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Pursuits of Happiness

1988

University of North Carolina
Press

Chapter One



TWO MODELS OF ENGLISH

COLONIZATION, 1600-1660

During the first six decades of the seventeenth century, an astonishing number of English people and smaller numbers of Welsh and Scots poured out of their native island in a massive movement west and south into and across the Atlantic. Without parallel in earlier English history or indeed even in the exodus of Portuguese and Spaniards to the East and to America over the previous century, this migration began slowly. No more than 25,000 to 30,000 people left during the first three decades of the century. Over the next thirty years, however, it reached substantial proportions, averaging as many as 6,500 to 8,000 people annually. Although surviving data are far too fragmentary to permit precise estimates of total emigration, probably no fewer than 240,000 and perhaps as many as 295,000 people left Britain before 1660.

This surging tide of humanity went primarily to five destinations. Beginning in 1603 and continuing for over forty years, 70,000 to 100,000 English and Scots joined a smaller group of Elizabethan emigrants to the "New English" plantations in Ireland. Four years later, in 1607, a small contingent of adventurers established the first permanent English American settlement in the new colony of Virginia. Along with its neighboring Chesapeake colony, Maryland, founded in 1634, Virginia was the destination of roughly 50,000 settlers by 1660, by far the greatest number of them arriving after the mid-1630s. Another, much more modest migration, consisting perhaps of 3,000 to 4,000 people, went to the western Atlantic island of Bermuda starting in 1612. Beginning with a small migration to Plymouth in 1620 and continuing with a huge influx into Massachusetts Bay between 1629 and the early 1640s, an additional 20,000 to 25,000 went to New England,

many of them spilling over into the new colonies of Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Haven after the mid-1630s. Also in the 1620s, several small islands in the eastern Caribbean, including principally Barbados and the Leeward Islands of St. Kitts, Nevis, Antigua, and Montserrat, became the destination for another, far larger migration of perhaps as many as 110,000 to 135,000.¹

By the 1640s and 1650s, England thus had five substantial areas of overseas settlements—the Irish plantations of Ulster and Munster; the Chesapeake colonies of Virginia and Maryland; Bermuda; the New England colonies of Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Haven; and the West Indian colonies of Barbados and the Leeward Islands. The predominantly English people who went to these areas all intended to one degree or another for the new societies they were creating to be fundamentally and recognizably English. Yet the new research into the cultural dynamics and socioeconomic and demographic configurations of the two major centers of English settlement on the North American continent has made it clearer than ever before that during these early years of settlement the Chesapeake colonies of Virginia and Maryland differed profoundly from the principal New England colonies of Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine how any two fragments from the same metropolitan culture could have been any more different. About the only characteristics they had in common were their ethnic homogeneity, their ruralness, their primitive material conditions, their remoteness from England, and, after their first few years, an abundant local food supply. In virtually every other respect, they seem to have been diametric opposites.

VIRGINIA, as England's oldest American colony, occupied the crucial place in the transformation of the English conception of colonization during the first quarter of the seventeenth century. Largely as a consequence of that "acquisitive and predatory drive for commodities and for the profits to be made on the rich products of the outer world" that characterized European overseas expansion during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Virginia's orientation was almost wholly commercial from the beginning.² Yet, like the Elizabethans who had earlier formed projects for plantations in Ireland and America, the first organizers of the Virginia Company and many of the first adventurers to Virginia were still thinking primarily in terms of

the Spanish experience in America. Hoping to secure a foothold in America before Spain and other rival European nations had occupied it all, they aspired, like the great Spanish *conquistadores*, to make some bold conquest that would bring them instant riches and fame and the nation wealth and power equivalent to that achieved by the Iberians over the previous century. Failing that, they thought of establishing commercial outposts, or factories such as those set up by the East India, Levant, and Muscovy companies in their respective spheres of influence during the last half of the sixteenth century, which would develop a lucrative trade with the natives. Even as it rapidly became clear that Virginia could succeed only if it could develop products that would be salable in European markets, those involved initially patterned their thinking on the English experience in Ireland, where such products were produced on units managed by the English but worked largely by native labor.³

An understanding of the ways participants in the Virginia enterprise initially conceived of the undertaking helps to explain many puzzling aspects of the colony's early history. Accustomed to thinking of colonies as commercial agricultural settlements, as Virginia quickly became, later generations of historians have had difficulty comprehending why the Virginia Company sent military adventurers rather than farmers in its initial thrust into the Chesapeake, why these adventurers did not work harder to try to feed themselves, and why the company and its leaders in the colony found it necessary to govern for so long through a severe military regimen. But when it is recognized that conquest, not agriculture, was the primary object of the Virginia outpost during its first years, that the initial adventurers expected to get food not by dint of their own labor but, like their Elizabethan counterparts in Ireland and elsewhere, from the local population, and that all earlier trading company factories established in the midst of potentially hostile and numerically superior populations had been operated as military and commercial organizations rather than as agricultural societies, the history of Virginia during its early years becomes much more comprehensible.⁴

