherent in the structure of any early modern ‘calling.’ Desired above all other domestic and political aims within early Puritan settlements was the explicit establishment and pious maintenance of a ‘Christian commonwealth,’ an enterprise that had notoriously failed in the East Anglian region of the southeastern English countryside during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In theory, this earthly ‘kingdom of God’ was to be based upon the practical devotions and elevated spiritual integrity of a ‘pure church’ – a morally authoritative religious body composed exclusively of those individuals destined for eternal salvation who have consented to live among one another for their mutual welfare, governing themselves by means of civil liberty, or the liberty to do “that which is just, good, and honest,” as well as the covenantal relationships and responsibilities mandated by such a standard. The historically contingent and physically strenuous demands of early colonial life, including the ‘transplantation’ of English patterns of civil action and the righteous ‘ordering’ of the New England wilderness, altered not the socially conservative and intrinsically prescriptive nature of the various processes of domestication, but rather impacted quite significantly the content and structure of its progression and development.

The aim and argument of this particular study were borne out of a keen interest in the theoretical and practical relationships between disciplined patterns of piety and pledged goals of proper economic conduct, displayed within various contemporary historiographies of and scholarly reflections on the “Great Migration generation.” My analytic research also explored such traditionally disparate areas of inquiry as the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Western European philosophical revival of the Scholastic and Aristotelian moral traditions and modes of logic, and the social interface upon which cultivated methods of pious observance and devotional family practices overlapped within early New England.

During the course of research for this project, I perceived a particular opportunity for contributions of complementary scholarship to be advanced, specifically within the fields of American Religious History and Religious Studies, concerning the relation between modes of devotional piety within the domestic sphere and economic activity bound by moral prescription as they functioned within the bounds of, and endeavored to improve, colonial life. The pursuit of a particular competency in seventeenth-century New England was made possible only through a socially regulated reorganization of customarily authoritative domestic relationships and responsibilities, emphasizing the role of patriarchal dominance, as the head of a specific family ‘unit,’ of which the ideal Christian ‘commonwealth’ was composed. For the settlers, such socio-political “reshuffling” demanded clear moral justification, as well as pious efforts to renegotiate and redefine the accepted standards of English competency, authoritative power, and virtuous conduct. While contingent adaptations to the landscape of the New World demanded a degree of theoretical and practical change within historically traditional
methods of English religious practice and social discipline, such endeavors in the name of ‘transplantation’ also necessitated a particular adherence to customary patterns of power and authority, as well as certain standards of moral obligation, patterns conceptually rooted in the culturally dominant Aristotelian and Augustinian philosophical traditions, epistemological systems which articulated and regulated intellectual and practical guidelines for the various cultures, societies, and political regimes of Western Christendom for over a millennium.

In the course of continuing research for this thesis, I neither came across nor uncovered any explicit analyses concerning the aforementioned persistence of certain historical traditions within New England landscapes, the notable exception being the voluminous body of work composed by colonial historian Perry Miller. Amassed over half a century ago, the writings of the notoriously prolific Miller stand alone in providing an intricate and convincing argument describing the inherently Aristotelian intellectual character of seventeenth-century New England settlers, academic endeavors which have subsequently received a barrage of criticism from those scholarly proponents of the “new social history,” “lived religion,” and the dominance of cultural materiality within the early decades of Anglo-American settlement, interpretive perspectives which became increasingly dominant within the field over the last fifty years.

In response to these particular endeavors, and in support of Miller’s basic argument, this thesis posits that domestically regulated devotional action, performed within the conservative bounds of familial obligation and responsibility in sixteenth-century England and seventeenth-century New England, functioned as a specific site of traditional interplay between certain tenets of customarily dominant Aristotelian moral
theory and distinctly Augustinian methods of Christian discourse and social discipline, thus proposing a concurrent, interactive analysis of both Miller’s work and that of his students and critics. The practical dominance and specific religious duties of the ‘domestic sphere’ – described at length within the works of social historians John Demos, Edmund Morgan, and Virginia Anderson – are characterized within this thesis, therefore, as mutually interdependent upon the disciplined delineation of social roles and obligations illustrated within the historically predominant Aristotelian tradition, as well as the morally sound pursuit of a competency, partially governed by the prescriptive moral and practical demands of Augustinian theology.

The central argument of this project endeavors to clearly state that ‘historicizing’ the contextual constructions of practical patterns of social discipline in this way makes possible a complementary depiction of the colonial agent and political subject in seventeenth-century New England. As a nexus of moral inquiry and pragmatic demand, Puritan Anglo-American identity was actively informed by distinctly English interpretations of the Aristotelian tradition of virtue ethics, the socially conservative supervision of moral discourse and practical action demanded by Augustinian Christian communities, and certain tenets of Reformed Calvinist theology, as explained in the first chapter of this thesis. While it is acknowledged that these particular epistemological sources may appear ethically disparate and culturally unaffiliated, they in fact partially compose what moral philosophers have described as a type of ‘inescapable framework,’ an environment of cultural perpetuity from which the conceptual and practical tenets of early modern Puritanism draw their theoretical support and moral justification. The historical agents comprising the “Great Migration generation,” as explained in the second
chapter of this project, may therefore be considered veritable sites of pragmatic ethical negotiation, caught within the interplay of authoritative tradition and historical circumstance, as individuals constructing contextually contingent identities which were in various ways informed by acutely English interpretations of Aristotelian, Augustinian, and Reformed Calvinist moral theories and modes of social discipline.

Such a consideration of these particular seventeenth-century actors, patterns of moral obligation, and explicit forms of domestic and social order also attempts to make clear the distinction between ‘autonomy’ and ‘agency,’ as the concepts themselves pertain to individual practices and convictions. While it is tempting for historians of colonial New England to assess and evaluate the judgments and actions of the seventeenth-century Puritan settlers as expressions representative of either the nascent development of a liberal capitalistic marketplace or a fierce libertarian desire for cultural and commercial isolation, the earliest Anglo-American colonizers of these landscapes were neither able nor willing to identify themselves as fledgling entrepreneurs or stubborn antiquarians. While having found fault with several areas of perceived moral weakness and callous impiety within the social and religious practices of the English public, these settlers never desired to abandon their corporate identity as English subjects and the righteous inheritors of certain cultural legacies and moral responsibilities central to the protection and perpetuation of Western Christendom. The concept of individual agency operating within sixteenth-century England and seventeenth-century New England can be most accurately understood by social historians of the era in terms of a virtuous performance of, and dutiful diligence within, a particular social role whose specific function had been developed over the course of multiple centuries by the
changing demands of cultural tradition, and was bound within the irrefutably contingent nature of a nation-state and its colonial territories during the early modern era.

The struggles of Puritan heads of household in early New England, as explained in the third and final chapter of this thesis, were the efforts of pious and dutiful fathers, attempting with certain inculcated diligence to carve out livings for both themselves and their families. Such contingent realities implicit to the unfamiliar and untamed atmospheres and landscapes of colonial New England were characterized primarily by the persistence of particular forms and explicit functions of English domestic, or 'practical,' piety. The distinct cultural patterns of practice and moral justification evinced within such practices served to perpetuate and reinforce the traditionally English conceptualizations of a 'good life,' righteous domestic behavior, and the customary 'ends' of an early modern competency.
CHAPTER I

VIRTUE ETHICS AND VOCATION IN WESTERN CHRISTENDOM

For it is central to the conception of such a tradition [virtue ethics] that the past is
never something merely to be discarded, but rather that the present is intelligible only
as a commentary upon and response to the past in which the past, if necessary and if
possible, is corrected and transcended, yet corrected and transcended in a way that
leaves the present open to being in turn corrected and transcended by some yet more
adequate future point of view. 4

It is from the same causes and by the same means that every virtue is both produced
and destroyed. 5

Virtue Ethics and the Aristotelian Moral Tradition

As a tradition of academic inquiry, moral philosophy endeavors to address the
meaning and function of practical conduct within specific historical circumstances, as is
concerned with describing methods of justification regarding differing definitions of
‘right’ and ‘wrong’ action, and of evaluative judgments made between what is ‘good’ and
what is ‘bad.’ Such qualitative distinctions, the discourse of moral philosophy maintains,
do not serve a merely descriptive purpose; to characterize something in this way is
considered to be an utterance of fact, an existential condition that can be objectively and
rationally discerned. 6 In order to adequately comprehend the descriptive power of such

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6 On this particular point, the preeminent contemporary moral philosopher Charles Taylor states that, “The
logic of virtue terms like courage or generosity is such that they have to be construed as picking out
projectable properties, just as ‘red’ or ‘square’ do.” Such an evaluation of moral character or ethical
conduct, Taylor argues, is held to be rational and objectively factual within the limits of a certain system of
logic. *Sources of the Self*, 68.
predicates and their practical implications, the established tenets of moral philosophy maintain that individuals must acknowledge and abide by the customary rules for their practical use, as well as the discursive roles played and political functions discharged by such qualitative concepts.

It is of the utmost importance, however, to maintain a cautious epistemological distinction between the ubiquitous binaries of right/wrong and good/bad when attempting any detailed analysis of moral predicates as they were used in late medieval and early modern Western societies. Contemporary academic moral philosophy has primarily concerned itself with various analyses of action, whether 'correct' or 'incorrect'; such an approach must be recognized principally as a result of certain seventeenth- and eighteenth-century political and ideological developments, the most prominent being the rise of contractual theory, republican and utilitarian philosophies, and the gradual cultural dominance of critical methods utilized within scientific investigation. Prior to these episodes of relatively recent socio-political and epistemological change, the cultural implications of which effectively displaced historically authoritative Aristotelian philosophical treatises from the halls of European universities and mouthpieces of popular thought, the overwhelming majority of the territories and subjects comprising the entirety of Western Christendom were explicitly committed to a morally prescriptive and socially conservative approach, by contemporary standards, to ethical conduct that inquired of individuals not, "What is [it] right to do?" but rather, "What is [it] good to be?"

Within the conceptual bounds of late medieval and early modern Christian societies of the West, this provocative question – the heart of moral philosophy – was
answered, in large part, by the postulates articulated by a substratum of Aristotelian moral inquiry commonly referred to as ‘virtue ethics.’ A particular method of assessing and formulating knowledge, virtue ethics must be understood as a distinctly contextual tradition, or a historically extended and socially embodied argument, operating within various stages of Western Christian thought. The tradition itself endeavors not to evaluate the content of a precise moral or ethical obligation, but rather to describe the explicit ways in which how that obligation represents and constitutes a ‘good life.’ As a method of justifying human behavior, virtue ethics assumes that the ultimate goal or end of seeking ‘the good,’ a quality defined only with reference to a definitive social role, is most effectively conceptualized as sincere and properly wrought happiness, or eudaimonia (εὐδαιμονία).

The true achievement of such an end, however, can possess significant meaning and importance in the pursuit of a ‘good life’ only within an explicitly prescriptive construction of social hierarchy and the functional roles which compose its ordered framework. The internal logic of this delineated structure necessarily provides both the practical means for, as well as the conceptual source of, the possibility of procuring such an existential ‘end’ as happiness. Thus, the Aristotelian tradition of virtue ethics essentially aims to describe what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ about a certain thing – thought, practice, habit, et cetera – to the extent that such a thing is performed or possessed by a specific moral agent occupying a specific social role. This particular system of logic maintains that the ‘good life’ for a human being is one guided by practical reason,

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7 Ibid., 222.
8 MacIntyre, After Virtue, 148.
meaning that the ‘good life’ for a human being must be good for a being with the
function of a human being; hence it must be a life guided by practical reason, and hence it
must be a life in accordance with the virtue that is needed for achieving one’s good. To
be considered a rational actor, an individual was to constantly cultivate and properly
embody the explicit moral ‘vision’ prescriptively accorded to a certain social station.

The pressure to actualize this state of being, intrinsic to a methodically
circumscribed moral order, mandated of individuals that they should not just simply live,
but rather dedicate themselves to living well, governing their conduct through the
exercise of moderate virtue. Within the conceptual limits of an Aristotelian interpretation
of objective reality, this was to have developed the virtue of *phronēsis* (φρόνησις), or a
disciplined method of proper moral discrimination; the term, primarily referred to in its
‘Latinized’ form *prudentia*, came to be utilized extensively within subsequent
philosophical commentary belonging to the Christian tradition, most notably those
treatises composed by the early “Church Fathers.”⁹ Considered to be a logical
prerequisite for the necessary cultivation and practical operation of other virtues,
*phronēsis* may be defined as simply not desiring or longing for that which is not
customarily due to one occupying a particular social station or functional role. The basic
tenets of the virtue ethics tradition maintain, therefore, that when an individual
successfully endeavors to reason and behave in disciplined accordance with the various
demands and responsibilities of a ‘natural’ civil status, such a virtuous individual will not
only inevitably do what is properly ‘good,’ but will also rest contentedly within the

⁹ Ibid., 183.
prescriptive limits of such a position, left wanting for nothing more and nothing less than those things to which he is entitled.

