A jeremiad for the technological society: Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s The Sirens of Titan and American Puritan sermons of the seventeenth century.

Judith Adams Mistichelli
A JEREMIAD FOR THE TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY:
KURT VONNEGUT, JR.'S THE SIRENS OF TITAN AND
AMERICAN PURITAN SERMONS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

by

Judith Adams Mistichelli

A Thesis
Presented to the Graduate Committee
of Lehigh University
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts

in
English

Lehigh University
1981
This thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

8/31/81
(date)

Professor in Charge

Chairman of Department
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Jeremiads: Themes, Structure, and Style</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sirens of Titan as a Jeremiad</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s science fiction novel, The Sirens of Titan, demonstrates noteworthy affinities to seventeenth-century American Puritan jeremiads. Vonnegut presents a satiric response to ideals initially embraced by the early Massachusetts ministers and transformed by them through the process of myth into the "American Dream": faith in providential history, deterministic surrender to an all-powerful yet vengeful God, millenialist notions of the emergence of a holy utopia from the New World wilderness, and society-wide election as the Chosen People.

The Sirens of Titan mirrors the structural movement of the jeremiads from a depiction of existing decadence and disorder, through a cleansing journey assisted by a wilderness condition, to repentance and the promise of sanctification. Literary devices common to the jeremiads are also employed by Vonnegut, including typology, homely metaphor, imagery, paradox and incongruity, emotional language. In his jeremiad for the technological society, Vonnegut assimilates and updates the Puritan sermons; but he rejects the assumption of an elect American community with a divine purpose and embraces instead the lonely individual who emerges from his odyssey in a state of innocence with the ability to love in the spirit of agape. The American Dream endures but is transformed from a societal ideal to an individual quest.
I
INTRODUCTION

The popularity of Kurt Vonnegut among the youth of the 1960s and 1970s invested him as a hierophant for the American scene in the latter half of the twentieth century. His fiction, with its apparent structural informality, and bare, conversational, paratactic prose style, reflects the rejection of established conventions and authority, as well as the instantaneous communication modes of the electronic age. Its comfortable locus in science fiction promotes a heartening disregard for the limits of the physical world. While his writings are evidently finely tuned to this age, they demonstrate noteworthy affinities to traditions developed initially by our Puritan forefathers in the seventeenth century which have since been established through the process of myth as pervasive elements in American culture.

The continuities in the preoccupations of spokesmen for generations separated by three hundred years in their solutions to the problems of their respective societies and in literary style are strikingly evident when Vonnegut's *The Sirens of Titan* is viewed in conjunction with the dominant literary output of the Puritan fathers, the sermons. In this novel, Vonnegut presents an ironic response to ideals initially expressed by the early Massachusetts ministers as the "New England Way": faith in
providential or redemptive history, deterministic surrender to an all-powerful yet vengeful God, millenialist notions of the emergence of a holy utopia from the New World wilderness, the pervasive doctrine of American innocence, and society-wide election as the Chosen People—all of which can be subsumed under the more familiar rubric of the enduring American Dream. While Augustine had visualized the "City of God," Calvin had indoctrinated his followers in determinism, and the philosophical idea of providential history was a matter anxiously questioned since the Renaissance, the American Puritans wrapped these concepts in a mantle of their own weaving, that is, the conviction that the exiles to the New World were chosen by God to create a society so perfect that it would usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth. They would succeed where the Old Testament Jews failed. Such doctrines emerged and were most publicly voiced in the specific type of sermon, generally preached on election or fast days, which has been designated by Perry Miller as the "Jeremiad." ¹

In this essay, I will expose the enduring influence of these sermons on Vonnegut. It will be evident that The Sirens of Titan, a work by a seemingly irreligious

man, can be viewed as a jeremiad for the technological society.

Both the jeremiads and *The Sirens of Titan* are deliberately designed and packaged for mass consumption. In seventeenth-century Massachusetts the sermons were heard by many and printed in pamphlet form for more careful study and for distribution to the constantly expanding community of churches. Similarly, *The Sirens of Titan* was first published in paperback, as were Vonnegut's other novels until recently, thus making it accessible to the author's youthful, counter-culture audience. The jeremiads employ such devices as typology and homely metaphors for familiarity, to stimulate responsiveness in the congregation, and to reinforce the sense of membership. Vonnegut chooses science fiction, a genre eagerly embraced by twentieth-century youth, utilizes similar literary devices, including typology, writes bare, unadorned and easily comprehensible sentences, and even coins a few unique terms that become an insider's vocabulary—a cult language that identifies his followers.

The striving for a wide audience in the general populace is common to the New World ministers and to Vonnegut since these spokesmen are driven by a messianic need to arouse an awareness in the citizenry to the shortcomings of society and the impending dire troubles threatening it. In the latter half of the seventeenth century in America
rapid cultural change, due largely to acceptance of the Half-Way Covenant and extensive commercial success, infused in the populace an uncertainty about their ability to achieve their original holy mission, and an inability to foresee the future design of their civilization. Likewise, since the middle of the twentieth century, the accelerating pace of technological developments has transformed our life styles and forced our values into constant flux until we are unable to predict the direction our society will take or our roles in it. Both the Puritan ministers and Vonnegut promote value systems that, if embraced, would provide a stabilizing force with which to control and plan the building of a culture. "Future shock," rather than a unique phenomenon of the twentieth century, is, it seems, indigenous to this nation and has been recognized and dealt with since our founding fathers first attempted to mold the course of events.

The uniqueness and the accompanying burden of the New World migration is affirmed by John Winthrop even before the governor sets foot on the New England soil. In "A Modell of Christian Charity," a sermon to his fellow passengers aboard the Arbella in 1630, Winthrop proclaims:

...we must Consider that wee shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eies of all people are uppon us; soe that if wee shall deale falsely with our god in this worke we have undertaken and soe cause him to withdrawe his present help from us, wee shall be made
a story and a by-word through the world,
wee shall open the mouthes of enemies to
speake evill of the wayes of god and all
professours for Gods sake.²

The Puritans sailed for the New World furnished with a
covenant theology. As foreshadowed by the journeys of the
Israelites in the Old Testament, the departing exiles be-
lieved they had a covenant with God to pass through the
hazardous sea and hew out of the wilderness a society
which would erect the City of God, a fit site for the
future Second Coming and millenium. Edward Johnson, in
his history Wonder-Working Providence of Sions Savior in
New England (1654), proclaims the hope of the embarkation
of an early group of colonists with inspiring words:

How much more shall Christ who createth all
power, call over this 900 league Ocean at his
pleasure, such instruments as he thinks meet
to make use of in this place, from whence you
are now to depart, but further that you may
not delay the Voyage intended, for your full
satisfaction, know this is the place where the
Lord will create a new Heaven, and a new Earth
in, new Churches, and a new Common-wealth to-
gether.³

Despite the magnificence and the holy import of the ven-
ture, Winthrop's initial sermon sets a precedent for
emphasis on the possibility of failure and gives disgrace

²John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity" (1630),
in The Puritans, ed. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson
(New York: American Book Co., 1938), p. 119. Archaic typo-
graphy has been slightly regularized throughout this essay.

³Edward Johnson, Wonder-Working Providence of Sions
Savior in New England (1654) and Good News from New England
(1648), ed. Edward J. Gallagher (Delmar, N. Y.: Scholars'
Facsimilies and Reprints, 1974), p. 3.
an overbearing, threatening presence.

Since the Puritans' task was not limited to the confines of their own settlement, the accompanying responsibility was oppressive. Loren Baritz, in City on a Hill, delineates the "cosmic significance" attached to the Great Migration. The Puritans conceived of their endeavors as a step toward the "redemption of the entire world," not the means of protecting a dissident community. Their success would prove God's efficacy, but their failure would also "radiate outward," that is, "the human race would know a divine opportunity had been lost. . . . Man-kind's destiny was at stake." The immigrants were not colonists, "mere human beings," but were "God's agents." 4

America as the locale for the holy utopia, the achievement of mankind's ultimate destiny, was not a conception initially engendered to motivate or prod the Puritan pilgrims toward their dangerous journey. Columbus is reported to have claimed that "God made me the messenger of the new heaven and the new earth, of which He spoke in the Apocalypse by St. John . . . and He showed me the spot where to find it."5 Ernest Tuveson, in Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millenial Role,


fully explains that Protestant Reformation theology viewed the course of history as a "great series of struggles, in which the Prince of Darkness is progressively defeated, according to a preconceived plan." Much attention was placed on John's apocalyptic writings which, unlike those of previous prophets, do not "depict a long and dreary sequence of unrelated calamities, increasing in intensity until, at the very end, the Messiah appears and all is set right"; instead, "the vivid descriptions of the sufferings and bloody conflicts are arranged in series, each leading up to a hymn of triumph and rejoicing. There is the sense of a rising movement, each victory being on a higher level than the one before." According to John, then, "the movement of the Revelation is in its way progressive--perhaps the first expression of the idea of history as progress." The Protestants accepted from John's visions that there would be a "new heaven and a new earth"; therefore, the settlement of New England was in fact considered as "advancing to the next step beyond the Reformation--the final reign of the spirit of Christ, the amalgamation of the City of the World into the City of God." It must be mentioned


Ibid., p. 7.

Ibid., p. 97.
that beyond the theology of John, on a subconscious level this scriptural pattern, with its step-by-step logic and progression, obviously also owes much to the manner of thinking generated by Francis Bacon's scientific method.

The success of the first settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, who considered themselves to be the vanguard of a divine mission, was seriously questioned as early as the second generation when backsliding, the impurity of the non-elect brought into the churches by the Half-Way Covenant, commercial interests, and the triumph of the Reformation in England forced a questioning of the national purpose. Kenneth Murdock, in his seminal article "Clio in the Wilderness: History and Biography in Puritan New England," explains that in the mid-1600s the American Puritans faced societal and personal crises because the Reformation in England had turned the eyes of the world away from the New England shores. It was necessary for them to find "reassurance" about the specialness of the New World society and their own personal roles in its advancement. Literature, especially histories and the spoken sermon, quickly became the mode for justification of America and its inhabitants.

Literary efforts set out to "devise strategies which would sustain the discovered meaning," and Sacvan Berco-

vitch further interprets that writers felt they could explain the "apparent discrepancy between promise and fulfillment" as an "error in perception." In a comment which is equally appropriate to contemporary American literature, Bercovitch finds that the tone of crisis in Puritan writings of the seventeenth century expresses the tension between "psychic uncertainty and rhetorical self-assertion."