If the first English people came to Virginia looking for conquests or trade to make them wealthy and if they organized themselves so as to exploit the fruits of their hoped-for discoveries, they soon realized that neither conquest nor trade was likely to yield returns sufficient to sustain the colony, and the rapid development of tobacco as a viable

commercial crop quickly transformed Virginia into the sort of commercial agricultural settlement that comes to mind when one thinks of early modern British colonies. Within a decade after its initial settlement in 1607, Virginia was organized for the production of a single agricultural staple—tobacco—for the metropolitan market. The high profits yielded by tobacco turned the colony into a boom settlement in which the reckless and single-minded pursuit of individual gain became the central animating impulse and the chief social determinant. In quest of wealth that would provide them with the civilized comforts they had left behind in England, men greedily took great risks. They dispersed themselves over the landscape with scant regard for the sensibilities of its Indian occupants. And they vigorously competed with one another for labor, the one commodity that provided the key to success in an economy that revolved around production of so labor-intensive a crop as tobacco.⁵

From these early decades, then, the labor requirements of producing tobacco were a primary force in shaping Chesapeake society. Aware that they had neither the coercive nor the persuasive resources necessary to reduce the local native populations to the hard labor involved in tobacco production, Virginia Company leaders moved quickly to solve their problem by guaranteeing prospective immigrants land and freedom in return for a specified period of labor as servants.⁶ For the next century, such servants constituted far and away the largest single source of European immigrants to the Chesapeake, probably 80 to 90 percent of the roughly 130,000 to 150,000 Europeans who migrated to the area before 1700. Almost wholly people who had not yet acquired much stake in society in England, these servant immigrants were drawn throughout the century from a broad cross section of English society, including, in roughly-equal proportions, unskilled laborers and youths, agricultural workers, and tradesmen. They came mostly from areas within a forty-mile radius of three main ports of embarkation: London, Bristol, and Liverpool. Most important for the character of emerging Chesapeake society, they were predominantly young (aged fifteen to twenty-four with twenty to twenty-one the most frequent age) and male (ranging over time from six to two and one-half males for every female).⁷

These people came to the Chesapeake with hopes for a better life or at least one in which their sustenance was less problematic than it had been in England, and Virginia Company leaders fully intended

that their hopes should not be disappointed. Once they had committed themselves to establishing an agricultural colony, company leaders sought to create a "stable, diversified society, where men would make reasonable profits and live ordinary, reasonable lives" in a context of traditional English political, religious, and cultural institutions.⁸ From the foundation of the colony, of course, the company, as Perry Miller has shown, had conceived of Virginia as considerably more than a purely economic venture. Along with its investors, backers, and the people it sent out to America, the company thought of the colony as part of a Divinely ordered plan in which English Protestants chosen by God would carry out the redemptive mission of reclaiming Virginia and its heathen inhabitants for His true church. The "conscious and powerful intention" of both promoters and adventurers, Miller has correctly argued, was "to merge the [colony's] society with the purposes of God."⁹ In the boom conditions that obtained between 1615 and 1625, however, such concerns, which had never been at the forefront of the Virginia enterprise, were thoroughly overridden by the race for tobacco profits. The company's broader social and religious goals, including its design of fixing Virginia firmly within a "religious framework," were very largely frustrated by the behavior of its settlers in Virginia, including even that of its own officers.

Indeed, the society that took shape in Virginia during these determinative formative years was a drastically simplified and considerably distorted version of contemporary English society. With no permanent commitment to the colony, property owners in Virginia showed little concern for the public weal of the colony and routinely sacrificed the corporate welfare to their own individual ends. Company officials led the way by expropriating so many of the resources the company sent to Virginia that, despite continuing heavy outlays, the company was on the verge of economic ruin by the time of its dissolution in 1624. Extremely reluctant to devote time or energy to any endeavor that did not contribute directly to their immediate tobacco profits, the free settlers often failed to produce enough food to feed themselves and their servants, whom they exploited ruthlessly and treated more as disposable commodities than as fellow human beings.¹⁰

By failing to grow enough food, overworking their servants, and unwittingly settling in areas with contaminated water, they also contributed to an astonishingly high mortality rate that took as much as 30 percent of the total European population in some years and was

probably even higher among fresh immigrants. At the same time that they made their powerful Indian neighbors anxious by steadily encroaching upon their lands, they neglected to take adequate precautions against Indian attack and paid dearly for their laxity when Indians killed 347 people—more than a quarter of the total number of English settlers—in a surprise massacre on March 22, 1622. Of the some 7,200 people who came to Virginia during the eighteen years of company supervision, only slightly more than 1,200 remained in 1624. Though there was obviously some leakage to the Indians and some reemigration to England or other Anglo-American outposts, most of this startling population loss was the product of a grim mortality. By the mid-1620s, a few immigrants had managed to accumulate substantial fortunes and to monopolize a highly disproportionate share of the colony's wealth. But their success had been purchased at an enormous cost in human life, and they had presided over the establishment of a society in which life for most of its inhabitants was little better than the hard, nasty, brutish, and short existence later attributed to the state of nature by the philosopher Thomas Hobbes."