At base, Aristotelian moral philosophy is predicated upon the notion that every conceivable thing—craft, inquiry, action, or project—aims ultimately toward some discernable ‘good’ by nature, the conditions of whose existence are rooted within universally objective standards, the eternal perpetuation of which remains independent from the transient fluctuation of human desire. In the probable achievement of this ‘good,’ it is assumed that some particular ‘evil’ is therefore avoided. The standards and restrictions of what is considered ‘good’ or ‘evil’ are simultaneously articulated and enforced by the specific telos (τέλος) of a thing, or the ultimate ‘end’ at which its existence aims, as well as the desires expressed and suppressed within the bounds of its function. The “dignity” of all societal roles reposes on the assumption that some degree of intrinsic value is embodied within all forms of human life and remains attached to the requirements of customary social station. Requisite elements of a proper ‘good life,’ therefore, may only be adequately conceptualized and fulfilled within the conservative bounds of an individual telos and the ‘final end’ at which a disciplined life is directed.

By definition, such an understanding of the determinate self presupposes the authoritative power and presence of a traditionally sanctioned moral order operating within the practical bounds of community life. To make the substantive claim that a particular aim is ‘good’ is to imply that whatever ‘end’ one seeks is also generally desired by those individuals pursuing a like goal or result. As such, accepted forms of a ‘good life’ are most accurately defined as those disciplined patterns of human effort that embody to the greatest possible extent all of the ‘ends’ that are to be sought by one
directed to a certain *telos*, which are regulated and reinforced through the operation of an authoritative social hierarchy.\textsuperscript{10} The shared ‘final end’ of mankind as understood by the virtue ethics tradition, therefore, is the morally legitimate discharge of a specific societal role, wherein individual agency may function and flourish as a component of prescriptive moral and political orders.

According to the precepts of Aristotelian moral philosophy, the proper fulfillment of those categorical demands pertaining to a particular social role demands perpetually reinforced, intimately supervised development and sustenance of the appropriate virtues necessary to its discharge. ‘The virtues’ are considered to be those identifiable human qualities the purposeful exercise of which will ultimately enable an individual to attain a degree of genuine happiness, and the lack of which essentially frustrates progression toward a given *telos*.\textsuperscript{11} Principles of this epistemological system describe such explicitly cultivated qualities as constitutive of the essential function attributed to a particular role, status, or station, and definitive of historically established expectations and responsibilities therein.\textsuperscript{12} Thus, as moral agents and historical subjects, the virtues delineate our relation to and connection with those individuals who recognize and honor similar theoretical standards that inform and direct practical activity. The display of a

\textsuperscript{10} For the explicit interests of this thesis, Taylor most effectively paraphrases the basic relationship between a ‘good life’ and ‘goods’: “The good life as a whole doesn’t stand to the partial goods as a basic reason. We can’t say informatively that $X$ is a good because it figures in the good life. It is much more that this life is good because it includes $X$.” Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 77. Also concerning ‘the good’ and a ‘good life,’ Irish-American moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre posits that, “If I aim at something, try to bring about some state of affairs, that I so aim is certainly not sufficient to justify my calling whatever I aim at good; but if I call what I aim at good, I shall be indicating that what I seek is what is sought in general by people who want what I want.” Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge and Company, 1966), 58.

\textsuperscript{11} MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 148.

\textsuperscript{12} MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, 187.
given virtue is not considered to be an ‘end-in-itself,’ but rather a certain discernable quality that provides objective evidence of a general, disciplined disposition of character, encouraging morally appropriate actions that attest to a state of learned, rational human excellence.\(^{13}\)

Virtuous conduct, therefore, is always embodied and analyzed in relation to a particular social role, and carries no definitive meaning or purpose apart from historical context. Individuals, as moral agents, may take decisive stances on particular ethical issues that can and should be described as authentic and legitimate, but any such analyses must recognize that the very possibility of a “chosen” action is necessarily framed within a historically contextual and delimited social horizon of great customary depth. The basic existence of an individual, as well as the precise character and function of their embodied social role, cannot be logically sustained when evaluated apart from the limited discursive space of questions, concerns, and practical conflicts that relate to the nature of the ‘end,’ and its composite ‘goods,’ toward which one strives. Moral circumscription enacted within explicitly hierarchical patterns of social construction, then, is the disciplinary hallmark of the Aristotelian tradition of virtue ethics.

Virtue Ethics and Augustinian Christianity

An intellectually dominant fourth-century thinker whose philosophical and theological treatises have proven immeasurably influential regarding historical processes of practical development and conceptual progression within the Western Christian tradition, Archbishop Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 CE) introduced within the nascent

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 191.
stages of theological development and the customarily authoritative, culturally dominant Aristotelian philosophy the metaphysical, morally unfamiliar Christian doctrines of original sin and free will. The theoretical and practical implications of this particular epistemological synthesis would, over time, effectively redefine historically traditional and socially regulated conceptions of 'the good' and its corresponding virtues within the developing Christian societies of the West.

As stated within various detailed exhortations on the nature of man, drawn from lectures composed and letters written by the preeminent theologian concerning original sin, the moral and spiritual 'fall of man' – rejecting the mandates of divine will so as to pursue and fulfill antagonistic personal desires, an ethical mishap which reveals the power and influence of willful pride and chosen ignorance of the moral order – may be most accurately conceptualized by students of early Christian cultural development and systematic theology as the definitive moment of fundamental and irreversible alienation of man from his God, recognized within the tradition as the ultimate creative source of physical existence, spiritual fulfillment, and ethical authority. This formative existential crisis concerning the moral identity and ethical purpose of man, Augustine argues, was nothing more and nothing less than a tragically human dalliance with impious, disoriented, and undisciplined desire. For the duration of its flawed existence, mankind in its entirety, having inherited the consequential punishment for and ethical stain of the 'sin of Adam' through a shared nature and origin, stands implicitly guilty of having violated the stringent, divinely composed codes of natural law, an unfortunate instance which revealed within the character of man the potential not only to commit evil acts and create spiritual discord, but also to make the opposite judgment, to conform to the tenets of
divine legislation. Philosophical arguments within the Augustinian tradition frequently stress the notion that the tenuous fulcrum of free will can be manipulated by the power of human volition in either direction, illustrating tangible evidence of the fundamental freedom of the will itself. The sole factor determining the ethical character and practical consequences of its choice is the structured presence or wretched absence of certain imposed disciplinary methods intended for ‘training’ the fluctuations of individual desire to conform without pause to mandates and inclinations of divine sovereignty.

The weakened moral fortitude characterizing an undisciplined will, this argument suggests, encourages the illicit embrace of naturally transient and unfulfilling instances of personal gratification and sensual satisfaction, rather than the dutiful acquiescence of humble human subjects to those desires and demands of God. Augustinian moral philosophy considers such divine mandates to be explicitly present not only within the historically authoritative social order, but also within the subtle operation of domestic activities, public events, and religious ceremonies that characterize routine patterns of daily civil, political, and ecclesiastical life. Propelled by the ethical force of frequent displeasure with the prescriptive nature inherent within instruments of divine will, the moral character of ‘fallen’ humanity fundamentally shifted; its perpetual ignorance of an existential obligation demanding piously vigilant, ethically conservative maintenance of public and private holy dwellings – its incorrectly disciplined character – came to be defined by cyclical patterns of weakness and depravity. Spiritually degrading, socially pervasive symptoms of a willfully chosen sinful existence, therefore, gradually warped the moral bent of humanity into an amassed collection of the deservedly damned, the majority of whom lacked willful disciplina, a correctly trained, perceptive understanding
of utter human dependence upon righteous directives and ultimate knowledge which comprised the divine will.¹⁴

Consciously operating within an existential condition colored by such ethical depravity and painful isolation, central tenets of Augustinian theology and moral philosophy powerfully assert and collectively argue that no spiritually debased, ‘fallen’ individual, neither by the power of their volition nor the integrity of their plausible goodwill, is able to personally exercise or propagate correct rationality or righteous evaluation without the disciplined search for and distinct influence of ‘the mind of God.’ Neither by the power of their volition nor the integrity of their intention may any human being discern and attain what is ‘good’ except through the proper development and legitimate use of a certain method of apprehension, the necessary preconditions of which include pious observance of moral obligations inherently operating within exhortations and mandates of the divine will, as well as lawful accordance with historically explicit, traditionally authoritative social responsibilities. No one, in short, may possess the discerning ability to judge rightly or behave righteously apart from the stern guidance and stipulations of the ‘mind of God,’ described within the culturally delimited bounds of the nascent Christian philosophical tradition as the physical embodiment of eternal truth.

In particular, a socially adept and morally intricate comprehension of such Augustinian doctrines as those pertaining to free will and the ‘fall of man’ functions primarily within ethical treatises produced by this fledgling religious culture as an invaluable prerequisite for accurately apprehending the explicitly theological and implicitly political consequences and implications of both the crucifixion and the

atonement of Christ, the inherent revelations of which effectively actualize and theoretically fulfill the spiritual and moral telos (pl. teloi) specific to traditional convictions of early Christian epistemology as conceptually formulated through the practical experience and intellectual acuity of contextual theological development. Moreover, the doctrines of original sin and free will, historically embedded within the Augustinian philosophical tradition, both operate by the virtue of overarching, integral assumptions that postulate the basic existence of a theoretical divide between conceptions of bodily and non-bodily reality. The existential opposition of the ‘pure’ spirit to the ‘tainted’ material presence of the flesh, a conceptual binary ubiquitous within the ethical compositions of early Christian moralists, can only be accurately understood in light of previous cultural exposure to customary Platonic distinctions between material and non-material realities.\textsuperscript{15} Hindered by the undisciplined manipulations of willful depravity and morally blinded as a consequence of the fall, man has grown ignorant to the particular fact that the sensual world within which his practical livelihood unfolds is essentially only a minute fraction of what is considered to be ‘real’ within the theoretically boundless reality of God. While persisting within his state of fundamental alienation from divine reality and the apprehension of true ‘good,’ fallen man is typically prone to interpret the character and meaning of his existence within the world in conceptually narrow and fundamentally sensual terms of material objects, interpersonal relations, physiological functions, sexual desires, and fiscal goals; or, rather, in particular modes of designation wholly separate from those whose essential purpose serves to acknowledge the utter existential dependence of mankind on the will and desires of God. In flourishes

\textsuperscript{15} Taylor, \textit{Sources of the Self}, 127.
of existential sickness, the improperly disciplined will, necessarily operating outside the conceptual bounds of philosophically ‘correct’ modes of rationality and therefore consequently misunderstanding the nature of ‘the good,’ attaches a wayward sense of desire to particular things that are, as dictated within annals of historical experience, transitory and unstable, ultimately rousing an uneasy sense of anxiety and implicitly promoting further violations of the moral and social orders through perpetual dedication to the attainment of sensual pleasure.\textsuperscript{16} As historical actors operating within a divinely ordained and prescriptive world, what is demanded above all else of fallen man, through imposed practical mandates and stringent moral predicates, is a dutiful and gracious bending of the will, an intricately disciplined action which follows the theoretical curve of divine sanction and the established tenets of historically authoritative tradition; there exists no other route to truth, happiness, or what is ‘good.’