The jeremiads, those sermons distinguished by Perry Miller as the "one literary type which the first native-born Americans inevitably developed," are dramatic examples of the utilization of literature for social purposes. As structurally delineated by Miller, the jeremiad begins with a "doctrine" that warns of God's vengeance for sins, usually supplied by the Books of Isaiah or Jeremiah in the Old Testament. The reasons for God's displeasure are then enumerated in a vigorous catalog of iniquities that details the state of the community: pride, heresy, worldly-mindedness, Sabbath-breaking, angry passions, decay of family discipline, sex and alcohol, lure of money. The preacher of the jeremiad would then propose a "scheme of reformation and let his imagination glow over


11 Ibid., p. 103.

12 Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province, p. 29.
the still more exquisite judgments yet in store unless his listeners acted upon his recommendations."^{13} Since the first ordained fast day on October 19, 1652, the ministers began to shift the blame for the society's declensions from such natural disasters as floods, earthquakes, and wars to the internal, personal shortcomings in the above listing.\textsuperscript{14} The focus on spiritual failures and moral deficiencies placed guilt squarely on the individual, resulting in excessive egocentricity and self examination, a conviction of worthlessness, and hopelessness.

The jeremiad did not end, however, with the confrontation of declension. Recently, Sacvan Bercovitch has recognized in the latter sections of the jeremiads the provision of a "prophetic vision that unveils the promises, announces the good things to come, and explains away the gap between fact and ideal."\textsuperscript{15} While furnishing a colorful and emotional explication of decay and punishment, the jeremiads paradoxically convert such vengeance into celebration. God's anger and the punishments visited upon the New England citizens were corrective rather than destructive, signs of love and election as "instruments of a sacred historical design." The purpose of such vengeance,

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 103.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 28.
the ministers explained, was to purge the Massachusetts colony and make it worthy to be the "City on the Hill" and the harbinger of the Second Coming. These sermons, then, invert the "doctrine of vengeance into a promise of ultimate success, affirming to the world, and despite the world, the inviolability of the colonial cause."17

It is the celebration of apparent failure, the pervasive affirmation of the mission and the exultation of continued promise that make the jeremiads distinctly American. The ability to inspire a rededication to the original covenant conception of New England's millenial role by reciting the punishments inflicted upon a backsliding people is a prodigious feat of rhetoric. Through the utilization of such literary devices as typology, imagery, metaphor, ambiguity and emotionally-charged language, the ministers not only convinced their followers of the holy future of the New World, but also elevated the American experience to the status of myth. The faith in a providential and redemptive history coupled with the sense of geographic and personal election constitute the American Dream, a myth that has dominated and shaped our literature as well as our national history. In his extensive study, The American Jeremiad, Sacvan Bercovitch considers the jeremiad's contribution to an ongoing

16 Ibid., pp. 3-23.
17 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
"nationwide ritual of progress" and the affirmative energies initiated by these sermons which "contributed to the success of the republic." \(^\text{18}\)

Remarking on the efficacy of the Dream, the conviction in a millenial-utopian destiny for mankind led by America, Tuveson, in *Redeemer Nation*, quips, "The irony of our day is that while rigid Calvinism has gone out of style, the notion of predestined history has lasted." \(^\text{19}\)

The belief in America as the chosen nation designed to save a wicked world has, if anything, increased in strength in order to justify our "civilizing" of the frontier wilderness and our wars to make the world safe for democracy. Conor Cruise O'Brien, in a recent article in *Harper's Magazine*, titled "Purely American," succinctly states that no other country has "submitted a case for canonization." \(^\text{20}\)

In *Puritan Influences in American Literature*, Emory Elliott explains the importance of an awareness of America's nascent literature:

> . . . without knowing as much about the Puritan heritage as our great writers have known and felt, we have been missing some of the richness of our major literary texts. . . . The themes, imagery, and very structure of

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. xv.

\(^{19}\) Tuveson, p. 50.

the Puritan Jeremiad persist in the works of writers as diverse as Mark Twain, Henry Adams, and F. Scott Fitzgerald and as seemingly anti-Puritan as Ernest Hemingway, Norman Mailer, and James Baldwin.²¹

Kurt Vonnegut, too, draws precisely on the themes of the jeremiads and by doing so demonstrates the continuity in American culture. In addition to thematic identification and a shunting of reality, in The Sirens of Titan Vonnegut employs the literary devices adopted by the Puritans, namely typology, metaphor and imagery, as well as paradox and incongruity. The structure of this novel also mirrors the essential movement of the jeremiads from a depiction of existing decadence and disorder, through a cleansing and learning process assisted by a wilderness condition, to a recognition of depravity, to repentance and rebirth, to a state of sanctification. The distinction which emerges, however, is that Vonnegut intends to transform these elements from the jeremiads into a satiric response to the failure of the Dream. In the balance of this essay, I will present a detailed investigation of the jeremiads and the manner in which Vonnegut assimilates them into his science fiction novel and updates them for the technological society.

II

THE JEREMIADS: THEMES, STRUCTURE, AND STYLE

Perry Miller traces the pattern of the jeremiad as evident in sermons of the early 1660s, namely John Higginson's election sermon of 1663, *The Cause of God and His People in New-England*. The type of sermon achieves "definite outline," Miller contends, with Jonathan Mitchell's *Nehemiah on the Wall* in 1667 and William Stoughton's *New-Englands True Interest*, 1668.  The themes and structure of the jeremiad are clearly apparent in some earlier sermons including one from the previous decade, Peter Bulkeley's *A Willing and Voluntary Subjection*, 1651;  and *Sion the Out-Cast Healed of her Wounds*, preached by John Norton in 1661 but not printed until 1664. It is the jeremiads of the decades of the 1670s and 1680s which created the most lasting impression and were "cited down to the Revolution." Samuel Danforth's *A Brief Recognition of New England's Errand into the Wil-


derness, 1670, is probably the most quoted and antholo-
gized of the jeremiads; others included among the more
eloquent, polished, and popular are Urian Oakes' New-
England Pleadeth With (1673) and The Sovereign Efficacy
of Divine Providence (1682), Eve-Salve by Thomas Shepard
(1672), Increase Mather's The Day of Trouble is Near
(1673), Samuel Willard's Heavenly Merchandize which ap-
propriates the metaphor of commerce (1686), the aforemen-
tioned New-Englands True Interest, and Cotton Mather's
Things to be Look'd For (1691) and A Midnight Cry
(1692). 26

By the beginning of the eighteenth century the dis-
tinctive form of the jeremiad ceased. Miller tells us
that the "first intimation that listeners were getting a
bit bored with the business" appears as early as the
1680s. It was admitted that the form had become a stereo-
type. Samuel Willard noted during the decade that the
jeremiads "have been condemned by some, contempned by many
more, scarcely believed by any." The decline in such
preachings was augmented by the loss of the Charter and
the subsequent subjection of New England to the "des-
potism" of the royal governor, Sir Edmund Andros. 27 A
discussion of the thematic content and the structure of

26 See the Bibliography for bibliographic data on
these sermons.

27 Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to
Province, p. 38.
these sermons will be followed by an examination of style, including the use of typology, metaphor, imagery, and language.

As David Minter states, the "original intention of the jeremiad was to inspire reform." On designated fast-days the New England congregations gathered to "repent that they had erred and strayed." The commercial success of the builders of the strong plantation of Massachusetts "frustrated" the original holy design. Instead of a model religious society, their successful building had resulted in a prosperous enterprise. The jeremiads evolved in order to save the populace and their founding fathers from an inadequate fate. These sermons serve, Bercovitch contends, as "one major thread in that process of self-justification, the myth of America."\(^{29}\)

The conviction that the Puritans were a chosen people brought to a special land in order to create a church-state that was to be a model for Reformation Christianity and a harbinger of the New Jerusalem is manifest in the jeremiads. The sermons express this concept with certainty since, as Bercovitch contends, their purpose was "to direct an imperiled people of God toward the fulfill-


\(^{29}\) Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad, p. xiv.
ment of their destiny, to guide them individually toward salvation, and collectively toward the American city of God." The preachers took their cue from biblical texts, extracting such scripture as the following passages from Jeremiah to lend credence to the mission:

Beholde the daies come, saith ye Lord, that I wil mak a newe covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah,

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, when I toke them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, the which my covenant they brake, althogh I was an housband unto them, saith the Lord.

But this shalbe the covenant that I wil make with the house of Israel, After those daies, saith the Lord, I wil put by Law in their inwarde partes, & write it in their hearts, & wil be their God, and they shalbe my people. . . . .

They shal aske the waye to Zion, with their faces thetherward, saying, come, and let us cleave to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shal not be forgotten.31

William Stoughton, in New-Englands True Interest, is straightforward and confident in his acknowledgement of God's Call to the New World colonists:

This we must know, that the Lords promises, and expectations of great things, have singled out New England, and all sorts and ranks of men amongst us, above any Nation or people in the world . . . . God had his Creatures in this Wilderness before we came, and his Rational Creatures too, a multitude of them; but as Sons and Children that are Covenant-born unto God, Are not we the first

30 Ibid., p. 9.

in such a Relation? in this respect we are surely the Lords first-born in this Wilderness.32

The passage demonstrates that the American Puritans believed it was their prerogative to give the Kingdom of God an earthly habitation. Bercovitch reminds us that the application of scriptural texts to a "secular enterprise ... flagrantly violates Christian tradition."33 The Puritan divines are undaunted, however. They recognize the weight of their responsibility, but express unquestioned acceptance of their role as the herald of the millenium. Urian Oakes is comforting, yet his calm words transmit the duty:

You have been conducted to a place of Rest and Liberty, and settled in the possession of very choice and singular Priviledges & Enjoyments. The Lord hath brought you over the great Ocean from your Native Land, the Land of your Progenitors, to a place of rest, where you have enjoyed singular mercies. ... This Wilderness was the place which God decreed to make a Canaan to you ... this our Commonwealth seems to exhibit to us a Specimen, or a little model of the Kingdome of Christ upon Earth ... This work of God set on foot and advanced to a good Degree here, being spread over the face of the Earth, and perfected as to greater Degrees of Light and Grace and Gospel-glory will be ... the Kingdom of Jesus Christ so much spoken of ... You have been as a City upon an hill though in a remote and obscure Wilderness as a Candle

The claim to election furnished a social identity for
the isolated colonists. Many of the ministers were not
as soothing as Oakes but instead demanded super-human per-
fection from the inhabitants in order to insure the suc-
cess of the society. Peter Bulkeley warned:

No peoples account will be heavier than
thine, if Thou doe not Walke worthy of the
meanes of thy salvation. The Lord looks
for more from Thee, then from other people;
more zeale for God, more Love to his truth,
more justice and equity in Thy wayes; Thou
shouldst be a speciall people, an onely
people, none like thee in all the earth.