By the time Charles I made Virginia England's first royal colony in 1625, Chesapeake society had developed a set of social and demographic characteristics that would prove remarkably durable. Oriented primarily toward the production of tobacco for European markets and deeply materialistic, Virginia was a highly exploitive, labor-intensive, and sharply differentiated society in which a few of the people who survived the high mortality had become rich and the vast majority worked in harsh conditions as servants, hoping to live long enough to work out their terms and become independent, landowning producers. With few people having any long-term commitment to the colony, religion and other traditional institutions were weak, a sense of community tenuous, and cultural amenities almost nonexistent. The population was mostly young, male, immigrant, outside the bounds of conventional family discipline, and incapable of reproducing itself. Men outnumbered women by three to one; three-fourths of the people were under thirty years of age, with nearly half falling into the age group between twenty and twenty-nine; more than nine out of ten were European born. Although the colony contained a small core of nuclear families, they formed no more than the earliest beginnings of a settled family structure. Created mostly after their members had arrived in the colony, families were predominantly childless; about two-

thirds of the roughly 45 percent of couples that did have children had only one. High mortality resulted in more than half of Virginia's few children living in broken families in which one or both parents were dead. Along with the absence of a clear correspondence between wealth and the traditional attributes of leadership as they were understood by Englishmen at home, the fragility of life—and fortune—in the colony meant that social and political authority was weak, impermanent, and open to challenge and that the potential for social discord was high.¹²

During the thirty-five years following the demise of the Virginia Company, however, conditions in this still contingent and rudimentary settlement on the Chesapeake improved substantially for its new English inhabitants. With the fall of tobacco prices beginning in the mid-1620s, the initial boom gradually dissipated. As profits fell, socioeconomic life in the Chesapeake may have lost some of its harsh competitive edge and become somewhat less intensely exploitive. Yet although prices continued to fall and the tobacco market went through recurrent cycles of prosperity and depression, growing productivity and lowered shipping and distribution costs combined to produce a long-term period of growth that lasted until 1680. A response to a steady rise in European demand for tobacco, this rapid expansion brought increasing wealth to the Chesapeake. Estimated annual income for the area as a whole increased from less than £10,000 sterling in 1630 to over £70,000 by 1670.¹³

Wealth, in turn, encouraged considerable immigration. More and more after the mid-1630s, younger sons of substantial gentry and urban families, some with wives and children, migrated to the Chesapeake to seek their fortunes and their independence in the production and marketing of tobacco.¹⁴ But the vast majority of immigrants continued to be servants, who, whenever (as in the late 1630s and throughout the 1650s) the tobacco market was bullish and demand for labor correspondingly high, came at the astonishing rate of 1,500 to 1,900 per year.¹⁵ Directed to the Chesapeake by servant factors hoping to profit from buoyant labor and tobacco markets, these thousands of servant immigrants were enticed by the prospects of themselves achieving land, servants, independence, and perhaps even affluence at the conclusion of their terms.

Before 1660, those servants who survived, especially those fortunate enough to acquire wives and families, were seldom disappointed in

their hopes. With land cheap and fixed capital costs for tools and equipment low, any person who could command modest amounts of labor additional to his own from either family members or servants could produce tobacco successfully. At least until the end of the 1650s, Chesapeake society, as Russell McNard has shown for Maryland, "was open enough to allow a man who started at the bottom without special advantages to acquire a substantial estate and a responsible [social and political] position"; "any healthy man" who "worked hard, practiced thrift, avoided expensive lawsuits, and did not suffer from plain bad luck, could become a landowner in a short time."¹⁶ For those free immigrants from higher social statuses in England who brought with them even modest amounts of capital with which to acquire servants, prospects were even brighter. They could confidently expect to do well economically, hold public office, and, in general, as one scholar has phrased it, "step a notch upward in the social scale."¹⁷

By 1660, these favorable economic conditions had drawn enough people into the Chesapeake to raise the total Euro-American population to around twenty-five thousand, an astonishing increase from the twelve hundred souls left by the Virginia Company in 1624.¹⁸ Some of this increase was the result of lower mortality and a higher birthrate. As Carville Earle has suggested, Jamestown and many other early Chesapeake settlements were located in a "deadly estuarine zone" in which the annual summer invasion of saltwater contaminated the drinking supply with salt, sediment, and fecal material containing pathogens of typhoid and dysentery that floated back and forth past the settlements with the summer tide. This condition, Earle estimates, produced sufficient incidence of typhoid, dysentery, and salt poisoning to account for roughly two-thirds of the high mortality under the Virginia Company. Subsequent redistribution of population to higher land and to freshwater zones after 1624 cut mortality rates by as much as 50 percent.¹⁹ Similarly, losses at the hands of the Indians diminished sharply. Following the 1622 massacre, colonists systematically subjugated Indian villages in the immediate vicinity of their own settlements, killing or destroying resisters, and carefully separated themselves from the rest of their Indian neighbors. Despite a second uprising in 1644 that took the lives of about five hundred whites, this policy was at least partly responsible for a higher survival rate among Euro-Virginians after 1630.²⁰ At the same time, a slowly improving ratio of women to men may have accounted for a modest rise in the birthrate.²¹