In accordance with the carefully delineated ethical bounds of Augustinian epistemology, corrective allocations of sensual appetites are considered plausible only within sincere and acutely self-conscious exercises of the will, that volatile instrument of human agency traditionally held responsible for the ‘sin of Adam,’ a strongly-worded barb often contained in various letters and exhortations composing the extensive body of early Christian philosophical commentary. The human will commits a sin, or a marked violation of the divinely sanctioned and culturally validated moral order, when it is expressly directed toward the attainment, consumption, and satisfaction of personally determined ‘goods’ and desires. This occurrence stands in stark opposition to the pursuit

of those morally prescribed ‘goods’ and desires whose rightful purpose and pursuit is explicitly dictated not only through the practical demands and moral obligations of a certain social station, but also by the mandates and desires of the divine will. To avoid such existential pitfalls, a will striving to be ‘good’ must be characterized without exception by an ethically disciplined and morally sound sense of control over the natural fluctuations of desire, specifically in conjunction with certain categorical restrictions placed upon such fleeting episodes of sensuality, the calculated tenets of which are present in various textual descriptions of eternal law circulating within the territorial boundaries of nascent Christian communities during the early centuries of theological and moral inquiry. The purposive nature of a ‘good will’ was primarily driven by a highly contextual and individually contingent ‘end’ – the attainment of the highest possible degree of practical wisdom traditionally considered proper to a specific social role. Personal yearnings of the will, then, must sincerely consent to the eternal truth and sublime desire of God, as understood within these particular religious communities, in order to develop the disciplined ability to judge correctly and behave in accordance with the ethical stipulations of the prevailing social and moral orders; in short, to possess the divinely sanctioned capacity to exercise adequate rationality in light of the universal human condition. As described by proponents of the Augustinian tradition, the possible attainment of rational knowledge is necessarily preceded by the properly disciplined alignment of an individual will not only within the practical bounds of a precise social order but also to the obligations specified by a historically authoritative moral tradition; conversely, the purely theoretical adherence of an individual will to an established ethical order is considered necessarily incomplete and existentially unstable until such a
conceptual allegiance is objectively validated through the attainment of practical knowledge.\textsuperscript{17}

For individual historical actors and moral agents of the Augustinian tradition, therefore, the righteous approximation of moral perfection demands without exception an unpretentious and full commitment of the will to the ethically authoritative desires characterizing the sovereign will of God as explicitly illustrated within the ‘natural’ composition of, and disciplinary character accorded to, the contextually dominant social order. The degree of genuine humility necessary to maintain a highly disciplined, perpetually conscious acknowledgement of such utter existential dependence, cultivated over time through correct moral instruction and voluntary submission to historically specific constructs of social authority, essentially serves to dissipate moral perversity and disoriented desire within the scope of human volition, the ethical stain of the ‘fall of man.’\textsuperscript{18}

The intricately ordered and intimately regulated ‘interiorization’ of traditionally prescriptive realities and socially conservative conditions operating within the Augustinian conception of the individual will, which effectively replaced external modes of social discipline with divinely sanctioned introspective methods for moral self-correction, in fact evinces the gradual development within the bounds of Western Christendom of a historically contingent epistemological transformation regarding constructions of the moral self and designations of socio-political authority. Within the epistemological limits of traditional Augustinian Christianity, the existential opposition

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., xvii.

\textsuperscript{18} "What is morally crucial about us...is this power of assent. This is our freedom, when we are subject to the truth; and the truth is God Himself, who frees us from death...from the state of sin." Ibid., 57.
of ‘pure’ intentions of the spirit to ‘tainted’ material condition of the flesh was extrapolated to developing cultural perceptions of the individual will and its fluctuation of desire, customarily conceived of in distinct opposition to the sovereign ethical sanctions and eternally ‘good’ desires of divine authority. The sensual world and its physically tempting lures, when engaged by an individual will lacking a sufficient degree of ‘correct’ discipline, by the character of its nature implicitly encouraged instances of moral failure and existential alienation.\footnote{Deceptive elements of materiality, most notably the inevitably empty promises and inherent false humility of the flesh, were held in interminable suspicion within the responsibilities and obligations traditionally characteristic of Augustinian theology. The apparent permanence and enhanced ‘reality’ of physicality ultimately served to distract the undisciplined Christian adherent from his greater obligations to the community and essentially detracted from his necessary acknowledgement of fundamental existence within divinely delineated moral and social orders; the material inclinations of the flesh itself, imbued with an ethical faculty of incredible power, had the strongest potential of being led astray.} Deceptive elements of materiality, most notably the inevitably empty promises and inherent false humility of the flesh, were held in interminable suspicion within the responsibilities and obligations traditionally characteristic of Augustinian theology. The apparent permanence and enhanced ‘reality’ of physicality ultimately served to distract the undisciplined Christian adherent from his greater obligations to the community and essentially detracted from his necessary acknowledgement of fundamental existence within divinely delineated moral and social orders; the material inclinations of the flesh itself, imbued with an ethical faculty of incredible power, had the strongest potential of being led astray.

The general doctrinal concepts of the will and original sin, therefore, introduced into the historically authoritative traditions and culturally contingent philosophies of early Christianity and Aristotelian moral inquiry an interpretive shift within the character and customary sources of authority operating in ethically prescriptive and socially conservative societies, a transformation of historical import which brought to the theoretical forefront of ethical discourse questions regarding the essential nature and ultimate purpose not only of the socio-political functions and moral obligations of the

\footnote{Deceptive elements of materiality, most notably the inevitably empty promises and inherent false humility of the flesh, were held in interminable suspicion within the responsibilities and obligations traditionally characteristic of Augustinian theology. The apparent permanence and enhanced ‘reality’ of physicality ultimately served to distract the undisciplined Christian adherent from his greater obligations to the community and essentially detracted from his necessary acknowledgement of fundamental existence within divinely delineated moral and social orders; the material inclinations of the flesh itself, imbued with an ethical faculty of incredible power, had the strongest potential of being led astray.}
Aristotelian individual, but also such capacities of the Christian ‘man of spirit.’ On the one hand, akin to the conservative precepts and delimited social expectations within Aristotelian moral philosophy, Augustinian theology maintained that genuine freedom may be expressed and sincere happiness experienced within the practical boundaries of a human life only through the act of cleaving to the tenets of the eternal law rather than fleeting fluctuations of desire, to love and pursue that which is appropriately ‘good’ with respect to embodied social roles, and to submit morally tainted, undisciplined inclinations of will to the veritable source of ultimate truth as illustrated in the nature of divine sovereignty. On the other hand, the utterly depraved and existentially alienated human condition articulated within the precepts of Augustinian theology – simultaneously introducing into the culturally dominant and historically authoritative Aristotelian perspective rationally unfamiliar and morally strange depictions of the origin, purpose, character, and function of mankind – which remained specific only to moral philosophies and political treatises of Christian societies of the West, renders all exercises of the individual will existentially precarious moments indeed.
Virtue Ethics and Medieval Thomism

A distinct strain of systematic Christian moral philosophy developed by thirteenth-century Dominican monk Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274 CE) gained fairly rapid popular support and widespread theological acclaim within the Christian universities and societies of the West. The rise through the European intellectual ranks of Aquinas’ postulates and treatises was nearly mirrored by the more discreet ascension and cultural dissemination of particular Islamic interpretations of and commentaries on the moral character, practical function, and existential implications of Aristotelian philosophy, which had remained epistemologically and culturally dominant within the territorial bounds of both Western Europe and the Muslim world for millennia. Additionally, during this time, nascent patterns of medieval urban life within Christian societies of the West were still emerging; gradually evolving out of older settlement designs dating back to the fall of the Roman Empire, customary obligations of local custom often conflicted with the widening extension of ecclesiastical power and privilege. Moreover, the rediscoveries and subsequent reinterpretations of classical texts threw into particularly stark relief the tenuous relationship between ‘pagan’ Greek philosophy and Christian revelation, as well as the immense variety of local practices and traditions of piety across Western Europe.

Similar to the widespread cultural and epistemological influence of Augustinian moral philosophy, the tenets and “proofs” of Thomist Aristotelianism effectively redefined sources of the moral self and individual agency within the conceptual bounds of the Western Christian tradition. Aquinas argued that the ‘fallen’ nature of mankind,

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however depraved, did not impede the ability of his rightly oriented rational faculties to identify, define, and explain an immense portion of objective reality without the aid of divine revelation, an epistemological source previously indispensable within any philosophical treatise composed within the Christian societies of the West. Above all other contributions to and reinterpretations of medieval schools of moral philosophy, however, Thomist theology posited that the existence of God could in fact be discerned through the correctly disciplined exercise of both inductive and deductive reasoning. The wholly rational, practical experience of the ultimate source of eternal truth as defined by the tradition, perceived through an appropriate ordering of the individual will with respect to the mandates and desires of the divine will of God as customarily evinced in the historically authoritative social and moral orders, possessed the objective ability to produce genuine happiness. Disciplined exercise of evaluative faculties to glimpse both the perfect existence and eternal will of God constituted the epistemological goal of moral inquiry and disciplined theological practice as defined by Thomist Aristotelianism.

Akin to similarly defined societal models prevalent within the ethically prescriptive environment of Aristotelian life, within tables of ecclesiastical stipulations regarding the practical form and ethical conduct of patterned daily activity during the High Middle Ages, pious performance of a divinely prescribed vocation provided a distinct model of humble, righteous labor and particular method of moral discipline within the practical framework of a holy life. Akin to the prescriptive social roles of Aristotelian moral philosophy and intimately disciplined will of Augustinian theology, the vocations described within the treatises of Thomism, conceptualized by medieval Christian adherents as divinely ordained and socially conservative stations comprised of
contextually specific labor demands and systematically assigned political obligations predicated upon older philosophical arguments that had dramatically altered the socio-political atmosphere of the West during the time of Augustine and the “Church Fathers,” evinced within the activities of the general population a particular mode of disciplined submission to the domestically authoritative and morally justified social order while providing an economic livelihood and political identity which was pleasing, no matter how lowly or degraded, in the rational judgment of God.21

Drawing specifically from the Aristotelian moral tradition, medieval Thomism maintained that the divinely sanctioned calls for humble obedience to the socially restrictive commands of such an aggressively delimited structure can be correctly understood, however, only through historically contextual interpretations regarding the character, function, and purpose of the virtues, moral qualities the pursuit and possible attainment of which expressed and served as a means to the fulfillment of, the practical demands of one’s station.22 The morally disciplined construction of an adequately meek and humble self in distinct relation to the customarily hierarchical, socially stratified ecclesiastical system of traditional authority must be secured before the possession of any

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21 Regarding the cultural influence of the Great Chain of Being, Charles Taylor argues that, “Until the end of the eighteenth century there was sufficient intellectual homogeneity for men to share certain assumptions...In varying degrees,...men accepted...the Christian interpretation of history, the sacramentalism of nature, the Great Chain of Being, the analogy of various planes of creation, the conception of man as microcosm...These were cosmic syntaxes in the public domain; and the poet could afford to think of his art as imitative of ‘nature’ since these patterns were what he meant by ‘nature.’” Furthermore, concerning the ‘natural order’ and vocation as they are understood within the medieval Christian tradition, Taylor writes, “And so what emerges out of this reflection on Natural Law is the norm of a stable order of industrious men in the settled course of their callings, dedicating themselves to growth and prosperity, rather than war and plunder, and accepting a morality of mutual respect and an ethic of self-improvement. This order seemed to be more than just a good idea; it was the rational, and God-given, way of living. To aim for this is not to follow a whim, or a particular preference; it is to head to where things were destined to go, a terminus ad quem in which everything is in its proper place.” Charles Taylor, A Secular Age (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 129.

22 Alasdair MacIntyre, A Short History of Ethics, 118.
other virtue becomes possible. Theoretically related to the Aristotelian moral concept of phronēsis, as well as the Augustinian theological concept of disciplina, the Thomist social mandate of humilitas practically endeavors to humble the desirous will and discipline the obstinate body through laborious participation in the divinely directed workings of the natural social order. Violation of this divinely sanctioned construction through the impious pursuit of personally chosen ‘ends’ is to sin against the sovereignty of the divine will, thus assigning a degree of personal culpability to failures of human reason and endeavor not previously emphasized within Christian theology and manifestations of social order in the medieval West.

The rational philosophy of Thomas Aquinas operated, therefore, at a particularly volatile nexus of cultural influence between the historically authoritative moral traditions contained within the conceptual bounds of ancient Greek and early Christian thought, heavily indebted to distinctly Aristotelian interpretations of natural law and specifically Augustinian conceptualizations of the moral weakness of fallen humanity. Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, whose widely influential body of work primarily considers the various points of genesis and historically contingent transmutation of moral language within the Western Christian philosophical tradition, has assigned to Thomist theology the venerable historical responsibility of maintaining the intellectual integrity of the Augustinian moral tradition during an historical era of cultural and philosophical upheaval within the Christian societies of the West. MacIntyre argues that it is the

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23 Apart from the primary virtue of humilitas, the Thomist account of the virtues is the first within the Western Christian tradition to recognize both four ‘cardinal’ virtues – prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude – and three ‘theological’ virtues – faith, hope, and love.
possession and transmission of this kind of pragmatic ability to recognize what is and what is not a guide to future action that lies at the core of Thomist moral inquiry.