As such perfection was demanded, excessive individual
guilt over human shortcomings was necessarily generated.
The preachers of the jeremiads cleverly manipulated these
feelings, which made the remorseful parishioners all the
more impressionable. The fate of the community could be
elevated above personal needs since, as individuals, the
citizens seemed to fall quite short of sainthood. Col-
lectively, the jeremiads promised, there was hope. Jon-
than Mitchel celebrates the "Great End" of the colonial
settlement:

New England's design in this vast undertaking
was reformation; that is, the avoiding of some

\[34\] Urian Oakes, *New-England Pleadeth With, and Pressed
to Consider the Things which Concern Her Peace* (Cambridge,
Mass.: Samuel Green, 1673), pp. 17, 21.

\[35\] Peter Bulkeley, "A Willing and Voluntary Subjec-
tion," p. 34.
special corruptions, and the Vigorous and more exact profession and practice of the contrary truths and rules, according to scripture-pattern... Our work is not only to depart from men's inventions, but to set up (All) God's institutions in their beauty and power, that we may exhibit a clear and compleat copy thereof before the world.36

There was one prominent dissenter in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Roger Williams' lone negation of the holy destiny of the colonies was considered dangerous probably because of its convincing eloquence. In a response to the orthodox opinions of John Cotton, who mercilessly advocated intolerance to those holding dissenting religious beliefs since such people corrupted the purity of God's chosen society, Williams denies the specialness of the New World or any other place. Within The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution (1644), he states with unwavering conviction:

... I shall evidently prove that the state of Israel as a Nationall State made up of Spirituall and Civill power, so farre as it attended upon the spirituall, was meerly figurative and typing out the Christian Churches consisting of both Jews and Gentiles... now the partition wall is broken down, and in respect of the Lords speciall proprietie to one Country more then another, what difference between Asia and Africa, between Europe and America, between England and Turkie, London and Constantinople?... But such a typicall respect we finde not now upon any People, Nation or Country of the whole World: But out

of all Nations, Tongues and Languages is God pleased to call some and redeem them to Himself. And hath made no difference betweene the Jewes and Gentiles, Greekes and Scithians . . . .37

The spiritual leaders of the colonies responded by banishing Williams to Rhode Island. Such a philosophical view was totally alien to the American experiment as conceptualized by the Puritans. Williams was confronting reality while the Puritan divines were creating a myth. The ministers adhered to Cotton's advocacy of persecution, and, at least verbally and in writing, thrashed their backsliding congregations unceasingly in the jeremiads.

Following the assertion of America as the New Jerusalem, a major portion of every jeremiad was dedicated to an unmercifully detailed and frank cataloging of the iniquities of the people. These sins, the listeners were told, would lead to personal damnation, but, more importantly, they threatened the failure of the society. Samuel Danforth, in his 1670 sermon A Brief Recognition of New England's Errand into the Wilderness, blandly proclaims the potential efficacy of the journey into the wild:

When men abate and cool in their affection to the pure worship of God which they went into the wilderness to enjoy, the Lord calls upon them seriously and thoroughly to examine themselves, what it was that drew them into the

Implicit here is the desire to provide an impetus to re-dedication to God's holy plan for New England. As he surveys the second and third generations from his pulpit, Danforth laments that the colonists have strayed from their errand into the wilderness. The "careless, remiss, flat, dry, cold, dead frame of spirit" which he encounters growing "prodigiously" among the New England people arouses an anger which is reflected in the change of tone in his sermon. Suddenly his language is blunt, biting, and commonplace; instead of a "sweet smell," there is a "stink" in the congregation. The vehemence of the jeremiads spurs Bercovitch to label the sermons "thundering denunciations" of the sins of the people. William Stoughton applies no sugar coating as he lists the abuses:

0 New-England, thy God did expect better things from thee and thy Children; not Worldliness, and an insatiable desire after perishing things; not Whoredomes and Fornications; not Revellings and Drunkenness; not Oaths and false Swearings; not Exactions and Oppression; not Slanderings and Backbitings; not Rudeness

---

39 Ibid., p. 68.
Speaking in support of the exile of a young man charged with various acts of sexual perversion, Danforth uses sharp, fervent language to warn the people that unless such evils are cast out they will spread to infect the colony and turn it into a New World Babylon:

What greater disgrace or infamy can be cast upon the grace of God, then to turn it into lasciviousness? What a reproach is this, that the Sons of God are become flesh, carnal, sensual, debauched; that the members of Christ are made the members of an Harlot; yea the members of a Beast; that the Temple of the holy Ghost is become a Stews, and Brothel-house, yea a Cage of unclean Birds, yea a very Hog-styl! 42

The ministers were not content with such robust denunciations of their congregations. The jeremiads followed such chastising with vivid, horrible depictions of imminent punishments from a vengeful God. Insecurity and fear, the preachers decided, could be the tools with which to extract holiness from the chaff. Samuel Willard's gruesome future scenario is typical of the tactics of the jeremiad:

Ah! little do we know what the terrors of this might mean, to be oppressed with pining hunger, with pinching penury; to hear the cries of Children following us for bread,

41 William Stoughton, New-Englands True Interest; Not to Lie, p. 20.
and none to give them, to hear the Sound of
the Trumpet and Alarm of War; to hear the
cries of the wounded, and see the slain in
our gates; to see the raging of Famine and
Pestilence, and natural affection changed
to a Tyger-like Cruelty, tender-hearted
Mothers[ ]up their bowels of pity, and
laying violent hands on the Children they
have born, to go into Captivity, and serve
an Enemy whose tender mercies are cruelty;
to live in fear of every sight, every noise,
lest it should be some messenger of Death,
or that which is worse.43

Willard conjures up the most frightening nightmares to
stimulate the emotions of his listeners. For the settlers
nothing could be more horrible than witnessing starving
children, the carnage of war, and the savagery of the un-
civilized hordes. Cleverly, Willard ends his catalog of
evils with the spectre of more devastating horrors. It is
no wonder that psychological problems of guilt and worth-
lessness plagued the Puritan populace. Cotton Mather is
also adept at scare tactics. Danger, he warns, is as close
as one's homespun pillow: "While you are Sleeping, your
Damnation is Hastening; You are toDay, nearer to Hell by
Twenty four Hours then you were Yesterday."44 While the
histories written during the seventeenth century chronicled
natural disasters, such as earthquakes, plagues, Indian wars,
and grasshoppers, which were sent by God as trials to the

43Samuel Willard, Useful Instructions for a Professing
People in Times of Great Security and Degeneracy (Cambridge:
Mass.: Samuel Green, 1673), p. 50.

44Cotton Mather, A Midnight Cry (Boston: John Allen,
1692), p. 54.
settlers and were recorded as a series of divine provi-
dences, the jeremiads turned all blame for lack of suc-
cess decidedly inward. The people were forced to investi-
gate themselves as the source of all their troubles and
failures. Excessive self-flagellation, both physical and
mental, was the inevitable result.

Following the caustic diatribes on declension, a
sudden, clean structural break is apparent in the jeremiads.
Miller notes two aspects of the sermons when he refers to
them as "subtle explorations of the labyrinth of sin and
regeneration," but it is Bercovitch who concentrates on
the redemptive aspects of the jeremiad. The ministers, he
explains, turned retribution into a "celebration," since,
they paradoxically contended, "God's punishments were cor-
rective, not destructive." In New England, as nowhere
else, God's "vengeance was a sign of love, a father's rod
used to improve the errant child. In short, their punish-
ments confirmed their promise." For the colonists "back-
sliding was not a matter of crime and punishment, but of
regeneration through suffering." By the use of ambiguity,
the clerics transformed adversity into hope and generated
a sense of movement from "the shortcomings of community
life . . . forward, with prophetic assurance" to the pros-

45 See especially Edward Johnson's Wonder-Working
Providence of Sions Savior in New England (1654).

46 Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to
Province, p. 29.
pect of the New Jerusalem. Thus the jeremiads became rhetorical "appeals for social revitalization." New England was God's country, therefore it must "expect His lash"; but the potential for ultimate triumph was inherent in the trial since God would not continue to test them if He had chosen to abandon them. David Minter explains that individual and societal "consciousness of failure" could be conceived as the hallmark of God's special blessing.

Danforth rejoices in the promise of the future: "No case is to be accounted desperate or incurable which Christ takes in hand . . . . Let us give glory to God by believing his Word and we shall have real and experimental manifestations of his glory for our good and comfort." Oakes voices a typical glance beyond the misery to the splendor waiting New England:

Humbling and Sorrowful times may come upon you: But the Lord's design in humbling and proving you will be that he may do you good at your Latter End: Though the Earth should tremble and reel to and fro, the Sea roar, the Mountains be cast into the midst of the Sea, and there be a Day of Gloominess and thick Darkness coming upon the Reformed Churches, and there should be a Day of trouble and Treading down, and Perplexity in this


David Minter, "The Puritan Jeremiad as a Literary Form," p. 49.


27
Valley of Vision: yet I have Commission from the Lord to say, It shall be well with the Righteous. . . . All the Sorrows, and Afflictions, and Sufferings of the People of God shall end in joy.50

The people of New England are a "Covenant-People," Increase Mather asserts, who have transgressed, thus "hath the Lord been whetting his glittering Sword."51 Samuel Willard promises that threatened calamity will be averted: "though the ax be up and ready to fall, yet he sees a few clusters and will say spare it, for there is a blessing in it. And I can not but be persuaded that God hath good things yet in reserve for New England."52

Implicit in this transformation of failure into celebration is an essential belief in providential history. The poignant doubts and final disavowals of such English writers as Thomas Malory and Walter Ralegh had little effect on the convictions of the Puritans. These two English authors initiated their epic works, Le Morte d'Arthur and History of the World, respectively, with the intention of demonstrating the efficacy of a divine hand in the guiding of history toward the redemption of mankind; but in the end both admitted with despair that no such scheme was


51Increase Mather, Renewal of Covenant the Great Duty Incumbant on Decaying or Distressed Churches (Boston: Phillips, 1677), p. 13.

demonstrated by man's story or even legends. The exiled Puritans, however, clung to their belief that history was predestined and that God directed all earthly events according to a plan for the eventual salvation of man from original sin and the establishment of Heaven on Earth. "Errand" for the Puritans meant a process whereby God's predestined design would come to fruition. The church in New England would gradually conquer "Satan's wilderness world for Christ."^53

Mitchel, as mentioned above, refers to a "scripture-pattern" determining "New England's design." And Oakes even uses the people's lack of wisdom to understand "their latter end" as an excuse for "rushing on prodigiously in a course of sin into misery."^54 Most important to the ministers and to the concept of the American Dream which they created is the idea of process, which when linked to a providential philosophy of history must be identified with progress. Thomas Shepard furnishes the following reminder:

A main design of God's people's adventuring in to this wilderness was for progress in the work of Reformation and that in the way of brotherly communion with the Reformed Churches of Christ in other parts of the world.55

And Urian Oakes, in the sermon which he dedicated to the

55Thomas Shepard, Eye-Salve, or A Watchword from Our Lord Jesus Christ Unto His Church (Cambridge, Mass.: Samuel Green, 1673), p. 37.
explication of "Divine Providence," places the society's fate in the hands of God:

The Salvations of New-England have been most apparently by the Lord's Governing Time, and Chance. This or that Chance or Occurrent hath fain in in the very nick of Time to prevent Ruine. Time and Chance which happens to men in the way of their Undertakings, is effectively ordered & governed by the Lord. God is the Lord of Time, and Orderer, and Governour of all Contingencies. . . . the Lord is pleased . . . to communicate causal power and virtue to his Creatures, . . . He takes them . . . into partnership & fellowship with Himself in the way of his providential Efficiency, that they may be Under-workers to, yea Co-workers with Himself.57

While New England was far from perfection, it was chosen by God as the place which would eventually usher in the millenium. Historical events in New England, if they could be understood, would reveal a pattern of progress toward the achievement of a saved society whose innocence would redeem a wicked world. The difficulty of interpreting the providential scheme is acknowledged by Increase Mather as he discusses the mysteries:

Sometimes there is a seeming contradiction in divine providence . . . . The providences of God seem to Interfere with one another sometimes. . . . The works of God sometimes seem to run counter with his word so that there is dark and amazing intricacy in the ways of providence. This is a wheel within


a wheel. Not only wise but good men have sometimes been put to a non-plus here.58

All heads were turned toward the future since the present was only an insignificant stepping stone on the divine journey. Salvation, or in its more modern guise, the Good Life, was the prize for which to keep striving, but it remained just out of reach, beyond the next mountain. In Rules for the Discerning of the Present Times, Willard gives assurance that the "Glorious state of the Church" is coming:

That there shall be such a time; that it is stated and determined in the Counsel of God; that there are the signs of its approaching; that the day of it is coming on apace; and that it is our duty soberly to acquaint ourselves with the tokens of it; . . . nor ought they who fear God in New-England to look upon themselves or theirs as unconcerned in it, because they dwell in a remote corner of the earth . . . .59

Cotton Mather is more bombastic in his vision of "that Glorious Revolution, wherein our Lord Jesus Christ, will both dispossess the Diwels of our Air, making of it a New Heaven, filled with the New Jerusalem of his Raised Saints; and also by a terrible Conflagration make a New Earth, whereon the Escaped Nations are to walk in the Light of


59 Samuel Willard, Rules for the Discerning of the Present Times (Boston: Benjamin Harris, 1693), p. 10.
In their development of this myth of America, the Puritan leaders recognized the efficacy of an orientation toward the future. Since the goal was never quite achieved, the society could be continually prodded toward good behavior. Bercovitch terms the ideology a "ritual of progress through consensus" and he notes its tenacity, mentioning the westward errand, Whitman's claim that his singing is the American Way, and Martin Luther King's denunciation of segregation as a violation of the American Dream. As a final comment on his discussion of the process which produced the myths of "city on a hill," "promised land," and "destined progress," Bercovitch recognizes the consequences:

symbol and metaphor facilitated the movement from visible saint to American patriot, sacred errand to manifest destiny, colony to republic to imperial power. In spite of themselves, the latter-day orthodoxy freed their rhetoric for the use and abuse of subsequent generations of Americans.

The leaders recognized one aspect of their culture as unavoidably problematic, that is, its prosperity. Its commercial success had been achieved, it appeared, at the expense of its religious mission. The more diligently the settlers applied themselves to building their colony by taming the wilderness, erecting towns, planting the meadows,

60 Mather, A Midnight Cry, p. 23.
61 Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad, p. 92.
and harvesting the seas, the more religion decayed and morals were corrupted. Status quickly became associated with money rather than election by God. John Higginson, in an early jeremiad, feels the necessity to remind his congregation that "New England is originally a plantation of Religion, not a plantation of Trade."\(^6\) But as commercial activity flourished in the emerging free-enterprise economy during the second and third generations, the spiritual leaders were forced to find a way to reconcile the seemingly antagonistic elements. The Old Testament furnished a ready accomodation, as Ernest Tuveson outlines:

Any reader of the Old Testament can hardly fail to notice that the prophets consistently stress the point that worldly flourishing is the sign that the chosen people is keeping its covenant; defeat and poverty come upon the nation when it violates its obligation to do God's work, and so incurs His wrath... Thus prosperity is the outward sign of an inward grace, for it demonstrates that the covenant is being fulfilled. God does not simply hand out goodies as compensation for good behavior.\(^3\)

Traits accountable to the successful businessman were found to be also characteristic of the pious. Cotton Mather elucidates the similarity as he explains why commercial aptitude and inclination demonstrate spiritual attainment:

A Christian should follow his Occupation with INDUSTRY. ... It seems a man Slothful in Business, is not a man Serving the


\(^3\) Tuveson, Redeemer Nation, p. 31.
Lord. By Slothfulness men bring upon themselves, What? but Poverty, but Misery, but all sorts of Confusion . . . . A Diligent man is very rarely an Indigent man. Would a man Rise by his Business . . . . Young man, Work hard while you are Young; You'll Keep the Effects of it, when you are Old . . . . let your Business Engross the most of Your Time . . . .

Mather also asserts that "it is the sovereign God, who has bestowed upon you the riches which distinguish you." Wealth, then, as all other things, is a gift from God. The obvious connection was made by the Puritans that those who achieve wealth and commercial success must be blessed with God's special favor. Such outward signs of election were not accepted, of course, without contention. The Antinomian controversy demonstrated the fervor of the debate, but those who equated personal prosperity with spiritual blessing prevailed. That God is the ultimate source of wealth became a major tenet of the developing myth of the American Dream. Daniel Boorstin explains that since the Puritans were so successful in building their communities out of a "howling wilderness" solely with their own energies and accomplishments, it was a logical step to "find their purposes somehow implicit in their achievements." The

64 Cotton Mather, "A Christian at his Calling" (1701), in Puritanism and the American Experience, p. 124.

65 Cotton Mather, Bonifacius; An Essay upon the Good, quoted in Free Will and Determinism in American Literature, by Perry D. Westbrook (Rutherford, N. J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1979), p. 121.

consequences of this identification of wealth and salvation are demonstrated by Perry Miller in the following progression:

Men started as millers and were paid in grain; thus providentially invited to find buyers, they grew to traders. Others started as artisans, took apprentices, and shortly were capitalists. Merchants imported the necessary stocks, advanced them to farmers and frontiersmen on credit, and so became bankers who, in the name of honesty, cracked a whip over their debtors.67

Since God rewards the industrious and the frugal, and wealth is indicative of the possessor's election, it is "little wonder," Irvin G. Wyllie comments in The Self-Made Man in America, that "John D. Rockefeller brushed off his critics with the simple assertion that it was God who had given him his money."68

The free enterprise system served as the catalyst for extensive upheaval in the social classes. Although the colonists had cast-off the inherited status in existence in Europe since medieval times, they insisted that some men were placed above others in order to facilitate God's divine plan. Certain people were chosen to lead others in a mutual social covenant, and toward such ends they were endowed with favors of property and power. Winthrop tells the Arbella.


68 Irvin G. Wyllie, "God and Mammon" (excerpted from The Self-Made Man in America), in Puritanism and the American Experience, p. 204.
passengers

That every man might have need of other, and from hence they might all be knitt more nearly together in the Bond of brotherly affection: from hence it appeares plainely that noe man is made more honourable then another or more wealthy etc. out of any perticuler and singuler respect to himselfe but for the glory of his Creator and the Common good of the Creature, Man; Therefore God still reserves the propperty of these guifts to himself . . . . All men being thus (by divine providence) rancked into two sortes, riche and poore . . . .

But the first generation "gentlemen" were soon supplanted in social position by the merchants and bankers who assumed status as a reward for their wealth. The Puritan fathers were forced to witness social classifications, which they believed were fixed by God, dissolve. Winthrop and his peers assumed, Miller explains, "men would remain forever in the stations to which they were born, and inferiors would eternally bow to gentlemen and scholars." As commercial families rose, they eagerly embraced the philosophy of social subordination. Samuel Willard's poignant plea to the new merchants that deference ought to be paid to gentlemen "tho' the Providence of God bring them into Poverty" went unheeded. In 1676, over forty years after Winthrop's sermon and despite rapid social change, William Hubbard could still assert the spiritual efficacy of in-


70 Miller, "The Protestant Ethic," p. 139.

71 Ibid., p. 139.
equality:

And hath not the same Almighty Creator and Disposer of all things made some of the sons of man as far differing in height of body one from the other, as Saul from the rest of the people? And are not some advanced as high above others in dignity and power as much as the cedars of Lebanon the low shrubs of the valley? It is not then the result of time or chance that some are mounted on horseback while others are left to travel on foot, that some have with the centurion power to command while others are required to obey . . . .72

The themes of the jeremiad were invested with imaginative power through the use of imagery, metaphor, emotionally-charged language, and typological parallels with the Old Testament. These literary devices assisted the ministers to involve the members of their congregations in the preached message. Increase Mather praised the preaching of his father, Richard, for its "plainness":

His way of Preaching was plain, aiming to shoot his Arrows not over his people's heads, but into their Hearts and Consciences. Whence he studiously avoided obscure phrases, Exotic words, or an unnecessary citation of Latin Sentences . . . . The Lord gave him an excellent faculty in making abstruse things plain, that in handling the deepest Mysteries he would accommodate himself to Vulgar Capacities, that even the meanest might learn something.73

72 William Hubbard, quoted in Free Will and Determinism in America, by Perry D. Westbrook, p. 126.

Such a characterization generally applies to all of the preachers of the jeremiads; yet the appellation "plain style" seems less than adequate and is misleading since the splendid imagery and language achieved an unfettered passion. As in thematic composition, the style is paradoxical—ordinary words and common objects are transformed into grand and vivid abstract images. Just as the evident failure of the mission was denied by the jeremiads, Larzar Ziff accurately observes that the preachers dismissed "external reality" by "leaping from the literal over a vast range of expression to arrive at the allegorical . . . ."\textsuperscript{74}

God's power to crush mortal backsliders or those who would dare to be His detractors is conveyed through familiar items to which connotations of vulnerability and strength are attached by means of association. In The Great End and Interest of New England, Jonathan Mitchel inserts a marvelous image:

\begin{quote}
... those among us, that desire to set up in this country, any of the ways of men's invention . . . lay themselves as potters vessels under the iron rod. For Christ who has taken this possession of these uttermost parts of the earth, will not endure it.\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

Danforth strives toward a like purpose as he figuratively casts soft flesh into the "hot furnace of affliction and


\textsuperscript{75}Mitchel, "The Great End and Interest of New England," pp. 11-12.
"tribulation" so that it will be "scorched and burnt, yet not melted but hardened thereby." That ordeal is followed by being swallowed up in the "lime pit of Pharisaical hypocrisy" or, escaping that, the "coal pit of Sadducean atheism and epicurism." 76 While such language as Danforth's could be considered excessive, the metaphors make God's strength more understandable. Because it does more than decorate the prose, or stimulate the senses, and does not detract from the reader's attention to the doctrine, the prose is acceptable. Danforth, however, lacks the charm of Mitchel and many of the other New England preachers. A like image by Increase Mather, for example, is more effective because of its simplicity:

"... that which the Lord intends by bringing his people into the Furnace of Affliction, is that he may make pure Metal of them, yea, that they may be purged and sanctified, and become vessels meet for their Masters use."