Notwithstanding these favorable developments, far and away the most significant source of population growth in the Chesapeake between 1624 and 1660 was continuing immigration. If mortality was falling dramatically, it nevertheless was still "comparable . . . to that of severe epidemic years in England." Malaria and periodic epidemics continued to take a high toll. Life expectancy for adult males remained somewhat lower than for people who stayed in England.²² Similarly, despite apparently higher survival rates for women in the Chesapeake, the continuing disproportion of males to females among servant immigrants meant that many men could not expect to form families and prevented the achievement of the more balanced sex ratio necessary for the population to sustain itself, much less to yield strong natural growth.²³

Indeed, as several recent studies have shown, persistently high mortality had a profound impact upon patterns of life among those people who had been able to form families. In one Maryland county half of all marriages were broken by death within seven years; in a Virginia county a quarter of all children had lost one or both parents by age five, one-half of them by age thirteen, and three-quarters by age twenty-one. Parental death was such an integral part of the fabric of life that it was the norm for most children. Because men died earlier than women, women were "accorded an unusually influential role in managing the estate and bringing up children," and the omnipresence of death impelled parents to set their sons up independently as soon as they reached maturity. Indeed, with so many children left so early without natural parents in the Chesapeake, parental control and sexual mores were unusually weak, and prudent parents must have sought to encourage autonomy and adaptability, not dependence and inflexibility, in their offspring.²⁴

At the same time that it produced an exceptional emphasis upon autonomy and independence, however, the continuing fragility of life in the Chesapeake was one of the several elements contributing to a growing sense of community. As scholars have traditionally emphasized, the harsh, competitive, and highly individualistic and materialistic impulses manifested during the first tobacco boom continued to be strongly evident in succeeding decades. But recent research has made clear that such impulses were significantly mitigated by several developments after 1630. First, the cooling off of the economy also slackened the pace of economic differentiation and thereby helped to blunt the intense competitiveness that had characterized social relations dur-

ing the boom years. Of course, some men with superior resources continued to acquire more wealth than others. But wealth actually seems to have been more equitably distributed through the 1640s and 1650s than it had been earlier. Although a few large producers had substantial holdings, most settlers had only small ones. Large and small holders alike still concentrated on producing tobacco for export. But they paid far more attention than earlier to domestic husbandry, including livestock raising, food production, and horticulture. Chesapeake society appeared to be slowly undergoing a transformation into a settled pasture-farming area that, despite its continuing emphasis on tobacco, was becoming more and more similar to many areas of rural England. The changing character of agriculture after 1650 thus helped to give the Chesapeake a more settled English appearance.²⁵

So also did the steady growth of population. People continued to disperse in nonnuclear settlements over the richest tobacco lands close to navigable streams. By 1660, however, population increases had resulted in the development of many areas of concentrated settlement, which were already well into the process of forming densely interconnecting societal networks based on kin, neighborhood, and economic ties. These networks in turn fostered the emergence of a shared sense of mutual interdependence and locally felt community. The Chesapeake, in short, was slowly being transformed into a "mosaic of close-knit neighborhoods" in which residents depended upon one another for association and assistance. In particular, the frequency of parental death operated as a powerful cohesive force among neighbors by accentuating the importance of extended kinship and quasi-kinship connections for rearing orphaned children.²⁶

As the Chesapeake area gradually took on a less contingent character, its white inhabitants made a concerted effort to recreate the institutional structures that had given social coherence and a sense of security to the world they had left behind in England. "Little by little," Warren M. Billings has remarked, these materialistic people "came to understand that a well-ordered society was a regulated community that kept its members at peace with one another and out of harm's way." Intensity of religious conviction was never sufficient to constitute a primary shaping influence in this early Chesapeake society, and religious opinions were every bit as diverse as they were in old England. Nevertheless, leaders in both Virginia and Maryland had moved to institute the established church during the early years of settlement,

and they subsequently proceeded to mark out new parishes "at a remarkably regular and prolific pace" and to endow them with most of the same broad social responsibilities performed by English parishes, including especially poor relief.²⁷

By creating county courts in the mid-1630s, they similarly gave vent to a growing desire for security of their liberties and property through the establishment of a legal and judicial order in the metropolitan tradition. The chief agencies for the articulation of local needs, these courts came to serve both as effective devices for implementing a uniform system of justice and as a visible institutional location for the embodiment and exertion of legitimate authority. With broad jurisdiction extending to virtually all aspects of life at the local level, the county courts in both Virginia and Maryland became the primary centers of power, more important in most respects than institutions at the provincial level, including even the representative lawmaking assemblies, the first of which convened in Virginia in 1619.