Virtue Ethics and Continental Reformed Theology

Following centuries of medieval dynastic warfare and political reshuffling within the bounds of Western Europe, the Roman Catholic Church had been gradually losing its moral authority and territorial autonomy along the periphery of its empire, notably along the coastal regions of the Netherlands and southeastern England. Such social conditions had wrested loose traditional bonds of practical labor and moral obligation in these particular areas, redistributing sources of sovereign authority within Western Christendom to local governors, displacing and disrupting the families and livelihoods of the privileged and dispossessed alike. Issues of clerical abuse plaguing ecclesiastical networks of power and tradition – granting indulgences and illegitimate church posts, exorbitant landholdings and territorial power, licentiousness, illiteracy, spiritual neglect – were additionally responsible for such a grand transformation, amidst tenuous relations between the central Roman church and her ancillary branches within the rising nation-states of the early modern era.

Expressive of a perceived obligation to initiate processes of rectification, regeneration, and authoritative discipline, Calvinist theology introduced into Augustinian Christianity the moral and social centrality of a covenant of grace. Calls for voluntary, willful submission to the sovereign authority of God were rooted in the Reformers’ rejection of various modes and forms of spiritual mediation, particularly the moral corruption and spiritual arrogance of those men practicing ‘priestcraft,’ assuming power
and sanctification over social subordinates reserved for Scripture alone. The hierarchies of medieval ecclesiastical and civic society – guilds, orders, monasteries, ‘houses’ – were revealed through condemnatory writs, public sermons, and burgeoning political opinion as temporal constructions of fallen and vainglorious mankind, grasping for material power in his misguided spiritual emptiness, failing in his dual obligation as a Christian to not only glorify the sanctity of God but also labor so as to, in time, sanctify the world.\textsuperscript{24} Sin had crippled the ability of humanity to conform to divine order by warping his affections and clouding his reason.\textsuperscript{25} The present human condition demanded, therefore, a transmutation of unwilling, begrudging hearts into obedient agents of divine desire. “Against all rational hope, against all just deserts,” the helplessness and depravity of mankind can find its rectification and fulfillment within sovereign grace.\textsuperscript{26}

It is the central paradox of Calvinist theology and modes of social order, however, that within the bounds of the covenant of grace, only the sins and transgressions of moral order committed by a certain group of practitioners, ‘the elect,’ are ultimately forgiven; that such a station had been bestowed upon the faithful prior to birth through the sovereign moral authority of God; and that no practical action or amount of attested faith could truthfully differentiate between the godliest of penitents and the lowliest of transgressors. Evidence of grace expressed through a life patterned after the mandates of divine order, however, was taken seriously as the only method of detecting evidence of salvation prior to divine judgment. This type of elite rule, described as “hyper-

\textsuperscript{24} Keith Thomas, \textit{The Ends of Life: Roads to Fulfillment in Early Modern England} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 96.

\textsuperscript{25} Foster, \textit{Their Solitary Way}, 19.

\textsuperscript{26} Taylor, \textit{Sources of the Self}, 215.
Augustinian,” wherein those perceived to be among the elect, evinced by appropriately pious conduct, are divinely enjoined to not only rule over themselves through practical agreement based on their shared good nature, but also to assume responsibility for and control over the ‘unregenerate,’ those whose perceived lack of practical salvific evidence mandated social control and moral regeneration, by force if necessary. The professed aim of such regulation was not only to produce natural obedience to authoritative direction, but also to inculcate a practical ethic of pious service and self-control. Such demands of civility reoriented the aim of the disciplined moral life, as understood within the conceptual patterns of the Western Christian tradition.

Within the Calvinist mind, a life so directed affirmed the inherent sanctity of all forms of legitimate daily activity directed toward divine service and reverence. Medieval ecclesiastical and social hierarchies, divided into ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ forms of godly and profane labor and providing the theoretical rationality for the monastic system, suffered continuous abuse within Reformed circles for their idleness, avarice, and gluttony. Rather than construct the content and form of daily life around the misdirection of such manmade social and political orders, Christians must become the constructors of their own character, retainers of their own moral integrity through the actions of a disciplined will. Initially, then, Calvinist theology introduced within the Augustinian Christian tradition an overriding dedication to covenanted commitment within all aspects of ordinary life, an entire dedication of the personal will and individual desires. ‘Ordinary

27 Ibid., 105.
28 Ibid., 119.
29 Ibid., 197.
life' essentially included those aspects of daily activity concerned with production and reproduction, the content and structure of labor, and the construction of everyday materials. Distinct attention was also given to the sexual nature of human life, concerning marriage, the state of the family, and gendered patterns of labor. Finally, the affirmation of ordinary patterns of daily activity within the Reformed tradition extended the spiritual importance of devotional performance into all corners of practical and civil life; one's entire existence, most notably expressed in rote patterns of familial obligation and social duty, was to become sanctified through disciplined devotional practice, or not at all.

The centrality of the covenant of grace within Calvinist theology is embodied in patterns of daily activity dedicated to a particular vocation, or calling. Edmund Morgan has argued that, at base, the doctrine of the calling implied only that "someone called, and that someone was called," but that such a divine injunction to pious duty and right action extended to all Reformed Christians. An individual calling differed from this 'general' calling; the personal calling referred to the method by which a particular man earned his daily bread, described by English Puritan divine William Perkins as "a certaine kind of life, ordained and imposed on man by God, for the common good." Inherently patriarchal, the purpose of labor was to build and properly maintain an estate through diligent work in a legitimate business. The British historian Keith Thomas has posited that, above all other considerations of moral and social order within early modern

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30 Ibid., 211. Taylor continues on to state that, "When Aristotle spoke of the ends of political association being "life and the good life" (ζωὴ καὶ εὐεργῇ), this was the range of things he wanted to encompass in the first of these terms, basically they englobe what we need to do to continue and renew life."


32 Taylor, Sources of the Self, 225.
Europe, a regular occupation was a sign of respectability and the ability to support a family was proof of manhood.\footnote{Thomas, \textit{The Ends of Life}, 102.}

Extrapolated from medieval conceptions of the ‘Great Chain of Being,’ the doctrine of the calling assumed not only that every individual had a specific role to play in the social order beyond the narrow bounds and prescriptive limits of clerical authority, but also that such stratification was rooted in the older Christian concept of the principle of plenitude.\footnote{Foster, \textit{Their Solitary Way}, 12.} God had not given mankind varied attributes, skills, and talents without having some benevolent intent behind such practical heterogeneity; possession of differing skills, a “cosmic division of labor,” implies a naturally hierarchical, divinely sanctioned social order and conception of ‘the good life.’\footnote{The Shorter Westminster Catechism, produced by English Puritan divines in 1648, mandated in particular that every calling be of practical use. Pursuing that path which makes one of greatest service to the common good was considered a divine decree: “In this world, we should seek not personal gratification, but the means of making oneself useful to others.” Thomas, \textit{The Ends of Life}, 14.} Indeed, Thomas has argued that contentment within a social station was “a virtue, whereby a man is well-pleased with that estate wherein he is placed.”\footnote{Ibid., 17.}

Despite the presence of a type of minority elite rule in the body of the elect, all forms of proper labor were socially legitimizied and morally sanctified within the conceptual bounds of the early modern Calvinist order. Adherence to and performance of a particular godly discipline was considered by British economic historian R. H. Tawney to be the “ark of the Reformed covenant,” the method by which an individual could most
accurately display evidence of justification by grace, or sanctification. Fully holy lives no longer restricted to the clerical orders, this type of democratized sanctification extended to those ravaged northern fringes of Western Christendom, quickened by the tumultuous social and religious conditions of early modern Europe. As argued by English Puritan luminary William Ames, there was some element of divine and eternal truth inscribed on the soul of every man – “shadows of virtue” – divinely ordained qualities directing a man to a particular calling for the sake of the common good, or salus populi. Though without faith man can do nothing acceptable in the sight of God, Ames stated, he still had to perform certain duties, because the duties “are in themselves good.” Such duties were given a peculiar inflection as practiced within England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the construction of virtuous Christian laborers and maintenance of moral and epistemological traditions effectively centered on the attainment of a competency through the use and development of landed property, carefully delineated by strict mandates of entail and centuries of common law precedents.

38 Literally, “the good of the people.” Foster, Their Solitary Way, 15.
CHAPTER II

CONTOURS OF ENGLISH COMPETENCY

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine:
Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
Makes that and th' action fine.\(^{40}\)

Go, till the fields, and with inglorious sweat,
An honest, but painful living get;
Your old neglected callings now renew,
And bid to glorious war a long adieu.\(^{41}\)

The End of ‘Merry Olde England’: Cultural Conditions of the Tudor Age

In early modern England, the achievement of a competency within the conceptual and practical bounds of a certain social role, and the subsequent avoidance of a socially degrading and morally reprehensible status of material dependency, functioned as the most poignant expression of willful devotion to a particular godly calling. The modest desire to possess sufficient property or social means to absorb familial labor while providing more than mere subsistence was the central motivation to everyday work and domestic activity. Much of seventeenth-century England was an intricate patchwork of parishes with particular local customs dating from “time out of mind,” and that “ancient practice” often dictated the shape of the landscape, patterns of settlement, modes of landholding, and rituals of agrarian activity.\(^{42}\) Landed property in late medieval and early modern England was conceived of as a ‘bundle of use-rights,’ rather than a private

\(^{40}\) Thomas, *Ends of Life*, 88.


commodity to be utilized for individual production and material advantage; those who were not freeholders could still maintain a degree of competent subsistence through delineated access to either common lands or contracted use of a landowner's resources.\textsuperscript{43} Yeomen, husbandmen, cottagers, and laborers collaborated, within the limits of their particular roles, with one another to sustain a complex, highly stratified, strongly agrarian economy.\textsuperscript{44} Karl Polanyi has argued that market transactions during this period ultimately rested on such "general collective social goods" as trust and regulation, drawn from moral and civil agencies ancillary to the market system.\textsuperscript{45} The social relations between these "producing ranks," historian Daniel Vickers has argued, are properly understood as matters of degree rather than strict class distinctions; a "spectrum of wealth" most accurately describes the hierarchical nature of tenant farmers and householders, assisted by servants and hired hands, who operated most of the early modern English rural economy.\textsuperscript{46}


\textsuperscript{45} The existence of such a standard of practice within the early modern English countryside is famously reviewed by E. P. Thompson within "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd" in \textit{Customs in Common}, 185-258.

Avoiding a state of abject dependency was the aim of such efforts. Within a cultural framework that deeply valued degrees of landed self-employment, reliance upon the material welfare and spiritual benevolence of others was more often than not a source of greater social stigma than the specific nature of labor performed.\(^{47}\) Therefore, to gain a competency was to achieve a prescribed measure of independence within the hierarchical, interlocking ranks of the ‘Great Chain of Being,’ during an age when personal fulfillment and ‘the good life’ were not specifically aligned with the concept of individual autonomy.\(^{48}\) While the pursuits of separate families dictated differing routes to the achievement of a competency, each participant aimed to maintain a degree of control over the terms and conditions of their working lives. The pursuit of a competency also allowed householders to assume responsibility for the particular social and economic role fulfilled by the household unit. This peculiar sense of personal responsibility over the direction and maintenance of familial welfare – buttressed by Aristotelian conceptions of social role, Augustinian depravity, and the Reformed ‘calling’ – found itself assailed by contradictory interests and social conditions of the rising state during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Two interrelated historical processes effectively altered the traditional landscapes, moral and social, of ‘Merry Olde England’: the dissolution of the monasteries and properties from 1536-1541, and increasing rates of enclosure for the purpose of pasturing sheep during the late medieval and early modern eras. Prior to the sanctions of King Henry VIII, the property of the church – between one-fifth and one-third of all English


lands—had been under attack for over two hundred years, most notoriously by the efforts of the fourteenth-century Lollardy movement as well as the grasping ambitions of the rising gentry. Riddled with depraved worldliness and deadened by passionless and rote routine, the institution of the English monastery had lost nearly all practical meaning within the community and few southeastern English counties continued to display strong manorial ties beyond the late medieval era.\(^{49}\) In point of fact, few monasteries and clerical orders displayed any resistance to such nascent flourishes of royal supremacy and divine right, which were only of a ‘Reforming’ nature nearly by default; primary loyalty and obedience to the king—guardian of peace and order, an anthropomorphic embodiment of the nation-state itself—dominated the English political theories and moral philosophies of the day.\(^{50}\) Although the official pretext used to justify royal assailment upon nearly nine hundred monastic houses lay in their perceived ‘corruption and decay,’ the fiscal state of the Crown was greatly enriched as a consequence, and an aura of illicit covetousness came to surround political flourishes of authoritarian grandeur and moral entitlement against local tradition and custom.\(^{51}\) Over one hundred thousand previously cloistered men and women joined the other ranks of the dispossessed, those whose customary claim to commonage rights had been curtailed as the rate of enclosures had steadily risen from the end of the fourteenth century, whose frightful epidemics and dynastic warfare had changed the relationship between landlord and tenant in favor of the gradual privatization of consolidated property.