Emory Elliott, in Power and the Pulpit in Puritan New England, points out that one of the most popular metaphors for describing the failings of succeeding generations was the depiction of New England as "a sickly society, suffering chills, fever, drowsiness, and lethargy." He reminds us that for families touched by the plagues of the 1660s and


77 Increase Mather, The Day of Trouble is Near (Cambridge, Mass.: Marmaduke Johnson, 1674), p. 17.
1670s, such visions must have been particularly effective.  

John Norton calls for "Gods Outcasts to accept of Gods plaister" and gives the spiritually sick an "Option" of the "plaister or of the sore." He goes on to warn that the illness may not be the most devastating circumstance for if the outcasts do not accept the "remedy," the sickness is "incurable." Such metaphors as this were successful not only because of their familiarity and timely application to common experiences, but also because they formed a brief narrative of peril and decline followed by the possibility for redemption. Thomas Walley mourns for a sick people, yet the medicines for a cure are available:

We have Gilreads Balm and Gilreads Physicians . . . we have the means of healing amongst us . . . . what Means can a people have more for Cure, then we have? God is yet in our Sion, we have healing Ordinances, the Preaching of the Gospel, the Seals of the Covenant of Grace, Magistrates that would heal the Sicknesses of Sion . . . .

Although the homely, familiar images predominate, exotic references appear occasionally as ploys for attention, perhaps to arouse some nodding parishioners, or simply for their shock value. One vivid example comes from John Norton: "The Woman in the wilderness may have the vomit of


the Dragon cast in her face, if you let it lye on, you will suffer; wash it off therefore by an Apologie."\(^{81}\)

Commerce, such an integral facet in the lives of the colonists, and in the forefront of everyone's mind because of its competition with religion as the motive force of the society, emerges as the impetus of many metaphorical constructions in the jeremiads. The success of its integration into the minds of the people, even the clergy, by the latter years of the seventeenth century is strikingly portrayed in Samuel Willard's sermon, *Heavenly Merchandize*, in which the ideal of truth is made understandable by treating it as a commodity to be bartered:

1. That there is such a Commodity as Truth, else it were a great cheat to advise us to seek for it.
2. That we have it not of our own, that it doth not descend to us by inheritance, but if we would have it, we must purchase it.
3. That it is to be obtained by us, if we will but go to the cost, that there is a market in which Truth is set to sale, and offered to such as come there.
4. That it is not to be had for nothing, but men must beat some expense for it.
5. Negative: Sell it not.\(^{82}\)

It should not go unnoticed that this remarkable sermon presents its material in a logical progression, much in the fashion of the step-by-step process of redemptive history, as conceived by the Puritans. Willard, however, makes the

\(^{81}\)Norton, *Sion the Out-Cast Healed of her Wounds*, p. 15

\(^{82}\)Samuel Willard, *Heavenly Merchandize or the Purchasing of Truth Recommended and the Selling of it Dissuaded* (Boston: Samuel Green, 1635), p. 3.
sermon resemble an accountant's ledger.

To complement the extensive use of imagery and metaphor, the Puritan divines insert language chosen to stir the emotions and thus draw the people into more personal involvement in the mythic message of the jeremiads and coincidentally in their society. Bulkeley judiciously inserts a few words the connotations of which are guaranteed to stimulate feelings:

Canst thou part with thy Absalom, thy Beloved lust, and be content that God should set up his kingdom in Thy whole soule? . . . if thou canst not submit that the life of some darling lust should goe; if there be any sinne that is dearer to thee, then to obey God; if thou test thy exceptions, and reservations, and wilt not yield universall obedience, then art thou an alien from God and his covenant . . . .

(emphasis mine)

This example is particularly cogent because of the clever juxtaposing of words producing opposing emotional responses, that is, "beloved lust" and "darling lust." Such rhetoric generates confusion and uncertainty which draws the listener into a questioning of his own basic values. People who are in a muddle are more easily manipulated.

Urian Oakes attempts to stimulate fear and dread with his language:

Hath not the Lord given a miscarrying womb unto all such as have conceived and been big with mischievous designs against you? Insomuch that all their counsel and endeavours have been

This passage perhaps owes its power to the fact that in Puritan New England miscarriages and deformed births were often considered direct evidence of God's displeasure and punishment—or a sign of the Devil's influence over an individual, as in Anne Hutchinson's case.

The Mathers are particularly adept at producing graphic language designed to frighten their listeners into good behavior. There is no restraint on the horrors of which their imaginations are capable. Increase conjures up a vision of the Lord "whetting his glittering Sword" and readying His "arrows drunk with blood." Cotton provides a glimpse of the apocalypse during which "dear Neighbours" are "Butchered" by the "most Barbarous canibals."

Typology is another literary device utilized by the New England clergy. It involves the discovering, in persons and events of the Old Testament, scriptural types which serve as prophetic foreshadowings of current happenings as well as the future. Murdock explains that typologists made "virtually every character and object in the Bible a metaphor or symbol of enduring significance."

God's providential plan was foreshadowed in the Bible then

84 Oakes, New-England Pleadeth With, p. 22.
85 Increase Mather, Renewal of Covenant the Great Duty Incumbant on Decaying or Distressed Churches, pp. 12-13.
86 Cotton Mather, A Midnight Cry, p. 8.
continually exemplified and revealed in a variety of forms throughout history. In *The American Jeremiad*, Bercovitch delineates how this kind of Protestant historiography implies a progression from biblical prophecy to the fulfillment of promise in America.

The American Jeremiahs consistently rooted their doctrine in biblical texts then made direct connections between Old Testament characters or events and actual personalities or occurrences in New England. They were able thus to imply that God's design for the redemption of man, as depicted in the Bible, was coming to fulfillment in the New World. The uninterrupted transmittal of God's message from biblical history, to the time of Christ, and on to the present in New England was indicative, the Puritans emphasized, of human progress. During later years in America, it can be noted that the typological comparisons were muted into metaphor and symbolism until the scriptural base of the divine plan was submerged and the idea of progress emerged cleansed of its religious trappings.

Perhaps the foremost and extended example of the use of typology in the jeremiads occurs in Samuel Danforth's *A Brief Recognition of New England's Errand Into the Wilder-

---


ness. Here, Moses, as a type, is reborn not only in John the Baptist but also finally in the preacher Samuel Danforth who submits himself, like his holy predecessors, to the purifying powers of the wilderness. The essence of this allegory is the implied progression from the promise of the Bible to fulfillment in New England. Danforth honors John the Baptist as "greater than any of the prophets that were before him," above Moses, Abraham, and David, because while all the others saw Christ "afar off," John saw him in the flesh, baptized him, and "applied the types to him personally . . . ." But, as dictated by human progress, "the least minister of the Gospel since Christ's ascension, is greater than John; not in respect of the measure of his personal gifts nor in respect of the manner of his calling, but in respect of the . . . degree of the revelation of Christ, which is far more clear and full . . . ." So, the Israel of Canaan becomes the New Israel in America. In comparison to the extended allegory of Danforth, Increase Mather's avowal of the promise of America is simple and direct. It demonstrates a more typical insertion of typology in the sermons:

As the children of Israel went through the Red Sea, and through the Wilderness, before they could enter into Canaan, so must we wade through a Red Sea of Troubles, and pass through

---

a Wilderness of Miseries, e're we can arrive at the heavenly Canaan.90

The themes and the style of the jeremiads created a myth of American promise which began as a hope for a New Eden. This dream, with its grounding in the familiar, everyday aspects of a colonial wilderness settlement, is most ideally and movingly visualized in the "plain" words of Samuel Sewell who surveys his New Earth with the eye of a fond husbandman:

As long as Plum Island shall faithfully keep the commanded Post; . . . As long as any Salmon, or Sturgeon shall swim in the streams of the Merrimack; . . . As long as the Sea-Fowl shall know the Time of their coming, and not neglect seasonably to visit the Places of their Acquaintance; As long as the Cattle shall be fed with the Grass growing in the Medows, . . . As long as any Sheep shall walk upon Old Town Hills, and shall from thence pleasantly look down upon the River Parker, and the fruitfull Marishees lying beneath; As long as any free and harmless Dove shall find a White Oak, or other Tree within the Township, to perch, or feed, or build a careless Nest upon; . . . As long as Nature shall not grow Old and dote; but shall constantly remember to give the rows of Indian Corn their education, by Pairs; So long shall Christians be born there; and being first made meet, shall from thence be Translated, to be made partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints of Light.91

Unfortunately, such a lovely future was not generated by the jeremiads. As they mediated between religion and an ideology of progress, they gave free enterprise the sanctity of grace, social stratification God's blessing,

90 Increase Mather, The Day of Trouble is Near, p. 3.
and nationalism the glory of divine cause.
III

THE SIRENS OF TITAN AS A JEREMIAD

In March of 1980, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. preached a Palm Sunday sermon in Saint Clement’s Episcopal Church in Manhattan. The popular author attributed his nervousness in preparation to the strangeness, for him, of the sermon form. He proceeded to talk to the parishioners, in a typically conversational and irreverent manner, about the value of the simple, kind gesture between two human beings and about Christ’s subtle talent for sarcasm when confronted by hypocrites. This incident prompts a consideration of the religious substance of Vonnegut’s fiction. A brooding over the purpose of man and his universe as well as the role of the reluctant “savior” fuels the novels. When his science fiction is related to what appears on the surface to be a totally alien form, the American jeremiad, striking similarities are evident in purpose, thematic content, and style. Tony Tanner hints at the kinship in his suggestion that Vonnegut “uses his fiction to issue short sermons on the state of contemporary America . . . .”