Along with the gradual thickening of social networks, courts and parishes made a substantial contribution toward the achievement of a more stable and coherent social and political order. To be sure, the courts also became the principal arenas of conflict for ambitious men who competed vigorously, sometimes violently, for power, advantage, and preeminence. Through this alternating process of conflict and cooperation, however, they laid the foundations for a ruling elite that could eventually perform functions, enjoy status, and exert influence similar to those of the county gentry in England. Just as provincial leaders in both Virginia and Maryland proved on several occasions that they could quickly unite against any metropolitan efforts to lessen their socioeconomic and political autonomy, so also did rivals within county magistracies often present a common front against the provincial government whenever local interests were at stake.²⁸

Between 1625 and 1660, the Chesapeake slowly became more heavily settled. Its demographic patterns were yet peculiar by metropolitan standards. Its Euro-American population, which made up more than 95 percent of the non-Indian people living in the area, was younger and more male; it had a high proportion of single-person male households, especially in areas of newest settlement; numbers of families and children were limited by a shortage of women; mortality rates were high. Though these demographic characteristics were far less pronounced than they had been thirty or even ten years earlier, their

continuance as well as the persistence of a strongly materialistic and individualistic orientation among settlers meant that the Chesapeake settlements still fell considerably short of the traditional ideals of an anglicized society.

Nevertheless, as it had slowly become more settled and socially more elaborate and less inimical to human life, the Chesapeake had also become far less fragile and had acquired an air of permanence that had been missing a mere thirty-five years earlier. These developments inspired its more sanguine leaders with visions of even more impressive achievements in the foreseeable future. Such people now actively sought to establish urban centers, develop more compact settlements, and diversify the economy to make it less susceptible to sudden fluctuations in the international tobacco trade. Through these and other similar changes, including a continuing improvement in demographic circumstances, Chesapeake leaders in the early 1660s looked forward to the eventual transformation of England's most ancient transatlantic dominion into a more fully anglicized society.²⁹

If the early history of the Chesapeake colonies was a story of a long search for sustenance, stability, and definition, England's New England colonies underwent no such uncertain travail. The first permanent New England colony at Plymouth was settled in 1620, thirteen years after the founding of Jamestown. With a significant proportion of families among the earliest immigrants, a considerably less malignant disease environment, better relations with a far less numerous native population, and, after the first winter, no severe food shortages such as beset Virginia during its early years, Plymouth had been able from very early on to establish a more settled society organized around the nuclear family and producing enough children to permit modest population growth. Population numbered no more than four hundred people after a decade and did not reach two thousand before 1660. This slow increase was the result not, as in the Chesapeake, of high mortality, which in Plymouth was somewhat lower even than in England, but of low rates of immigration.

Through mixed agriculture and some fur trading with Indians along the Maine coast, the Plymouth colonists were able both to sustain themselves and to produce a surplus sufficient to pay off their substantial debts to the English merchants who had underwritten their venture. In contrast to the Chesapeake colonies, however, they never dis-

covered a source of wealth that either made Plymouth attractive to immigrants or produced a strong demand for labor, much less the resources necessary to purchase that labor. Throughout the seventeenth century, standards of living were moderate, the pace of social differentiation and wealth concentration was slow, and men's economic ambitions necessarily remained comparatively modest.

Plymouth differed from Virginia and Maryland not only in its relative inability to generate much wealth but also in the deeply and persistently religious orientation of its separatist puritan leaders. Like the Chesapeake colonies, however, Plymouth was characterized by a significant degree of religious pluralism from the beginning, and neither the strength nor perhaps the internal logic of the separatist persuasion of the dominant group proved powerful enough either to prevent population dispersion or to foster the development of a strong sense of community. Not much less than the Chesapeake colonies, then, Plymouth was marked by geographic mobility, a high degree of individualistic behavior, and relatively weak ties of community.³⁰