\(^{49}\) While reflective of the experience of the southeastern English counties, relative disengagement from the manorial system in northern and western regions did not become a distinct reality for another century or more.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 148.

Following the dissolution, care for the poor was placed in the hands of individual parishes and counties, who were compelled to implement such disciplinary measures as the 1563 Statute of Artificers and the 1601 Elizabethan Poor Laws in order to regulate the productivity of the population. Government decrees such as these ultimately aimed at moral and social reform through pious and dutiful dedication to "dignifying labor"; they also gave evidence, however, to larger fears regarding the swift increase in vagrancy, the movement of those who had taken to tramping the highways in search of work.\textsuperscript{52} Falling wages, swelling populations and rack-renting characterized the century between the early reign of King Henry VIII and 'the Great Migration,' spanning from 1630 to 1642.\textsuperscript{53} Public political and social treatises recoiled in horror from the disorganized, irreligious life of 'Hugh Make-Shift,' he who embodied "that dissolute condition of masterless men, without subjection to laws, and a coercive power to tie their hands from rapine and revenge."\textsuperscript{54}

Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, describing the moral and social ‘sickness’ of early seventeenth-century England, described the contemporary tumult as an unfortunate by-product of repeated and unrepentant violations of the traditional prescriptive order implicit within the sociopolitical operation of a commonwealth. Natural and civil law, those qualities and moral virtues disposing men to peace and obedience, had been


\textsuperscript{53} Stephen Innes argues that the largest problem within the political economy of England – defined as the "extended principles of prudence, productivity, and oversight from the household to the state," as well as the administration of resources – was unemployment, not unproductivity. Prosperity in early modern England was equated with "full employment." Innes, *Work and Labor in Early America*, 5; Margaret Newell, *From Dependency to Independence: Economic Revolution in Colonial New England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 14.

effectively subverted in Tudor and Stuart England in favor of rising "monopolies of a few private men," collaborating against the rightful will of sovereign authority; vainglorious men, those fools who overestimated their personal worth to the construction and perpetuation of the commonwealth, dominated the political and social landscapes.\textsuperscript{55} As the "dispenser of prosperity and guardian of civilization," Hobbes understood the hierarchical integrity of the commonwealth as the veritable "soul of the universe," finding its ultimate sanction in providential decree.\textsuperscript{56} Without a coercive state to restrain sinful impulses and administer justly deserved punishments, theorists such as Hobbes maintained that no life would be safe, no property secure, and no honor observed: "for in the act of our submission, consists both our obligation, and our liberty."\textsuperscript{57} Such cultural transformations naturally disrupted the normative networks of power and local governance, but to the rising Puritan leaders in the southeastern region of East Anglia, the contemporary tumult and its assaults on traditional patterns of daily life and devotional activity had gradually revealed a particularly expedient opportunity for social and moral salvation: transatlantic migration.

English Puritanism and Continental Inflection: Devotion in East Anglia

The desperate need for a renewed social covenant among the disorderly, covetous, and impious ranks of early modern England was most potently felt in the southeastern counties of the realm, within the bounds of the region known as East Anglia. Comprised

\textsuperscript{55} Hobbes, \textit{Leviathan}, 213.


\textsuperscript{57} Miller, \textit{Errand Into the Wilderness}, 142; Hobbes, \textit{Leviathan}, 144.
of three counties — Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex — and surrounding lands, the region became nationally distinguished during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a leading producer of both textiles and a certain “Augustinian strain of piety” — English Reformed theology, or Puritanism.58 The intimate cultural and financial ties the region shared with nearby London and the seat of the Crown were highly influential factors in its religious and economic transformation during the early modern era. The success of local textile production had thus enabled the metropolitan area of London to surpass Paris as the largest urban center in Western Europe. Additionally, regional tendencies toward the consolidation and privatization of property characteristic of the Tudor and Stuart governmental leaders had significantly empowered many East Anglian gentlemen and influential heads of household. The close proximity of the region to the Netherlands, the uncontested cultural hotbed of stringent Calvinist thought, also inflected regional social and moral orders and traditions. The Dutch were not only the most proficient producers of textiles in Europe, and therefore kept the financial rise of the East Anglian cloth market in check, but their Reformed clergy and universities also clung to the most stringent elements of Calvinist thought, welcoming Protestant clerical refugees from across Western Europe.

“Puritanism in England, whatever else it accomplished in the economic, ecclesiastical, political, and social turmoil of the period,” historian Charles Hambrick-Stowe has argued, “was a devotional movement dedicated to the spiritual regeneration of

58 David Grayson Allen, In English Ways: The Movement of Societies and the Transferal of English Local Law and Custom to Massachusetts Bay in the Seventeenth Century (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1983), 117; Miller, The Seventeenth Century, 3-34. One of the most poignant contemporary descriptions of a Puritan is found within John Bunyan’s A Pilgrim’s Progress: “A man fleeing the wrath of God and the City of Destruction, weighed down by the burden of sin and guilt, engrossed in the Bible, and asking the question, ‘What must I do to be saved?’” John Coffey and Paul H. C. Lim, eds., The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 2.
individuals and of society.”⁵⁹ According to these locally influential ‘precisionists,’ under the sovereign direction of monarchs King Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Elizabeth I, the national churches of England had shed a portion of their stigma as ill-conducted, ineffective, impious institutions.⁶⁰ The Anglican Church, established by Henry in 1534 and again by Elizabeth following the reign of Catholic Mary in 1558, had hastily recruited poorly educated priests to vacant clerical positions and retained several ‘impious’ elements of traditional Catholic ritual, such as an entrenched ecclesiastical hierarchy and the donning of priestly vestments. Puritan luminaries labeled such concessions to the failed moral standards of the ‘old’ church by Tudor monarch Elizabeth I and Archbishop William Laud in the early years of the Stuart reign as irreligious, even treasonous, vehemently against the civil interests of the English people; for Puritan leaders, national adherence to the spiritually impotent Anglican Church not only surely led to damnation, but also effectively inhibited the ability of all stripes of English citizens to achieve any semblance of a truly ‘good life,’ the experience of divine authority without the use of corrupted mediation. Their subsequent persecution by the state church drove local leaders into a Genevan “matrix of exile” on the Continent, the conditions of which produced two of the most influential devotional works for English Puritans: the Geneva Bible (1560) and Actes and Monuments (1563), a manual written by Puritan luminary John Foxe.⁶¹ Such writings, heavily influenced by the social ethics and moral theory of the Genevan theocratic experiment, were clandestinely transported across the North Sea to the East Anglian region of southern England and elsewhere, and were quickly adopted

⁶⁰ Ibid., 1.
and emulated by Puritan reformers, most notably those divines installed at the University of Cambridge during the later years of the sixteenth century.

While a fellow at Christ College at Cambridge, located west of Suffolk in the East Anglian region, theologian William Perkins (1558-1602 CE) was the first of the ‘moderate’ English Puritans whose moral theory and forms of practical piety had been intimately shaped by the contours of social discipline within Continental Reformed thought. As a moderate, Perkins and his followers denounced the more radical branches of Puritanism, including the group of Separatists led by William Bradford to Plymouth Plantation in 1620. Promoting an anthropology of simul iustus et peccator (“at once righteous and sinful”), moderate Puritan divines such as Perkins were receptive to the doctrine of preparationism, or the belief that unregenerate sinners may prepare themselves for the grace of spiritual rehabilitation through close self-examination and virtuous use of the means at their disposal, such as Scripture passages or sermons, or through the pious and dutiful performance of a particular calling. More importantly, Perkins and his theological followers and successors believed that, no matter how spiritually corrupt and socially impotent the English church may appear, it could always be rectified to a properly pious, practically upstanding state through the diligent submission and moral regeneration of its congregants.

The teachings of Perkins established within Puritan divinity a strong cultural affinity for devotional practices such as explicit forms of meditation and spiritual exercises modeled on medieval religious practice. Within the conceptual and practical bounds of such modes of devotion, the spiritual life was understood as a “life process,” a
journey or pilgrimage from a state of sin to a state of salvation and glory.\textsuperscript{62} Additionally, specific devotional literature such as primers and catechisms figured prominently within Puritan prayer and reflection, encouraging introspection and self-examination.\textsuperscript{62} Such forms of devotional literature were also used to educate and discipline Puritan children in the modes of sanctified daily activity; the Puritans sought knowledge, therefore, not simply as a polite accomplishment, nor as a means of advancing material welfare, but because social discipline and spiritual salvation were impossible without it.\textsuperscript{64} Perkins insisted that a true reading of Scripture could occur only after “humble preparation” of the soul and the “right disposition” of the body through such intensive exercises, as well as poignant “attention to the duties to be performed afterword,” as a pious individual in an impious world.\textsuperscript{65} Devotional ‘pilgrimage,’ an “implantation into Christ,” was expected to take place within the context of the secular calling of the practitioner.\textsuperscript{66} Distilled through the mind of sixteenth-century moral luminary William Perkins, Puritan piety became devotional piety.\textsuperscript{67}

As the author of numerous theological tracts and treatises of practical piety, William Ames (1576-1633 CE) became the primary inheritor of the devotional strand of

\textsuperscript{62} Hambrick-Stowe, \textit{The Practice of Piety}, 20.


\textsuperscript{64} Morgan, \textit{The Puritan Family}, 89.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 202.

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 81.

\textsuperscript{67} It is difficult to exaggerate the explosive volume of Puritan devotional material pouring from late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English presses, the most famous of which was Lewis Bayly’s \textit{Practice of Piety, directing a Christian how to walk that he may please God}, published in London in 1613. John Morrill, “The Puritan Revolution” in \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism}, 76-77.
Puritan divinity after the death of Perkins, his former instructor. His most famous work, *Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, was first delivered as a series of lectures at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands between 1620-1622 and published in 1623.\(^{68}\) Placing the seat of all forms of knowledge, moral or practical, in the providentially ordered will rather than the operations of the intellect, Ames held the position regarding daily activity that “since this life so willed is truly and properly our most important practice, it is self-evident that theology is not a speculative discipline but a practical one.”\(^{69}\) Intended as a manual of Calvinist theology for personal use, the structure and content of the work illustrate the distinct influence of Ramist philosophy on moderate forms of English Puritanism. Rising to civil and ecclesiastical prominence as an element of the seventeenth-century cultural revival of Scholasticism within Western Europe, the teachings of Petrus Ramus, a French theologian, concerned the explicit relevance of theological tenets or moral theory to practical activity and modes of social order and discipline within early modern Christian thought. Operating at the center of Ramist logic was the Aristotelian law of relatives, which stated that no man was inferior or superior to any other as a result of his nature, but was defined as such only as he stood in relation to other men. Virtue, and consequently ‘the good life,’ become conformity to this particular understanding of social and moral order, illustrated as a series of divinely ordained emanations of moral responsibilities and obligations, social stations, and pious duties.\(^{70}\)


\(^{69}\) Ibid., 193.

\(^{70}\) Ibid., 151; Foster, *Their Solitary Way*, 34; Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 24-35.
The colonial historian Perry Miller is most widely known for his extensive research on the relationship between Ramist philosophy and "the New England mind." While often chided in contemporary publications for his attachment to overly rational or "intellectual" constructions of the covenant of grace within Reformed theology, Miller's work draws particular attention to the historically embedded "inescapable frameworks" of the Puritan moral tradition, noting that "he [the Protestant] had revolted against the sway of the medieval [Aristotelian] Schoolmen without having discarded the immense accumulation of Scholastic thought."\(^{71}\) Additionally, Miller has drawn specific attention to the "Augustinian strain of piety" which wound a common thread of theological belief between all of the Puritan faithful. The Augustinian social covenant was based not on an assumption of virtuous character, he argues, but rather on the necessities of a depraved nature.\(^{72}\)

Within the tumultuous social, political, and moral landscapes of southeastern England, William Ames and his followers became, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the foremost architects of the theological ideal of a 'pure church.'\(^{73}\) This particular doctrinal concept was not unique to early modern Calvinist thought, but rather identified its historico-theological precedent within the Augustinian notion of 'visible' and 'in invisible' churches: as understood within the conceptual bounds of the Augustinian Christian tradition, the visible church contained all professed believers in Christ, while the invisible church functioned as the spiritual sanctuary exclusively for

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\(^{72}\) Ibid., 417.