The similarities are indicative of the significance in the American experience of the metaphor of Exodus within

which the admission of failure is made poignant by a longing for the possibility of an elusive Promised Land in the future. Like the Puritans and succeeding generations of American writers before him, Vonnegut continues the task of creating a myth of America. In *The Sirens of Titan*, his ironic view forces a confrontation with the tarnished, decadent reality of New World culture in the twentieth century; but his purpose remains true to tradition—he endeavors to present a redemptive passage leading to fulfillment in a New Canaan and assurance of eternal happiness in Paradise. Vonnegut, however, deliberately satirizes the concept of community election, and rejects it in favor of the pursuit of individual salvation. Like American novelists from Hawthorne and Cooper to Bellow and Ellison, Vonnegut explores the role of an American Adam, a figure endowed by the novel with mythical status, who must test the validity of the ideal of innocence as he is initiated into the realities of the American scene. The goal of a national errand to cleanse a wicked world is recognized to be in itself corrupting. Therefore, Vonnegut places his hopes in the ability of the individual pilgrim to be resurrected from society's evils by a journey toward personal purification which involves recognition of depravity, the creation of an enriching, non-traditional lifestyle, and the ability to give love and accept it in return.
Vonnegut's pilgrim's progress is updated to the latter half of the twentieth century by the pervasive influence of technology. While technology's destructive capabilities as well as its inherent ability to manipulate humans and stifle their initiative are repeatedly demonstrated, Vonnegut invests machines with a surprising asset. Various electronic devices actually assist and guide the pilgrim on his redemptive journey; as such, the gadgets are essential to the sought-after vision of Paradise.

Just as the jeremiads obviated reality by denying the evident failure of their community and superimposing a myth of America's redemptive role to be fulfilled in a time to come, Vonnegut gives his audience objective distance by projecting his tale into a science fiction future. While conditions of the present may seem indicative of irreversible moral decay and nuclear doom, Vonnegut allows his readers a refuge in a distant time. Through the guise of science fiction, David Ketterer explains, Vonnegut "evokes a setting in which regeneration may take place."  

Rapid social change, the situation which created crisis and forced

---

94 Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., The Sirens of Titan (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1959), p. 313. All further references to the text of this novel will appear in parentheses within the body of this essay.

response from the Puritan leaders, also challenges Vonnegut to depict future conditions. The science fiction mode assists him to foster adaptability to the changes begotten by the technological society. It is no accident that the space wanderers of Vonnegut's fiction are referred to as the "Pilgrims" (i.e. Billy Pilgrim who reappears in many of the novels), since they fit into the model of the American experience engendered by the Pilgrim Fathers. Twentieth century travelers still carry the burden of the "Errand."

Thematically, Vonnegut is concerned in The Sirens of Titan with the same matters facing the Puritan spokesmen of the latter seventeenth century, namely the purpose of man and the universe in the context of providential history, the role of America as the Chosen Land, the backslidings of the people, the significance of commercial success, social inequality, and the possibility of redemption. The literary devices familiar in the jeremiads are revitalized by Vonnegut for a like purpose, that is, to transform his tale into myth. The whole is organized into a structural pattern which mirrors the format of the jeremiads, a saga of decay, regeneration through a wilderness journey, and salvation.

With "progress" evoked on its frontispiece in a manner similar to the scriptural reading which serves as a contextual guide for each jeremiad, The Sirens of Titan is a satiric exploration into the "purpose of human life" (p. 51
Malachi Constant, whose name in Hebrew means "faithful messenger," pines for a purpose to his existence, a "first class message from God to someone equally distinguished" (p. 17) which he will have the honor to convey. Constant receives the nod for his quest from one of New England's foremost citizens, Winston Niles Rumfoord, a wealthy man who can see into the future as a result of his collision with a chrono-synclastic infundibulum, an astronomical phenomenon that can disengage man from the confines of time and space. Rumfoord materializes on his estate in Newport, Rhode Island every fifty-nine days and controls events with the vengeful power of an Old Testament God. Fate, or the divine plan, he decrees without sympathy, demands that his wife Beatrice and Malachi will journey to Mars, breed like animals, produce a son, and eventually end up together on solitary Titan, Saturn's most famous moon. Such a design is so repulsive to both agents that they do everything in their power to subvert the plan of providence; but their efforts are to no avail, they are destined to serve the plan of the Supreme hand shaping history.

As Malachi Constant approaches the Rumfoord mansion for the first time, he must traverse a narrow path through a reinvigorated wilderness because the garden had become a green "jungle" from lack of cultivation once Rumfoord set forth as a traveler of the universe. The path divides at
a "marvelously creative" fountain. "It was a cone described by many stone bowls of decreasing diameters. The bowls were collars on a cylindrical shaft forty feet high" (p. 16). The unchecked growth of the jungle contrasts effectively with the carefully engineered, controlled, almost purposeful fountain that, while dry at the moment, so enthralles Constant that he visualizes its fluid capabilities:

... the teeny-weeny bowl at the tippy-tippy top brimming over into the next little bowl . . . and the next little bowl's brimming over into the next little bowl . . . and the next little bowl's brimming over into the next bowl . . . and on and on and on, a rhapsody of brimming . . . (p. 19)

Rumfoord's estate fountain symbolizes process, that is, a step-by-step continuum similar to the course of providential history as envisioned by the Puritan theologians. For Ketterer, the fountain suggests the "system-within-system design of the universe." Its structure brings to mind Increase Mather's depiction of the intricacies of the pattern of divine providence as "a wheel within a wheel." The cascading water and the rotating wheels imply movement which is indirect but constantly progressive.

Since it is dry, Constant impulsively decides to climb over the fountain rather than go around it. What he hopes to see from the forty-foot high topmost bowl "with his feet in the ruins of birds' nests" is from "whence he had come

96 Ibid., p. 312.
97 See pages 30-31 of this essay.
and whither he was bound" (p. 17). This desire is indicative of Constant's need to understand the purpose of his existence, the outcome of the message he will carry. His action pays homage to a structure which symbolizes passage for him. The fountain and Constant's climb bring to mind Bercovitch's statement on the ritual import of the jeremiad: "to sustain process by imposing control, and to justify control by presenting a certain form of process as the only road to the future kingdom." 

The fountain is only one of the spiral shapes which are so pervasive throughout the novel that they serve as a controlling image. The chrono-synclastic infundibulum that gyrates Rumfoord and his dog, Kazak, around the universe and is thus the means by which Rumfoord is made aware of the plan he orchestrates is described as time "curved toward the same side in all directions" within a funnel (p. 15). Rumfoord and Kazak themselves exist as wave phenomena "pulsing in a distorted spiral with its origin in the Sun and its terminal in Betelgeuse" (p. 13). Constant first sees Beatrice Rumfoord, the woman with whom his life is to become entwined, at the top of a spiral staircase, dressed in a "long white dressing gown whose soft folds formed a counterclockwise spiral in harmony with the staircase" (p. 40). As he takes his leave of Beatrice, Constant imagines a change in the direction of the staircase and senses that he

---

has suddenly become "the bottommost point in a whirlpool of fate" (p. 42). Later, on Mercury, Constant and a companion will be deposited into a deep, dark cave by means of a lengthy, indirect, descending entranceway. Late in the novel, when an explosion on the Sun causes Rumfoord to dematerialize for the final time, he takes his leave of the solar system in a shroud of whipped electricity:

The fizzing twig of electricity on Rumfoord's finger grew, forming a spiral around Rumfoord. Rumfoord considered the spiral with sad contempt. 'I think perhaps this is it'... It was indeed. The spiral telescoped slightly, making a curtsey. And then it began to revolve around Rumfoord, spinning a continuous cocoon of green light. (p. 298)

Encompassing these specific incidences, Malachi's travels throughout the novel describe an intensely circuitous route from disgrace to redemption. He acquiesces in the Martian plot to kidnap him from Earth because he and the conglomerate he controls, Magnum Opus, are being sued by millions of people because the product, MoonMist Cigarettes (possibly containing marijuana) have been found by the American Medical Association to cause irreversible sterility. On Mars, Constant's memory is surgically emptied several times until he becomes an automaton member of the Martian army assembled as a force to invade Earth. During the seige, however, the space ship transporting Constant and his squad commander, Boaz, is diverted to Mercury where the two remain buried in a cave for three years. The stage is then set for Constant's return to New England as a space
wandering Messiah, only to be suddenly exhibited as the
embodiment of debauchery, egocentricity, and evil. To save
the community from such rottenness, Malachi and his wife
and son are exiled to Titan where they each create an in-
dividual, simple, yet fulfilling lifestyle. But the jour-
ney for Malachi is not ended. Salo, a robot from Tralfam-
dador who is marooned on Titan waiting for a replacement
part for his space vehicle, which eventually is furnished
by Constant's son, transports Malachi back to the American
heartland, Indianapolis, and engineers for his human friend
a dying vision of Paradise which allows this mortal Adam to
escape disillusion and embrace his dream.

Constant's odyssey, then, is circular with sudden re-
versals in direction. Like providential history, the in-
direct nature of the spiral pattern hides the inevitable
"constant" progress. Vonnegut satirizes the meaning of
"progress" and the linear conception of history by inserting
a Presidential address heralding the "New Age of Space."
This leader, with his Boston Brahmin accent, is confident of
the nature of "progerse" for America and its straightfor-
ward, cause and effect design:

And there is one frontier we can make par-
ticular progerse on and that is the great fron-
tier of space. We have been turned back by
space once, but it isn't the American way to
take no for an answer where progerse is concerned.
Now, people of faint heart come to see me
every day at the White House . . . and they
weep and wail and say, 'Oh, Mr. President, the
wirehouses [sic] are all full of automobiles
and airplanes and kitchen appliances . . . there is nothing more that anybody wants the factories to make because everybody already has two, three, and four of everything."

I said to him and I say to you and I say to everybody, Space can absorb the productivity of a trillion planets the size of earth. We could build and fire rockets forever, and never fill up space and never learn all there is to know about it . . . . If people listened to people like you, there wouldn't ever be any progress. There wouldn't be the telephone or anything! (pp. 59-60)

Vonnegut is obviously suspicious of those who link their particular idea of progress with the motives of the Almighty in order to sanctify what is essentially a merchandizing scheme. In an article originally in the New York Times Magazine, Vonnegut reflects on the symbolism that may be attached to man's footprints on the moon:

The footprint could mean, if we let it, that Earthlings have done an unbelievably difficult and beautiful thing which the Creator, for its own reasons, wanted Earthlings to do. . . . But that footprint will be profaned in America at once by advertising . . . And it may be a better footprint, actually, than that. It might really be sacred. . . . Maybe the Creator really does want us to travel a lot more than we have traveled so far. . . . I prefer to think not, though, for this simple-minded reason: Earthlings who have felt that the Creator clearly wanted this or that have almost always been pigheaded and cruel. You bet.99

Implicit here are thoughts not only about the World Wars and the Vietnam conflict during which we could justify the perpetration of unspeakable horrors because we were

fighting against "evil," but also the intolerance con-
ceived by our Puritan forefathers against any beliefs
which diverged from their conception of God's holy plan,
as especially evidenced by the persecution of Roger Wil-
liams and Anne Hutchinson, as well as the witch trials
and the destruction of the civilization of the Native
Americans, all condoned in the name of progress toward
the City of God.