If Plymouth differed from the Chesapeake colonies in its slow pace of economic and demographic growth and the more deeply religious orientation of its dominant leaders and settlers, the puritan settlements begun with the founding of the new colony of Massachusetts Bay in 1629 presented an even more striking contrast. For one thing, Massachusetts was initially peopled largely by a short, sudden, and carefully organized burst of immigration. Between twenty and twenty-five thousand Englishmen poured into the colony and adjacent areas in just twelve short years between 1630 and 1642. For another, most of these immigrants, as many as 70 percent, came not as unmarried, young, and unfree servants but as members of established families, independent farmers and artisans with some accumulated resources. "Unlike the simultaneous outpouring of Englishmen to other New World colonies," then, this "Great Migration to New England . . . was a voluntary exodus of families and included relatively few indentured servants." Virtually from the beginning, therefore, the age structure and sex ratio in New England resembled those of established societies all over western Europe far more closely than was the case with any other new societies established by the English in America during the early modern era. Unlike the Chesapeake colonies, which could never have sustained themselves without a constant flow of new arrivals from England, New England was the destination of relatively few new im-

migrants following the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642. Indeed, there was a substantial counterflow of disillusioned settlers back to England during the 1640s and 1650s, involving as much as 10 percent of the population of some towns. Nor does it appear that immigration from England to New England ever again became substantial at any later time during the colonial period.³¹

Nevertheless, New England's population grew rapidly from the large base of initial immigrants. Largely free of serious epidemics, New England experienced much lower mortality rates than either England or any of its colonies. Recent studies have shown that infant mortality was low—of an average of 8.3 children born to a group of sample families in Andover, 7.2 survived to age twenty-one—and those who lived to that age could anticipate long and healthy lives: 71.8 for men and 80.8 for women among the first generation of settlers and 64.2 for men and 61.6 for women among the second. Combined with relatively young ages at first marriages for women (19.0 for the first generation and 22.3 for the second) and a correspondingly high number of births per marriage, this low rate of mortality sent population surging upward. Within a generation, population had doubled. By 1660, New England as a whole contained between fifty-five and sixty thousand inhabitants of European descent, more than twice the number in the Chesapeake colonies, which had been in existence for a full generation longer. In vivid contrast to the Chesapeake, moreover, most of these people were native born, New England becoming the first region of Anglo-American settlement to develop a predominantly creole population.³²

Simultaneously New England's new inhabitants were fanning out all over eastern and southern New England. Local Indians provided much less resistance than in the Chesapeake. They were not nearly so numerous nor so powerful as those who occupied eastern Virginia and Maryland, and the New Englanders pursued a more conciliatory and paternalistic, albeit no less culturally arrogant, policy toward them. Except for the brief war with the Pequots in 1637 during which the New Englanders virtually exterminated one of the most powerful tribes in the region, white-Indian relations were comparatively harmonious. Within just three decades, New Englanders had established settlements all along the coast from southern Maine to western Long Island Sound as well as in the rich Connecticut Valley and on Long Island itself. By the early 1640s, New England consisted of five sepa-

rate colonies: Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, New Haven, and Rhode Island.³³

The great migration to New England between 1630 and 1642 had an even deeper religious coloring than had the earlier and smaller immigration to Plymouth. Indeed, as a collectivity, New England immigrants, in Perry Miller's words, were "primarily occupied with religious ideas," and the depth and extent of this religious impulse provided yet another striking contrast with the palpably more secular settlements that had taken shape around Chesapeake Bay. Participants in the great migration were far from being all of one mind with regard to theology, church government, and other religious questions, and the congregational church polity preferred by most of them was conducive to the accommodation of a wide diversity of religious opinion. Nevertheless, an overwhelming majority of New England settlers were dedicated puritans. "Adherence to Puritan principles" was "the common thread that stitched individual emigrants together into a larger movement," and puritanism "remained the dominant force of New England culture" throughout the seventeenth century.

Unlike their predecessors at Plymouth, they came to America not simply to find a refuge from the religious impositions of the early Stuarts. Rather, they were moved by the vision of establishing a redemptive community of God's chosen people in the New World. They saw themselves as a special group joined in a binding covenant with God and sent by Him into the wilderness "as instruments of a sacred historical design." Their "peculiar mission" was to establish the true Christian commonwealth that would thenceforth serve as a model for the rest of the Christian world. In the societies they created, the church and the clergy necessarily had unusually powerful roles, the relationship between clerical and secular leaders was both intimate and mutually supportive, and full civil rights, including the franchise, were in many communities limited to church members.³⁴

The millennial vision of the New England puritan colonists had a powerful social as well as religious dimension. They came to America not only because they were unable to realize their religious aspirations in old England. They were also driven by a profound disquiet over the state of contemporary English society. In towns and rural areas alike, new social and economic forces seemed to be producing a disturbing and ever-widening gap between inherited prescriptions of social order and actual circumstances of life, and the crown and its agents were

more and more intruding into many aspects of local affairs—civil as well as religious. To an important degree, the great migration to New England was an “essentially defensive, conservative, even reactionary” response to these developments, betraying a profound fear of social chaos and a deep yearning for order and control. Hence its members were determined not only to achieve perfection in the church but also to create a society that, in contrast to the seemingly increasingly anarchic and beleaguered world they were leaving behind, would conform as closely as possible to traditional English conceptions of the ideal, well-ordered commonwealth.³⁵