\(^{73}\) Ibid., 442.
those who had been predestined for eternal salvation. The visible, temporal church functions as an institution specifically designed to control and alleviate the effects of human corruption; voluntarily gathered, pure churches – ‘congregations’ – would contain only those individuals who have been saved. According to conclusions drawn by historian Stephen Foster, Puritan speculation had “combined [the stipulations of] Exodus 18:20 with the Aristotelian *Nicomachean Ethics* to produce a social ideal not very different from the contemporary English view, that of the country gentleman devoted to a particular calling as well as to public service, though the Puritan variant was possibly more austere and intensely religious.”74 Within the “union of the seen and unseen,” outward acts of virtuous character would reliably evince the prior reception of divine grace.75 It was becoming increasingly clear to the followers of Ames’ theoretical developments and those affected by the Cambridge theologians, however, that even an approximation of such an aim was impossible within the bounds of an England in disarray.

Indeed, from the position of a devoted Puritan in early modern East Anglia, the cultural and religious fabric of the commonwealth appeared to be tearing at the seams: the grasping, petty material desires of the tepidly reformed Anglican Church had not only alienated thousands of individuals from their proper place within social hierarchy and heavily disrupted the traditional “order of things,” but had also failed in its practical

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74 Foster, *Their Solitary Way*, 70. Exodus 18:20 reads, “And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.” Holy Bible: King James Version (Iowa Falls: World Bible Publishers, 2001), 92. Interestingly, Exodus 18:21 reads, “Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as those who fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness, and place such men over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.” Ibid., 92.

endeavors to serve the spiritual welfare of the English people. Order had been lost as the soul of the state; what had once been rehabilitative membership within the commonwealth had devolved into ravenous forms of social competition, the Hobbesian “war of all against all,” alienated from historically embedded forms of labor considered to be “testimonies of virtue.” The practical ability to approach daily life and the demands of a particular calling as a type of devotional, spiritual activity, a concept so central to moderate Puritan thought, had become legitimately unfeasible by the early seventeenth century.

The Great Migration: Migrants, Motives, Moral Machinations

As East Anglian Puritans struggled with civil and ecclesiastical legislation within regional bounds, thousands of the dispossessed and disenfranchised were constructing pragmatic methods of social and economic betterment. From 1620 until the outbreak of the English Civil War, the ‘Great Migration’ brought tens of thousands of English immigrants to the shores of the New World, the majority of whom lived – briefly, and without much material or spiritual comfort – in the West Indies or on the banks of Virginia. Despite harsh conditions, backbreaking labor, and oppressive climates, individuals such as these, mostly single, unmarried men under the age of twenty-five, were not deterred from the scantest possibility of employment during an era when poverty and political tensions within England threatened to drown the rising nation-state in an ample flood of “sturdy beggars and masterless men.”

While historians have attributed the transatlantic migration of such young men to dominant economic desires and the vague possibility of social advancement, the

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76 Thomas, *Ends of Life*, 155.
motivational complexity of the Puritan migration to New England continues to receive a steady flow of varied theoretical treatments, the most compelling of which for the interests of this study seems to supply a type of ‘common thread’ wound between migrants, over against the “open-ended” conclusions of previous scholarship on the Great Migration. In her article entitled, “Migrants and Motives: Religion and the Settlement of New England, 1630-1640,” the argument constructed by Virginia DeJohn Anderson not only delineates the distinctly religious impetus behind the movement to New England by thousands of East Anglian practitioners, but also offers a scholarly corrective to those previous investigations which had identified no unifying factor among English migrants.

Anderson locates her work within the line of historical thought associated with Samuel Eliot Morison and N. C. P. Tyack, whose investigations of the East Anglian migration to New England had argued for the theoretical impossibility and historical irresponsibility of the separation and isolation of social, political, and religious factors. More recently, intensive demographical studies by David Grayson Allen, T. H. Breen, and Stephen Foster acknowledge the fundamental practical reality of such inseparable motives. Anderson, however, argues that these particular findings are “disappointing,” for they identify no shared incentive, no ideological ‘common ground’ shared among travelers to New England. While such scholars’ efforts have poignantly illustrated the importance of the heterogeneity of town and county settlement between the Old and New

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Worlds, the immigrants’ voluntary departure and the short duration of the movement suggest that the migration resulted from a “common, reasoned response to a highly specific set of circumstances.” Seeking moral and social redemption within explicit, morally purified, voluntary church covenants, the Puritan migrants composing “New England’s generation” recognized that the nature of such a communal agreement and shared moral commitment to the pursuit of a ‘good life’ provided the only effective means of maintaining a degree of social cohesion where coercive power was limited and graceful, virtuous cohabitation desired above all contingent opportunity for material gain. In return for submission to the mandates of providential will and practical obligations of the covenant, these English migrants hoped that God might allow them, through the pious and ordered exercise of their own labor, to enjoy a competency of the world’s goods.  

Focusing exclusively on the migrants’ desire for an ideal, purified church covenant while acknowledging the practical reality of town and county variance, Anderson contends that conceptual links between the economic distress of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the Great Migration are not as close are they as assumed to be: “if agrarian distress was a ‘push’ factor [to British North America],” she notes, “it produced a seriously delayed reaction.” While the inclination toward purely material gain can be sufficiently ruled out as a general cause of the migration, the practical relationship between religious motivations and economic viability in early modern

79 Ibid., 341, 362-373. The work of Allen and Foster has been dedicated to illustrating degrees of social, political, and religious variety between migrants of differing English towns, counties, and regions. See Allen, In English Ways, 169.


81 Ibid., 368-369.
England, as suggested by the doctrine of the calling and the peculiar Puritanical
attachment to modes and methods of devotional activity, is too intimately interwoven to
be overlooked. For example, the work of social historian Allan Kulikoff has focused on
the connections between socio-economic misfortune in sixteenth century England and the
outpouring of migrants to the New World. Not only do both the timing of colonial
charters and the migration of entire family units suggest a deeper economic motivation,
Kulikoff argues, but the most influential and outspoken regional promoters of
transatlantic migration, the Puritan clergy and lay gentry of East Anglia, depicted New
England as a certain “refuge from oppression.” Operating at the center of these
opposing historical interpretations, however conceptually disparate, is an understanding
of the family, the household, as the basic unit of both productive labor and a domestic
‘culture of discipline’ at work within the early modern Puritan social and moral orders.

Over against the flood of single male laborers to other regions of British North
America, the normative ‘unit’ transported to the shores of New England during the extent
of the Great Migration was the family, typically consisting of husband, wife, children,
and a single servant. As the ‘germ’ of all political and ecclesiastical authority, the family
was considered the basic unit within the Ramist law of relatives, as understood within the
bounds of English Puritan thought: prior to standing in relation to any other individual or
group, social position and moral obligation are first delineated within the limits of the
family. The English family, or “little commonwealth,” was therefore the seat of

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82 Kulikoff, From British Peasants..., 53-58.
virtuous social morality and discipline.\textsuperscript{84} Additionally, as the center of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century education, practical and religious training as delineated by the patriarchal authority of the godly parents – performance of gender-specific labor, studying devotionals and catechisms – encouraged Puritan children and servants to truly love and honor their daily labors and social obligations, while displaying obedience, faithfulness, and reverence to the moral authority of their parents and masters. “Complete but not yet completed,” Anderson argues that the age distribution and economic viability of these particular English settlers more closely resembled the non-migrating English population than other Anglican colonists in the New World.\textsuperscript{85} Most had toiled for their competencies in lowland, pastured areas of the southeast, and a large percent had lived in urbanized localities, or market towns, dedicated to the pursuit of a “mixed economy” which included agrarian practice, home manufactures, and local production.\textsuperscript{86}

The “remaking of rural England” over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, therefore, not only swelled local laboring ranks and the practical responsibilities of the parish, but also threatened the traditional integrity of household labor and the joint efforts of husband, wife, child, and servant in the early modern countryside.\textsuperscript{87} Escalating rates of vagrancy and “masterless men,” however, had dramatically affected the urbanized areas of the East Anglian region, whose local networks of manufacture and intimate ties to the culture and religion of London ensured a

\textsuperscript{84} Tawney, \textit{Religion and the Rise of Capitalism}, 25.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 346-347.


\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 70.
steady stream of the rootless and unemployed. Additionally, increasing instances of enclosure and gradual subversion of the East Anglian textile market to the deft plying of Dutch traders had spurred the gradual development of a permanent socio-economic stratum of the landless poor during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As political and religious turmoil wrecked and reorganized the English countryside, Puritan heads of household and local gentry recognized the grave threat to familial order, social discipline, and virtuous conduct posed by such cultural tumult. In order to regain a degree of social and moral control over the terms on which these practical labors were performed, transatlantic migration to New England offered the possibility of a systematic regeneration of traditional forms of social stratification and prescribed economic conduct within the bounds of an ideal ‘pure church’ and providentially ordered society. The particular shape of competency as the settlers had understood it in England underwent a dramatic transformation and practical reorganization within the bounds of the wild, "unimproved" landscape of the New England frontier. Attainment of a degree of moral and social welfare depended no longer upon the socially stratified, interlocking efforts of different laboring ‘classes,’ but rather on the pious and disciplined commitment of the entire family unit – most importantly, the joint efforts of father and son – to the pursuit of a particular form of gaining a competency within an environment desperately in need of morally prescriptive, socially regulated sources of labor and capital.
CHAPTER III

CONTOURS OF AMERICAN COMPETENCY

Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me. 88

Noe man is made more honourable than another or more wealthy etc. out of any particular or singular respect to himselfe, but for the glory of his creator, and the common good of man. 89

Cultural Contours: Native Displacement and the Transplantation of Civility

The primary concern plaguing participants of the Great Migration was that the brethren they had left behind would think them ethically misguided and treasonous for abandoning England at its most desperate hour of need. 90 As previously stated, these particular families were not separatists, nor did they aspire to the theological hopes of Bradford and his followers at Plymouth; indeed, most of them, travelling together as congregational groups, likely expected to return to England after the social bedlam and religious upheaval had safely passed to re-establish a ‘pure church’ within the bounds of the realm. Attempting to undertake such a sweeping project during the first thirty years of the seventeenth century within the bounds of the English realm itself had proven simply impossible: the traditionally delineated ranks of social roles and prescriptive functions had become swollen and disorganized; rising rates of enclosure and restrictions placed on areas of commonage across the southeastern English countryside had curtailed the

89 John Winthrop, A Modell of Christian Charity, 1629. Quoted in Foster, Their Solitary Way, 110.
90 Kulikoff, From British Peasants..., 39.
practical ability to gain a competency from the land; and the oppressive political actions of the Laudian Church of England had forced many Puritan leaders from prominent social posts abroad to the “Genevan experiment” on the Continent. Above all other concerns of the Puritan family, material dependency was to be avoided at all costs. Pious heads of household understood that their labors and those of their families must have some measure of voluntary commitment and personal agency, or such work cannot rightfully be a religious ‘calling,’ but simply an instance of unfree labor. The religious and political disruptions of the age, Puritan leaders argued, proved an insurmountable obstacle to the specific aims of socially prescriptive, virtuous labor within the bounds of a competency.

As described by prominent Suffolk migrant and Massachusetts Bay Colony governor John Winthrop, desired above all else within English “transplantations” to the New World was the pious, properly ordered establishment of the type of ‘Christian commonwealth’ that had failed in the East Anglian region during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries under the guiding devotional efforts of such figures as William Perkins and William Ames. Such an ideal society would be based upon the devotional piety of a pure church and covenantal relationships between righteous men, living freely among one another, consenting to mutual government under the direction of civil liberty, or the liberty to do “that which is just, good, and honest.”91 Puritan migrants to New England did not quarrel with the traditionally authoritative structure of the English commonwealth, a moral and practical acquiescence that embodies certain ideals of an age that understood freedom only as voluntary submission to a divinely ordained

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91 Foster, *Their Solitary Way*, 158.
system of authority and deference. Typically assuming the ideal form of temporal governance, those who migrated to the New World may have harbored particular disagreements with the enacted aims of the political commonwealth and Church of England, but did not often find issue, theological or civil, with its socially stratified, hierarchical construction. The earthly state, as understood by early modern moderate Puritans, existed to enforce a certain “positive pattern of virtue,” evinced within and delineated by the tenets of both providentially revealed and natural law. Culturally dominant political philosophies of the day argued that unless the naturally elected ‘rulers’ and the naturally deferent ‘ruled’ observed the limits of their respective callings and social stations, there could be no hierarchy or moral order, and thus no possible form of righteous, disciplined government. As stated by Perry Miller and reminiscent of late medieval, morally prescribed notions of order, the concept of a “history of thought” in New England is effectively meaningless unless it is remembered that the intellectual tradition began with an assumption of the unity of knowledge and validity of natural law.