Malachi Constant is obsessed by a need to learn the
purpose of his existence and the meaning of the message
he is destined to transport. His American instinct leads
him to the tentative assumption, "I guess somebody up
there likes me" (p. 7), and following Rumfoord's disclo-
sures about his impending travels in the solar system,
Malachi sits back in his limousine quaking under what he
assumes to be an Almighty call: "Something was looking
out for him, all right. And whatever it was, it was
saving his skin for--" (p. 47). He is convinced he is
one of the elect. Having offered himself to God as a
messenger, he demands that Rumfoord tell him "What's the
message?" and "Why the hell" he should go to Titan (p.
35). He takes for granted that his mission is divine
despite the fact that like Bunyan's pilgrim, after ripping
open "the seams of his memory, hoping to find a secret
compartment with something of value in it," he can dredge
up "nothing of value" (p. 22).
Following his transportation to Mars, Constant's memory is surgically removed, an antenna is planted in his brain, and he is given the new identity of "Unk," a common soldier in the Martian army. His position implies a wearied, meaningless, yet relentless type of process:

The third man in the second squad of the first platoon of the second company of the third battalion of the second regiment of the First Martian Assault Infantry Division was a private who had been broken from lieutenant-colonel three years before. (p. 98)

Because of the antennas in their heads, the recruits can be controlled like robots and punished with excruciating pain whenever they do anything "a good soldier wouldn't ever do" (p. 102). Such regulation is an exaggerated form of the power the Puritan ministers and their rhetorical descendants exerted over the minds of their followers, be they parishioners or soldiers. Fresh from a mind-scraping operation, Unk can even be manipulated to strangle to death his best friend Stony Stevenson while the rest of the army complacently watches.

But Unk is unique. As he stares down the spiral of the muzzle of his immaculately clean rifle, he sees in the distance the Promised Land Americans have been dreaming of for centuries:

He could have stared happily at the immaculate spiral of the rifling for hours, dreaming of the happy land whose round gate he saw at the other end of the bore. The pink under his oily thumbnail at the far end of the barrel made that far end seem a rosy paradise indeed.
Some day he was going to crawl down the barrel to that paradise. (p. 109)

The "oily thumbnail" mocks the vision and makes it a sham. But Unk is persistent. Despite having his memory cleaned seven times when once is enough for most of the others, Unk keeps trying to "puzzle things out" (p. 119) by fighting the inevitable pain provoked by his antenna. He struggles to determine who he is, to make sense of his nearly formless memories, and to understand the task and chain of command of the Martian army. As a hedge against the ordained memory losses, he lists in a letter to himself all "the things I know for sure" (p. 124). Among the items are the fact that he is alive, that he is on Mars, that he is being trained to kill other beings on Earth, that the pain in his head signifies he is learning something, that Stony is his best friend, and that "somebody made everything for some reason" (pp. 124-31). The list and the effort in its compilation testify to the strength of the need to discover a purpose in existence. Unk's stated goal is to find a peaceful spot in the universe with Stony as his companion and "spend a lot of time trying to figure out why whoever made everything went and made it" (p. 131). Like the Puritans, Unk needs to create illusions in order to go on living in a world that would otherwise be meaningless chaos. Stanley Schatt recognizes that Vonnegut is portraying the belief in a divine purpose as "pathetic." Vonnegut suggests, Schatt
contends, that "humanity still suffers from Sir Francis Bacon's 'idols of the tribe,' the human need to observe order in the universe even when there is none."\textsuperscript{100}

Since he has been freed from the confines of time by the chrono-synclastic infundibulum, Winston Niles Rumfoord is aware of the guiding plan, the purpose that is structuring present events. He answers his wife's protest about being sent off to Mars as a concubine for Malachi with the following parable:

\begin{quote}
I can see the whole roller coaster you're on. And sure—I could give you a piece of paper that would tell you about every dip and turn, warn you about every bogeyman that was going to pop out at you in the tunnels. But that wouldn't help you any . . . you'd still have to take the roller-coaster ride . . . . I didn't design the roller coaster, I don't own it, and I don't say who rides and who doesn't. I just know what it's shaped like. \\
(p. 58)
\end{quote}

Regardless of his dedication to his own role in the scheme, Rumfoord is aware "to what disgustingly paltry ends" the entire history of the Earth has been manipulated (p. 64). He allows the guiding purpose to be revealed to Malachi, Beatrice and Chrono when they near the end of their journey on Saturn's moon.

At Rumfoord's Titan home, appropriately named Dun Roamin and "shining out there like St. Augustine's City of God" (p. 291), Malachi and his family meet Salo, a

\textsuperscript{100}Stanley Schatt, \textit{Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.} (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), pp. 39, 42.
robot from Tralfamadore, a planet at the edge of the galaxy. From Salo they discover that they have all been wielded by the Tralfamadorians, a race of robots. Like Malachi, Salo is also a messenger. His duty is to carry a message from one end of the galaxy to the other, but he is delayed in his mission by a broken part in his ship's power system, about the size and shape of a beer can opener. Landing on Titan in the Earthling year 203,227 B.C., he awaits a replacement part to be supplied from Earth. The Tralfamadorians control and mold the entire history of Earth toward the purpose of delivery of the small piece of metal. Great achievements of man, such as Stonehenge, the Great Wall of China, the Moscow Kremlin, simply spell out consoling messages to Salo from his home planet: "Replacement part being rushed with all possible speed," and "Be patient. We haven't forgotten you" (p. 271). The folks from Earth learn that their world, and their own trials have achieved nothing more than the delivery of a small piece of metal, which hangs around Chrono's neck as a good luck charm, to a robot. Instead of a history of redemption from sin and resurrection into the glorious millenium of God, Earth's job has been that of a spare parts factory. This mocking turn about is all the more devastating when the tradition of providential history and the glorious destiny of America as the builder of the City of God is recalled. Critic Schatt finds that
"history is the major subject of The Sirens of Titan":101

. . . Vonnegut's focus is on whether or not human history is meaningful. Vonnegut suggests that historians . . . have wasted their time trying to discover patterns and meaning to a human history that has been the result of Tralfamadorians' efforts to send a message from one end of the universe to the other.101

Vonnegut dramatizes the danger of the relentless search for "meaning" and "purpose" in the saga of the metamorphosis of the Tralfamadorians into robots. The inhabitants of the distant planet were not always mechanical. Obsessed with finding out what their purpose was, the creatures made machines to serve all the low, disgusting, shameful purposes they could discover so that they could be left free to find a higher purpose. But the purpose was never high enough, "so machines were made to serve higher purposes, too." The machines were so expert that the creatures finally gave the mechanisms the job of "finding out what the highest purpose of the creatures could be. The machines reported in all honesty that the creatures couldn't be said to have any purpose at all." Since they were purposeless and therefore despicable, the creatures told the machines to efficiently annihilate them (pp. 274-75). The need for a "purpose," then, denies man the ability to live a human life.

So, Vonnegut strips away the consolation of the idea of a divine manipulator who will make everything come out

101 Ibid., p. 36.
glorious in the end. In Beyond the Waste Land: A Study of the American Novel in the Nineteen Sixties, Raymond Olderman asserts that Vonnegut teaches us that we "need not ask about the powers that rule and the meaning of life because life is meaningless; we should not ask because the question misplaces emphasis and makes us wonder about meaning--it makes us take part in 'Children's Crusades' to prove one theory of meaning better than any other, and generally wreak havoc on one another."  

Rebecca M. Pauly agrees in her article, "The Moral Stance of Kurt Vonnegut." The Sirens of Titan, she asserts, disposes "mercilessly of the idea of crusades. The idea of providential luck is a horrible joke played on man." Our ends are tawdry, at best, therefore, the refuge for our egos lies in the repudiation of the idea of a divine will and the embracing of life in the present. Rumfoord, who is forced into the inconsequential Tralfamadorian use of him as no more than a "handy-dandy potato peeler" (p. 285), has enough freedom of will to orchestrate a scenario which, from his point of view, will compensate man for lack of cosmic dignity and unite everyone in a supportive...


brotherhood. The satire that Vonnegut achieves through Rumfoord's plan evolves from its reliance on the tradition of the "chosen people."

Rumfoord is the unseen supreme commander of the Martian army which he has assembled with the purpose of invading Earth. Like Malachi and Beatrice, the troops are drafted by means of kidnapping, then their minds are emptied via psychosurgery. Not a merciless hawk, Rumfoord is motivated by a noble cause—he designs the attack as a device to finally unite the people on Earth into a worldwide retaliatory force against the aliens. Out of the rubble and chaos of such a cataclysmic event, Rumfoord is able to realize his ultimate ambition, to establish a new church with a revolutionary doctrine.

The Martian forces as well as their opponents on Earth, then, serve, albeit unknowingly, as soldier-saints in a crusade orchestrated by the all-powerful Rumfoord. The Martian invading "armada" is vigorously annihilated by a barrage of 2,542,670 thermo-nuclear anti-aircraft rockets -- enough warheads to turn the skies burnt orange for a year and a half (p. 169). The magnitude of this war with Mars actualizes the terror of twentieth-century civilization and also the one-upsmanship available to modern man over his Puritan ancestors--while Winthrop had to direct the eyes of his congregation toward an imagined chiliad in the future, Rumfoord, as Ketterer reminds us, "has it in
his power to be the instigator of a do-it-yourself apoc-
calypse." 104

The Earthlings prove to be vigilant guardians of
their planet. Mrs. Lyman R. Peterson, a housewife in
Boca Raton, Florida, receives the Congressional Medal of
Honor for killing four of the very few members of the
Martian Assault Infantry to actually land on Earth. With
her son's .22 caliber rifle, "she picked them off as they
came out of their space ship, which had landed in her
backyard" (p. 170). The homely locale of the battle, of
course, helps to reduce the cause to the ridiculous. The
narrator comments:

Earth's glorious victory over Mars had been a
tawdry butchery of virtually unarmed saints,
saints who had waged feeble war on Earth in
order to weld the peoples of that planet into
a monolithic Brotherhood of Man. (p. 175)

The concept of the soldier-saint is an ingrained tradition
in American culture. As early as 1648 in Wonder-Working
Providence, Edward Johnson lauded the New World Soldier of
Christ with marvelous rhetoric which gave enduring power
to the imagery:

Babylon is fallen, the God of truth hath said
it; then who would not be a Souldier on Christ's
side, where is such a certainty of victory? nay
I can tell you a farther word of encouragement,
every true-hearted Souldier that falls by the
sword in this fight, shall not lye dead long,
but stand upon his feet again, and be made par-
taker of the triumph of this Victory; and none
can be overcome, but by turning his back in

104Ketterer, p. 4.
fight. And for a word of terror to the enemy, let them know Christ will never give over the raising of fresh forces, till they are overthrown root and branch. And now you ancient people of Israel look out of Your Prison grates, let these armies of the Lord Christ Jesus provoke you to acknowledge he is certainly come . . . here is a people not only praying but fighting for you, that the great block may be removed out of the way, . . . that they with you may enjoy that glorious resurrection day, the glorious nuptials of the Lamb . . . .