This determination was, moreover, powerfully reinforced by the puritans’ fear of the American wilderness. The great plenty of land was certainly an important element in drawing them to the New World. In contrast to the settlers of the other English colonies in America, however, they seem to have displayed fewer paradisaical fantasies of a life of ease assisted by the natural abundance of a new Eden in America. Rather, nature, symbolized by the unnamed wilderness and its wild and savage Indian inhabitants, seemed to the puritans to be corrupt and out of control. Like unredeemed man himself, it had to be subdued and subjected to good order.³⁶

In their grand design of building the ideal, traditional, ordered English world in the unnamed American wilderness, the puritan settlers of New England organized their new societies around a series of tightly-constructed and relatively independent settled permanent communities in which the inhabitants formally covenanted with each other to found unified social organisms. There was considerable diversity in the form of these communities. A few, like Andover, seem to have been classical nucleated villages in which the inhabitants lived around the meetinghouse, itself an omnipresent symbol of the commonality of their lives and social goals, and went forth each working morning to fields arranged according to the traditional open field system that still prevailed in several areas of England. But most, like Sudbury, quickly broke up into dispersed rural settlements with the inhabitants living on individual farms. The way any group of settlers organized themselves on the land seems to have been determined to a significant degree by their own prior experience in England.³⁷

But everywhere, at least in the three “orthodox colonies” of Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, and New Haven, the purpose of their settlements was the same. Although they were by no means disinterested

in achieving sustenance and prosperity, they put enormous emphasis upon establishing well-ordered communities knit together by Christian love and composed only of like-minded people with a common religious ideology and a strong sense of communal responsibility. Insofar as possible, they intended to maintain order, hierarchy, and subordination; to subordinate individual interests to the public good; to shun all public disputes; to maintain tight control over economic life, including especially the unruly forces of the market; to subject the moral and social conduct of themselves and their neighbors to the closest possible social discipline; and systematically to exclude the contentious and the deviant from their midst.³⁸

These tightly constructed and communally oriented villages were only one means of achieving order and harmony in puritan New England. Strong extended and highly patriarchal families also helped to preserve social control and guarantee a relatively high degree of peace throughout the first generation of settlement. The process of migration from England evidently limited the degree to which families among the first settlers were likely to be extended in structure. But a combination of abundant land, large families, great longevity among parents, a proclivity for children to remain in the communities of their nativity, and long delays in the transmission of land to the second generation contributed to the rapid development of families that were extended in structure, patriarchal in character, and deeply rooted in their local communities. A majority of households remained nuclear into the second generation in the sense that sons usually lived apart from their parents after they were married. As Philip Greven has found for Andover, however, the proximity of residences laid the basis for elaborate kinship networks that continued to expand for generations. In Andover, the most salient characteristic of the family during the first generation of settlement was the enormous strength of parental authority, with fathers retaining control of land to ensure that their children would continue dutiful and dependent. In this regard, as in so many others, the society of puritan New England provided a stark contrast to the improvisational family and household arrangements and the emphasis on autonomy and adaptability in child rearing dictated by high parental mortality in the Chesapeake colonies.³⁹

Both to reinforce the role of the family and to promote religious and social cohesion, puritan magistrates tried to create an educational system that was extraordinarily elaborate for a new colonial society. Es-

established within a decade after the first settlement of Massachusetts, Harvard College, conceived of as the functional equivalent of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and Trinity College, Dublin, was intended to provide puritan America with its own supply of orthodox ministers who, as Hugh Kearney has pointed out, could be relied upon to mitigate "the dangers of unlicensed, uncontrolled theological debate, which carried within it the seeds of social disturbance." Similarly, the magistrates passed laws in the 1640s requiring towns to establish schools for the explicit purpose of instilling the young with the correct religious and social principles as they were being gradually worked out in the communities of the saints. Far from being an agency for modernization, education in New England thus seems at least during the earliest generations to have been more a vehicle for achieving religious uniformity and social control through inculcation and reinforcement of the traditional values and social order the puritans were trying to build into the foundations of their new American societies.⁴⁰

Presiding over the puritan colonial experiments in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Haven and imparting vigor and authority to government as well as to churches, communities, families, and educational institutions was a numerous and highly visible group of established secular and clerical leaders. To a far greater extent than any other English colonists in America, the puritans brought their leaders with them to New England. Political and religious authority and social status survived the Atlantic crossing and the process of reimplantation in the New World without serious disruption. Unlike the hothouse climates that sprang up among the winners in the race for tobacco profits in the early Chesapeake, New England leaders at both the local and provincial levels were to a significant degree during the first decades people who had brought all the traditional attributes of sociopolitical authority with them to the New World.