Such were the historically embedded expectations, moral and social, of the Puritan families comprising the Great Migration to New England: the establishment of a righteous commonwealth, governed by natural and fervently faithful leaders, invigorated by the humble pursuit of practical piety, and conducting business which aimed toward the achievement of a socially regulated and communally beneficial competency. Perry Miller

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92 Ibid., 160.
93 Ibid., 168.
has poignantly argued that although the members of the migration thought of the expansive movement as achieving a type of "corporate identity" through the practical act of migrating, they did not, and had no practical or moral means to, identify the covenant of grace – the divine promise of good to virtue, and of evil to vice – with the unfamiliar landscape of the New World. While an overwhelming volume of scholarly research regarding the social, moral, and economic histories of Puritan New England has focused on the social and moral calamities signified by the perceived religious ‘declension’ of second- and third-generation Puritan children as the primary crisis faced by “New England’s generation,” the practical negotiation of New England landscapes, informed by English conceptions of civility and adherence to forms of devotional religious practice, preceded the era of the jeremiad and the Halfway Covenant. On this particular point, social historian Sacvan Berkovitch has argued within his own work on the social prominence and moral influence of the jeremiad, that the “process of Americanization” for the English settlers began with the initial practical developments and moral renegotiations of the Puritan families composing the Great Migration.

With respect to such an extensive process, Allan Kulikoff has written that the landscapes of New England differed from the English countryside in three distinct yet interrelated ways: the two territories varied considerably in the composition and content of nature (weather patterns, topographical features), habitat (availability of dwellings and infrastructural transport), and conceptions of order (methods by which farms and towns

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96 Berkovitch, The American Jeremiad, 18.
were organized). Arriving from counties and enclosed pastural lands within East Anglia, a region culturally familiar with patterns of enclosure and the ubiquity of demarcated, pastured tracts of land, the thickly wooded swatches of ‘wilderness’ typical throughout the New England countryside were foreboding and unfamiliar. Additionally, the fluctuation of seasonal climates proved to be harsher and more extreme than the temperate zones stretching across much of southern England, and the soil along the colonial frontier proved notoriously rocky and relatively unproductive. The most difficult of all practical New World realities to surmount both physically and ethically, however, was the sheer expanse of unclaimed, unenclosed land before them. Hailing primarily from county market towns or small hamlets along regional highways, acres of undeveloped woodlands and miles of unmarked interior waterway not only seemed utterly unfamiliar, but also appeared to the English colonists as an essential misappropriation of productive land, a physical element meant to be claimed, bounded, and ‘improved’ with respect to the virtuous pursuit of a particular agrarian calling, or the attainment of a competency.

From time out of mind, the single most valuable element within the socially complex, hierarchical English system of social stature and economic viability had been access to, or at least the customary use of, land. Within a strongly agrarian economy, seasonal access to arable land not only allowed heads of household to provide for their families, but also allowed them to pursue a particular calling, a pursuit necessary for legitimate social recognition and mutual respect. However wild or unkempt any tract of land may seem to be, English political philosophy maintained that it might always be

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97 Kulikoff, *From British Peasants...,* 80.
“improved,” or developed in such a way as to be fit for a certain trade; productive land left needlessly fallow was representative of an instance of wasted capital and lost opportunities for heads of household to gain a competency. Regardless of the relatively low productivity of New England soil, disciplined conquest of the local lands was socially justified through philosophical arguments appealing to the moral superiority of the settlers’ “civil” rights to the land over against the inferior “natural” rights held by the natives. The English settlers had voluntarily departed the East Anglian region in hopes of preserving distinct, traditional English modes of moral integrity and social civility; to the migrating Puritan practitioners, such socially regulated “transplantations” of historically established English cultural elements to the unfamiliar landscapes of the New World were the sole practical method by which to protect and sustain traditional social and moral standards of virtuous conduct and fruitful productivity for future generations, far from the grasping covetousness and impiety of the undisciplined English government and church.

The Puritan settlers of the Great Migration, therefore, considered themselves morally obligated to ‘reseat’ the land, to ‘improve’ it in such a way so as to render the pious and properly ordered achievement of a competency, and a degree of independence, possible. Transplantations of English modes and methods of civility and civilization were conceived of as the natural consequence of socially regulated pursuits of a competency within the morally prescriptive limits of correctly ordered daily practice and traditional

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98 Ibid., 74. Kulikoff notes that English settlers often gravitated to lands that had either already been cleared by Native Americans for settlement or the planting of corn, or had been left vacant by the ravages of European epidemics transported to the New World a century earlier, during the initial transatlantic explorations of Spain and France. Additionally, Virginia Anderson and Jay McWilliams have argued that the process of domestication and household construction in New England began, curiously enough, with the integration of livestock and swine into the colonial landscape, whose movements, lacking a commonage, had to be kept circumscribed through the claiming of personal property and erection of fences.
conceptions of social discipline. The practical framework of late medieval and early modern English competency, however, reposed upon the mutual interaction and economic interdependence of historically established “classes” of laborers, each possessing distinct and particular customary rights and social obligations, each ‘stratum’ somehow practically entangled with the ‘bundle of use-rights’ of the land, but none privately owning the tract outright. The migrating Puritan family ‘units’ of the Great Migration to New England had no choice but to renegotiate the practical confines and traditional tenets of English competency, as well as redefine the duties and responsibilities of the moral self in terms of familial devotion to the pursuit of a particular form of a competency.

Economic Contours: Ubiquitous Freeholders and the Redefinition of Competency

Over the course of the early colonial period, economic activity within Puritan New England was based almost entirely around three main components: trading in beaver pelts and guns with local networks of natives in exchange for corn and grains; plying the coastal waters in search of cod to dry, cure, and ship to the West Indies or southeastern Europe; and shipbuilding. The magisterial government of Massachusetts played a central, authoritative role in structuring the local economy during the first decade of settlement: as the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the group had struggled to organize Puritan migration efforts amidst disruptions of the social and moral orders traditionally characteristic of Laudian England, attempted to regulate wages and ‘just prices,’ actively

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supervised the disciplined, ordered establishment of towns, and offered incentives for advances within economic and infrastructural development. These public enterprises operated, however, within a set of practical constraints unknown within the contemporary English landscape that restricted the possibility of specialized or intensive market activity during the early years of New England – the lack of practically sufficient, morally disciplined sources of both labor and capital. The existence of such environmentally contingent physical constraints therefore encouraged the socially disciplined development within the frontier landscape of a comparatively high instance of relatively self-contained familial subsistence production that had been pragmatically impossible within the social restrictions and moral demands of the early modern English countryside.

Within the practical setting of New World landscapes, traditional English common law and agrarian custom often proved to be pragmatically unreliable. Whereas a strict hierarchy of agrarian workers had characterized the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English countryside, each stratum affixed with its own bundle of historically established social obligations and moral prescriptions, such an expression of political economy could not yet practically exist on the western periphery of early modern European empires, especially within the moral demands of a society established specifically for the undertaking of work and labor distinguished by its pious content and character. Economic historians John McCusker and Russell Menard have argued that it made “little sense” to follow the “best English practices” in an economy and physical environment where labor and capital were scarce and expensive, but land remained cheap

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[100] Ibid., 95; McWilliams, *Building the Bay Colony*, 32.
and the potential for landownership ubiquitous.\textsuperscript{101} Additionally, migrating groups bound for New England, over against other areas of British North America, were composed of familial or congregational units, rather than individuals.\textsuperscript{102} Lacking an assembly of servants, wage workers, and tenant farmers, however, the complex, customary system of English land tenure broke down, and freehold land tenure was the only sensible agrarian system to implement in an environment where no customarily servile social stratum existed to toil in and tend to the fruits of the land.\textsuperscript{103} Additionally, the comparatively low productivity of New England farms, as well as the gradual accumulation of labor and capital along the colonial periphery of European empires, prevented the use or support of non-familial full-time assistance, as had been traditionally customary within English agrarian practice. The English family unit and the achievement of a competency, therefore, were pragmatically renegotiated in response to the contingent demands of a colonial frontier landscape informed by historically established practices of devotional activity and the proper ordering of the pious self as dictated by the tenets of the Augustinian Christian tradition.

The operations of the “little commonwealth” became, as the sole migrating productive unit, the fundamental basis of the colonial New England economy. For the migrants, the central issue of maintaining control over the terms and conditions of their working lives without servants and tenants, as well as the providential duty of extending English civility across the New England landscape, was largely negotiated through

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 306.
\textsuperscript{102} Morgan, \textit{The Puritan Family}, 135.
\textsuperscript{103} Kulikoff, \textit{The Agrarian Origins...}, 200; Foster, \textit{Their Solitary Way}, 38.
practical reliance upon the economic fruits borne by father/son agrarian partnerships, which happened to be defined by an acute state of dependency unfamiliar to all ranks and ‘classes’ of English laborers. Regarding the peculiar nature of familial labor relations, Daniel Vickers has argued that, while historians have successfully disposed of self-sufficiency as an early American reality, they ought further to admit that it was not even an aspiration.\footnote{Vickers, Farmers and Fishermen, 7.} While the \textit{majority} of the English system of land tenure broke down on the New England frontier, the traditional practice of entail survived in a pragmatically altered, socially regulated, morally prescriptive form.\footnote{The legal practice of entail in early modern England was considered a limitation of the inheritance of property to certain heirs over a number of generations. "Entail," Oxford Dictionaries, April 2010. Oxford University Press. \url{http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/entail} (accessed April 24, 2012).} In North America as in England, it remained the responsibility of the father, the head of household, to avoid states of abject dependency for his family. According to the socially prescriptive local traditions of Western Christendom, only properly ordered households could practice the forms of patriarchy and family discipline that God demanded from all Calvinist practitioners.\footnote{Kulikoff, From British Peasants..., 226.} Within the bounds of customary English practice, these elements of pious order were typically secured through both the diligent practice of the father’s own calling and the “hiring-out” of his children, once they had reached proper working age.\footnote{Vickers, Farmers and Fishermen, 66. The extensive work of Edmund Morgan on the domestic and family histories of the Puritan migrants has shown that boys typically began to perform specific duties within the household at the age of five, worked regularly by the age of eight, and chose a calling between the ages of ten and fourteen. Girls often began household chores at the age of seven. Morgan, The Puritan Family, 70.} As the overwhelming majority of the seventeenth-century English population could not claim the title of freeholder, fathers provided for their patriarchal future – their sons – through
the hiring-out process and individual probate records, which attempted to keep private items and personal property within the paternal family line.

Nearly all the Puritan heads of household in seventeenth-century New England, however, owned their land and its intrinsic privileges outright. In the practical absence of traditional prescriptions of agrarian order, English settlers did not share or divide lands—the sole source of economic security and ultimate basis of familial support—with tenant farmers, wageworkers, or any other ‘class’ of laborer other than their sons. These Puritan sons, circumscribed by the lack of sufficient workers to maintain their own farms at a relatively young age, were thereby forced to toil on the farms of their fathers until they, too, possessed the able hands of dutiful sons who would serve their paterfamilias, biding their youth and material resources on the rough edges of the colonial periphery. The immediate, practical benefits of strengthened patriarchal control and circumscribed youthful mobility on the frontier were twofold: fathers retained their sons for longer periods of time on family farms, carved out of the wilderness of New England, in the interests of infrastructural development and the attainment of a degree of modest familial prosperity, while sons labored to improve land that, due to the altered system of entail, would one day be theirs, not only to own, but also to add to, to build upon with additional swatches of uninterrupted, unclaimed fertile land. By guaranteeing a middling level of family subsistence first, therefore, most farmers in early New England participated in local markets and centers of exchange without being dominated by them; living in a “society with markets” rather than a “market society,” farmers were able to reinvest modest material gains into their family and immediate community without traditional

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cultural obligation. Neither nascent capitalists nor backcountry ascetics, the early
domestic leaders – moral, social, and economic – within the New England countryside
were pious and diligent Puritan fathers, attempting to sufficiently provide for themselves
and their families through modest success at a particular competency.\(^{109}\)

As a temporally specific articulation of the Calvinist doctrine of the calling, then,
the distinctly English pursuit of the achievement of a competency met with practical
failure within the bounds of early New England. The heavy precedence of historical
custom and common law in early modern England, functioning as praxis and as law,
could not be translated onto a physical landscape so utterly different from the customary
“patchwork parishes” characteristic of southeastern England and East Anglia.\(^{110}\)
Specifically designated within England only as the fundamental building block of the
ideal ‘pure church,’ the family unit was transformed, through the practical demands of
“civilizing” an unfamiliar territory, into the sole economic engine operating within the
‘transplantations’ of colonial New England. For the Puritan settlers of the Great
Migration, gaining a competency in the New World depended not on the interplay and
interdependence of traditional socio-economic hierarchies, access to common lands, or
the reality of widespread tenant farming; rather, negotiations of familial labor between

\(^{109}\) The terms “nascent capitalist” and “backcountry ascetic” are personal interpretations of what John
McCusker and Russell Menard refer to within their flagship compilation, \textit{The Economy of British America},
as the two primary schools of economic thought within the field of early colonial American history: the
‘Malthusian’ school, driven by conceptions of the “lure of the frontier,” internal development, and rapid
and extensive population growth and expansion; and the ‘Market’ school, based upon analyses of an
apparent “export-led” economic system, predicated on the assumption of a “two-region world” – the
metropolis and the colony – the latter of which required “vents for surplus” in order to function correctly.
McCusker and Menard, \textit{The Economy of British America}, 18-21.

\(^{110}\) Thompson, \textit{Customs in Common}, 97. On the traditional importance of custom within early modern
English culture, Thompson notes that “…customs do things – they are not abstract formulations of, or
searches for, meanings, although they may convey meaning. Customs are dearly connected to and rooted in
the material and social realities of life and work.” Ibid., 13.
fathers and sons on freeholder farms allowed English settlers to consolidate sources of both potential labor and produced capital within an environment where both precious commodities were scarce and highly expensive. While the practical content of a competency had been altered dramatically as an contingent result of migration to the New World, the fundamental moral aim did not: the pursuit of a competency in seventeenth-century New England remained both a distinct, disciplined method of Puritanical devotion as well as an expression of the performance of a providentially ordained calling, historically established English displays of sanctification within an impious world.

Moral Contours: Reorienting Practical Piety within Early New England

Regarding the content and structure of practical piety and economic conduct in the New World, historians of the various landscapes of early modern England and seventeenth-century New England consistently disagree with one another. On the one hand, Daniel Vickers has stated within his own work regarding father/son laboring relationships in colonial Massachusetts that, “in no way did they [English settlers] think of themselves as preserving a moral, customary past. When they did act in concert, it was to shake off tradition and secure for their families the independence that seemed proper to the New World.”\(^{111}\) However, such historical arguments, of which Vickers’ is but one, do not seem to supply an adequate explanation for the theoretical and practical persistence of such elements of Christian moral tradition as the Reformed Calvinist commitment to devotional practice or the essentially medieval doctrine of the calling, nor do such posits

sufficiently address the immeasurable social and moral impact of the recently revived Aristotelian tradition on the tenets of Puritan theology.

On the other hand, Stephen Foster has argued that the theory of a pure church literally had no meaning apart from the constitutional development that translated abstract European fictions into very concrete American realities. If the New England Puritans had broken with their European heritage, Foster argues, they had done so inadvertently and for the most European of reasons, having assumed all the while that they were building their society according to unchanging divine decrees applicable on either side of the Atlantic.¹¹² Such theoretical positions take into account both the intimate historical proximity of and cultural continuity between moderate Puritan communities in Old and New England, despite contingent differences in agricultural and political systems.

Shifts in agrarian practices and methods by which to achieve competency did not display evidence of either dissatisfaction with customary English landholding habits or a communal desire to “shake off tradition” and create a wholly original interpretation of ‘the good life.’ Rather, the transition from the economically rigid, socially interdependent ranks of English laborers to the homogeneity of the father/son working pair was one of practical necessity, driven not by individual interests or an acutely perceived divine decree, but rather by the desire to re-establish a sense of moral order and social prescription within the landscape of the New World, qualities already present and persistent within the practical and religious organization of the family unit. In other words, Puritan migrants arriving to a strange and unfamiliar scene in New England

¹¹² Foster, Their Solitary Way, 66.
simply wished to make it feel like home again by the only means with which the
migration had supplied them: their families.

Predicated on an Aristotelian conception of customarily rigid social roles, the
Reformed doctrine of the calling and Puritan devotional practice were effectively united
within the familial pursuit of a competency in seventeenth-century New England. The
democratized sacralization of all forms of humble and righteous work within the
‘affirmation of ordinary life’ extended, as a concept actively negotiated within a specific
moral tradition, to the contingent forms of pious labor constructed on the frontier of the
New World. In the relative absence of customary social organizations and modes of labor
such as tenant farmers or landless laborers, English migrants did not conceive of
themselves as redefining the traditional parameters of the calling or devotional practice,
nor did fathers and sons living and working in New England desire to separate
themselves, conceptually and practically, from the traditions of their English forebears
for any reason, social or religious. The righteous and dutiful subordination of the son to
the father, rather, was the closest approximation to customary modes of social
prescription and the control of labor that was possible in the early decades of New
England.

Furthermore, the intimate collaboration of all members of the nuclear family unit
for the purposes of sufficient living and working conditions in the New World mimicked
the activities of regulated Puritan devotional activity in the Old World, most notably
within the intimate, communal practices of the followers of William Perkins and William
Ames. Formulated outside of the traditional limits of a properly ordered and morally
regulated church in sixteenth-century England, Puritan devotional practice as an
historically established tradition readily lent itself, as a method of internalizing forms of social discipline, to the contingent demands of the New England frontier. The relatively morally autonomous nature of English devotional practice, however, concentrated upon intimately gathered or private practices or Scriptural recitations, was effectively turned outward towards the family group and social community as a function of the colonial experience. Devotional pilgrimage, conceived of theologically as an effective "implantation in Christ," was only possible through the pious execution of a secular calling, of which, within the conceptual and physical limits and demands of the colonial frontier, intently pious and morally prescriptive labor within the bounds of familial responsibility became the primary expression.

Within the tenuous and unfamiliar landscape of New England, actively engaged in cooperative and cross-generational activity, the entire Puritan family was put to physical work and rote catechismal memorization by the age of seven at the latest; thus, even families with young children were able to labor together as a devotional unit in the absence of customary modes of social discipline and religious structure. In the relative scarcity of nearly any other 'calling' than agricultural work on the frontier, fathers and sons toiled as a collaborative pair in what had become, by way of contingent circumstances and pious dedication to traditional modes of discipline, their sacralized vocation. The righteous strengthening of the family unit in pursuit of an agricultural calling, therefore, was the fundamental aim and purpose of all forms of labor and conceptualizations of 'the good life' in the seventeenth-century New England countryside.
CONCLUSION

What we are trying to find out is what are the links, what are the connections that can be identified between mechanisms of coercion and elements of knowledge, what is the interplay of relays and support developed between them, such that a given element of knowledge takes on the effects of power in a given system where it is allocated to a true, probable, uncertain or false element, such that a procedure of coercion acquires the very form and justification of a rational, calculated, technically efficient element.¹¹³

By the third quarter of the seventeenth century, the structure and content of practical piety and economic practice of Puritan England had changed dramatically from its nascent form culturally dominant not fifty years earlier: the development of open expanses of unimproved land, familial dependence, and a peculiar devotional character had gradually come to replace patchwork parishes, socially delineated working ranks, and ‘visible churches’ as the true ideals to which Puritan New Englanders believed themselves to be heir. Escalating levels of vagrants, ‘Hugh Make-Shifts,’ and masterless men, set forth into the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English countryside by the vainglorious and impious actions of a few powerful men, had genuinely upset traditional understandings of social hierarchy and customary deference. Increasing rates of enclosure following such ‘enrichment of the gentry’ threatened the economic viability, and thus the spiritual welfare, of the Puritan faithful devoted to gaining an adequate competency from the cultivation of common landholdings. Acts of migration – from the northeast corners of the Continent to the southeastern hamlets and market towns of England, across the Atlantic to the shores of North America – and pragmatic renegotiations of moral order and social discipline were therefore central to such conceptual and practical shifts within Reformed and Puritan theologies.

¹¹³ Michel Foucault, The Politics of Truth (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 1997), 59.
Both of these strains of Calvinist thought subscribed to a particular anthropology of the fallen man, emphasizing the degree of depravity over against the possibility of virtue without grace; as argued by Charles Hambrick-Stowe, "a primary emphasis on personal experience, human sinfulness, and divine initiative in salvation through grace are the hallmarks of Augustinian spirituality."\textsuperscript{114} The covenant of grace within Protestant philosophy depended on the lowliness of the human condition for its conceptual integrity; the ideals of spiritual regeneration and a 'pure church' would find no practical necessity if man were able to redeem himself from the Fall without the intervention of divine providence. Human depravity had cursed mankind to labor by the sweat of his brow for his sustenance and meager holdings; the Puritan man had sensed his natural shamefulness and felt remorse for his condition, but the medieval concept of the calling as interpreted by Calvin and Perkins as a type of devotional practice enabled him to glorify his work by sacralizing it, making every daily activity holy and spiritually expressive. Howsoever industriously he may labor and howsoever faithfully he may hone his craft, Augustinian piety and English political philosophy state that a singular will sins when it turns to the private satisfaction of personal goods. A proper will must be characterized by a desire to live an honorable life, and must assent to the truth and desire of God in order to judge and act rightly among other men.

To act rightly among other men is to act in relation to them: the Ramist law of relatives dictates that, while an individual is not virtuous or corrupt by nature, he can be identified as such only in relation to the thought and conduct of other men. Similarly, virtue ethics, or Aristotelian moral theory, endeavors to define not the content of a particular obligation, but rather how that obligation relates to a particular type of good

\textsuperscript{114} Hambrick-Stowe, \textit{The Practice of Piety}, 26.
life," as well as a form of human agency and identity considered possible within a particular society. What is considered 'good' is determined by the particular telos of a person: the specific aim that the individual seeks, the social function that one fulfills, and the individual desires both expressed and suppressed as a result of that prescription. Virtues are considered those qualities the lack of which frustrate an individual's movement toward his telos. Within the conceptual bounds of the tradition of virtue ethics, therefore, virtuous conduct is always attached to a particular socially prescriptive role and practice at a historically specific cultural juncture.

This thesis has endeavored to illuminate historically embedded strands of a particular moral tradition, virtue ethics, traced throughout the works and posits of authors highly influential within the Western Christian tradition and across the Atlantic to Puritan New England. Aristotelian moral theory and strict social hierarchy, Augustinian perceptions of original sin and the will, the Reformed doctrine of the calling, and familial Puritan devotion were social and moral realities for all of the migrants transported to New England during the Great Migration. Puritan fathers and sons of New England would have recognized these particular elements of Aristotelian, Augustinian, and Reformed theology at work within their laboring relationships.

Such a conceptual approach regarding the concept of competency in early New England differs from traditional contemporary interpretations of the English settlers of the Great Migration as either anti-capitalist ascetics or proto-capitalist entrepreneurs. Historian Stephen Innes has argued that the pursuit of a competency connoted neither "frontier-like simplicity" nor "rude sufficiency," but rather "the accoutrements of a
midlevel household.”¹¹⁵ Such theses have attempted, in varying forms, to negotiate the written records of the English settlers as though they had existed in the eighteenth, or even nineteenth, centuries; as general motivations for daily activity and productivity, ‘capitalism’ or ‘anticapitalism’ are features of the post-Industrial Revolution “modern age,” and have no practical application to the actions and writings of seventeenth-century religiously-motivated migrants. This thesis has argued that the conceptual roots of competency lie specifically within the medieval Thomist and early modern Calvinist doctrines of the calling, moral traditions buttressed by centuries of Aristotelian and Augustinian cultural influence, respectively. Migrants to New England were not motivated by the allure of capitalistic success or the isolated and precarious nature of the backcountry, but rather by concern for the welfare of their families, whose economic and spiritual estates were wracked by the social and moral turmoil of the age. Puritan heads of household in Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut were not prototypes for the American ‘hero’ or ‘antihero,’ but fathers.

Such an approach to American Religious History endeavors to take into careful moral consideration and historical account not only the practical interaction of certain forms of materiality and “lived religion” within the early colonial landscape, but also the ways in which these particular concepts are shaped by and interact with the historical processes and moral prescriptions of the virtue ethics tradition, specifically the strain of Calvinist piety at work within the bounds of Puritan New England. The intricate workings of such a cultural tradition, which illustrate the conceptual influence of seventeenth-century Scholastic and Ramist philosophies upon the practical, daily activities of English settlers to the New World, provide a most important and routinely

understudied "lens" through which the practical fulfillment of labor demands, historically contingent negotiations of competency, and exhibitions of personal agency can be understood as the active attainment of a type of 'good life' through socially regulated and morally prescribed modes of social and economic conduct.
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