As Stephen Foster has pointed out, the political societies of the New England colonies were based not on the "customary engines of social coercion of early modern Europe," not on "a hereditary monarch, a titled nobility, a church hierarchy, and a landlord class," but on "a radical voluntarism" deriving from the logic of the social covenants that served as the foundations for colonies and communities alike. Because all freemen, initially defined as church members who had assumed full civil rights, were theoretically parties to those covenants and because the proportion of freemen ran as high as 60 to 70 percent

of the adult male population in most towns, the potential for political participation was—by English standards—extraordinarily high. Nor were the broad body of freemen hesitant to take an active political role whenever they perceived that their privileges or interests were not being adequately protected. Most of the time, however, they willingly deferred to the magistrates, who assumed the dominant role in establishing political institutions, allocating land, making laws, dispensing justice, and reinforcing the position of the clergy and churches.

The astonishing deference of the relatively extensive constituencies of New England to their magisterial elites was without parallel in the other new English societies in America during their initial decades and constituted vivid testimony to the depth of New Englanders' devotion to the traditional ideal of an organic social hierarchy and their acceptance of the authority of their magistrates. At least during the first generation of settlement, that authority was even further reinforced by a high degree of cooperation among lay and clerical leaders, all of whom agreed that their primary responsibilities were to implement and maintain a stable "political society which would have as its primary emphasis the protection of the rights of the churches" and to nourish the strong corporate impulse that had animated and characterized the puritan colonies from their first establishment.⁴¹

A comparatively slow pace of economic development also helped the puritans to achieve their socio-religious goals in New England. Many immigrants, including even some of the clergy, certainly had economic as well as religious and social reasons for coming to New England, and, although the economy of the region seems to have been reasonably prosperous and even to have enjoyed considerable growth over much of the seventeenth century, neither the soil nor the climate was conducive to the development of staple agriculture. Very early, fish, timber, furs, and shipping brought some people more than ordinary returns, and in seaboard towns a substantial proportion of the population engaged in fishing. But most settlers had no alternative source of income than cereal agriculture and animal husbandry, which yielded only modest profits. Hence, except in the emergent port centers of Boston and Salem, the wealth structure of the New England colonies, at least down to 1660, remained far more equitable than in the colonies of the Chesapeake. Nor, except perhaps in the fishing industry, did New Englanders have either the need, the incentive, or the resources to recruit a large force of unfree laborers. The labor of

family members and perhaps a few servants who resided in the nuclear family households was all that was either necessary or profitable for most economic enterprises in the region. In all these respects, New England again seemed to be wholly dissimilar from the colonies along the Chesapeake.⁴²

Along with the strong cohesive force exerted by the church, village, family, schools, and visible and authoritative leadership structures that characterized the New England villages, the absence of exceptional economic opportunities inhibited the urge to scatter that was so powerful among the settlers in the Chesapeake. The initial colonists moved fairly often during the first two decades of settlement, and people who either had tenuous ties to the community or lived in the economically most active areas tended to be highly mobile. But those with close economic, family, political, and religious involvement seem to have developed a deep emotional attachment to their communities, which in turn seems to have fostered a persistence and spatial immobility that may have been greater even than in most established village populations in England.⁴³

These same conditions also helped to produce several decades of "relative social peace." Notwithstanding the well-known theological controversies between Bay Colony magistrates and religious rebels such as Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson, the challenges presented by the arrival of the Quakers in the mid-1650s, and the presence of considerable controversy in the churches and contention in the courts, major social discord was rare and conflict restrained throughout most of the seventeenth century. As Timothy Breen and Stephen Foster have aptly observed in regard to Massachusetts, the harmony of New England society placed it in contrast not only to the Chesapeake but to virtually the whole of the contemporary civilized world and constituted perhaps the single "most startling accomplishment" of the orthodox puritan colonies of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Haven.⁴⁴

BETWEEN 1607 and 1660, the English emigration to America thus had produced on the eastern coastline of continental North America two simplified expressions of contemporary English society. But they were extremely different from each other. Chesapeake society was highly materialistic, infinitely more secular, competitive, exploitive, and very heavily devoted to commercial agricultural production for an

export market. Its high demand for labor and high mortality rates combined to produce a population that was disproportionately male, young, single, immigrant, and mobile. The process of family formation was slow. Social institutions were weak, authority was tenuous, and individualism was strong. With only a slowly developing sense of community, the Chesapeake exhibited a marked proclivity toward public discord.

If, in many of these respects, the Chesapeake was "the most dynamic and innovative society on the Atlantic seaboard" during the early seventeenth century, the puritan colonies of New England were the most self-consciously and successfully traditional. With low mortality, rapid population growth, a benign disease environment, and a far more fully and rapidly articulated Old World-style society, the intensely religious colonies of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Haven, moved by powerful millennial and communal impulses, exhibited rapid community and family development. With strong patriarchal families, elaborate kinship networks, and visible and authoritative leaders, localities quickly developed vigorous social institutions, including many schools, and deeply rooted populations. Mostly involved in cereal agriculture and with no generalized source of great economic profit, the puritan colonies displayed a relatively egalitarian wealth structure and an extraordinarily low incidence of social discord and contention. It is hardly possible to conceive how any two settlements composed almost entirely of Englishmen could have been much more different.⁴⁵