The Puritans obviated the distinction between secular and sacred revolutions. The combatants are depicted as soldier-saints in many jeremiads. In the last decades of the seventeenth century, the Indian uprisings stimulated the warmongering exhortations of the clergy. Cotton Mather deliberately inverted his biblical text for the sermon Things to be Look'd For: "Prepare war, beat your Plough-shares into Swords, and your Pruning hooks into Spears."

Then he proceeds to transform the congregation into a battalion:

. . . the Thanks that should be given to all that have the Spirit of Souldiery among us, art particularly belonging to that Worshipful Company which by asking a Sermon this Day, have declared the God of Heaven to be their Commander in Chief . . . . You are in this respect, the Glory of New-England, which may Challenge the biggest part of the World by far . . . . But your Souldiery is that which adds to our Expectations from you . . . There is not . . . that People under the Sun, which dare meet them [the men of New England] upon

Cotton's was not a lone voice. In 1679 J. R. Richardson writes an entire sermon on *The Necessity of a Well-Experienced Souldiery* and Samuel Nowell places *Abraham in Arms*. Throughout American history this rhetoric and imagery has served as the motivation for action. Sacvan Bercovitch sees this figural mode as a forceful impetus for the American Revolution. The Rebellion was the "vehicle of providence. It took the form of a mighty, spontaneous turning forward, both regenerative and organic, confirming the prophecies of Scripture. . . . The Revolutionaries were agents of the predetermined course of progress." It is easy to recognize a like saintly interpretation of military action in America's subsequent armed ventures. Vonnegut comments about World War II in an interview with Robert Scholes: "we came out as the authentic good guys, and then on into the reconstruction of Europe, too. And it's made us very smug and prone to make ghastly mistakes.


because we have been virtuous."¹⁰⁹

The "great and unforgettable suicide of Mars," is orchestrated so that "Earthlings might at last become one people—joyful, fraternal, and proud" (p. 179). Rumfoord explains, after the slaughter, that the noble wish of the Martian troops "when they died . . . was not for paradise for themselves, but that the brotherhood of mankind on Earth might be enduring" (pp. 179-80). To change the world and usher in the millenium, Rumfoord recognizes that he must have "showmanship, a genial willingness to shed other people's blood, and a plausible new religion to introduce during the brief period of repentance and horror that usually follows bloodshed" (p. 174). Rumfoord's thinking is hardly original; he needed merely to turn to his New England ancestors for a tutorial on tactics for preparation of the chosen land and the subsequent salvation of the world. But the marvelously paradoxical result is his religion "The Church of God the Utterly Indifferent." Central to this creed are the teachings "Puny man can do nothing at all to help or please God Almighty, and Luck is not the hand of God." On the Church's flag are the golden words "Take Care of the People, and God Almighty Will Take Care of Himself" (p. 180). The Church

of God the Utterly Indifferent claims to unbind man from the delusion that he is serving God's purposes and consequently to allow unrestricted, natural human development. The Reverend C. Horner Redwine preaches:

O Lord Most High, Creator of the Cosmos, . . .
Trifler with Millennia--what could we do for Thee that Thou couldst not do for Thyself one octillion times better? Nothing. What could we do or say that could possibly interest Thee? Nothing. Oh, Mankind, rejoice in the apathy of our Creator, for it makes us free and truthful and dignified at last. . . . And no longer can a tyrant say, 'God wants this or that to happen, and anybody who doesn't help this or that to happen is against God.' . . . The claptrap that has so often enslaved us or driven us into the madhouse lies slain! (p. 215)

David Ketterer presumes that Rumfoord, since he is able to see into the future and therefore presumably knows of the role of Tralfamadore, "concocted his religion of accidental causality as a form of compensation or consolation protecting mankind from the sad knowledge that there has, indeed, been a purposeful design directing human affairs, but one that does little to advantage man's sense of dignity." As Rumfoord tells Malachi, "it's a thankless job, telling people it's a hard, hard universe they're in" (p. 25).

The Church of God the Utterly Indifferent conceptualizes Vonnegut's rejection of Christianity on the grounds that it can not deal with man's needs in the here and now. Rebecca Pauly explains that in Rumfoord's new religion

110Ketterer, p. 306. 70
"ontological questions of a working God are abandoned; the church militant is anathema." During an interview with Robert Short, Vonnegut expresses the positive results of nonreliance on God:

... it's been an affirmative act, an affirmative attitude in my family for at least two hundred years ... to declare ... that there is no God, that God has always been dead. ... We've always found this meant an agreeable situation, to be on our own and to behave virtuously within the biological limits of being human beings.

What is important, Vonnegut seems to be saying, is not why but how one lives. An ill-defined hope for the future may not be as necessary as man has tended to believe. The longing for the millenium to come tends to promote a view of the present as a wasteland. To cope with the harsh realities of everyday imperfection, man has always invented the illusions of mythology and religion. That even the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent is illusory is immediately evident in the implied Bacchus lurking beneath the cloth of the Rev. Horner Redwine.

Malachi Constant is on hold deep within the cave on Mercury so that Rumfoord can spring him at the appropriate time to serve as the savior of his new religion.

111 Pauly, p. 69.
chi's return to Earth is a flagrant lampoon of the long-awaited Second Coming. Precipitated by the hopeful Chaucerian beginning, "Whan that Aprille with his shoures sote" (p. 220), the Space Wanderer, a naked, bearded, confused Malachi, still aware only of his identity as the memoryless "Unk," appears in the yard of the Barnstable First Church of God the Utterly Indifferent on Cape Cod. So, at long last the savior descends upon Massachusetts Bay. He is baptised by a fire engine's riotous, indiscriminate stream of water which soaks the entire crowd surrounding the reluctant messiah:

There was a nozzle mounted amidships on the fire engine. . . . they aimed it straight up and turned it on. A shivering, unsure fountain climbed into the sky, was torn to shards by the winds when it could climb no more. The shards fell all around, now falling on the space ship with splattering thumps. Now soaking the firemen themselves; now soaking women and children, startling them, then making them more full of joy than ever. (p. 225)

The disorder of this stream contrasts with the precise, methodical fountain that intrigues Constant on his first trip to the Rumfoord estate. While the sculptured fountain symbolizes process and system, the baptismal fountain of the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent is appropriately random.

Although the members of Rumfoord's church are free of the bonds of God's will, true to their New England heritage they substitute their own imposed shackles. Indivi-
duals in the crowd greeting their savior wear weights or
dress in frumpish clothes to annihilate the unfair advan-
tage of indiscriminate luck. The Church of God the Utter-
ly Indifferent proclaims that an apathetic God has no in-
terest in bestowing favors on cherished elect. Any ad-
vantages, occurring in some people by accident, must be
compensated for so that everyone in the community will be
equal and content. Such a conviction reflects the Ameri-
can colonists' elevation of the community welfare above
that of the individual; however, it is in direct opposi-
tion to the Puritan belief in inequality as a method by
which God achieves His purposes. As John Winthrop ex-
plained aboard the Arbella, certain people were chosen by
God to lead the community toward its ordained destiny, and
to facilitate such ends they were endowed by God with
wealth and power. The views of spiritual election of a
certain group or race and the equation of worldly success
with Heavenly Grace are turned around by Vonnegut for the
purposes of ridicule and to demonstrate how man's real
spirit is stifled by cultural dogmas fostered to promote
social stratification.

In the crowd at Barnstable are women with the "terr-
rific advantage of beauty" who annihilate their luck with
"bad posture, chewing gum, and a ghoulish use of cosme-
tics." A "dark young man" with "predaceous sex appeal"
handicaps himself with a wife "nauseated by sex," and the
wife, vain about her Phi Beta Kappa key, burdens herself with a husband who reads "nothing but comic books."
Others attach varying weights of lead balls to their bodies to compensate for physical prowess. The narrator rather blandly notes that the folks are "all so happy" because "nobody took advantage of anybody any more" (pp. 224-25).

Dressed in a lemon-yellow stretch suit with orange question marks on his chest and back, as the manipulated messiah is led in front of his massive, unruly flock, Unk by chance proves worthy of their adoration. The congregation asks him, "What happened to you?" and Unk is equal to the task. His wanderings have led him to the conclusion which also happens to be the primary tenet of the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent: "I was a victim of a series of accidents, as are we all" (p. 229). Such a pronouncement, of course, negates the premise upon which a "chosen people" built the New World. Urian Oakes, in 1677 emphatically denied the operation of "chance":

And it is so far from being Chance to God, that there is as much (if not more) of the Wisdom, and Will, and Power of God appearing in matters of Chance and Contingency, as in any other events.113

When the origin of this ideal is understood through Purit-

tan writings, the force of Vonnegut's satire on American culture becomes evident since the possibility of delusion is made manifest.

The "perfect love feast" (p. 245), a rite reinvigorated from our colonial past, surrounding the reluctant savior is instantly turned into a communal release of hate when the puppet master Rumfoord reveals the yellow-clad Malachi to be a profligate who used the fruits of his good luck to "wallow" in "voluptuous turpitude" (p. 251). As the richest man on earth, Malachi, before being caught up in Rumfoord's plan, had explained his wealth with the tentative assertion "I guess somebody up there likes me" (p. 7). As Rumfoord explains to the mob, there is "nothing more cruel, ... more blasphemous that a man can do than to believe that ... luck, good or bad, is the hand of God!" (p. 252). Rumfoord's choice of the garish outfit for his timid savior is purposive: the crowd can easily be aroused to scorn a buffoon. Vonnegut discusses this psychology in an article written for Harper's Magazine:

When the Inquisition was about to burn somebody alive in a public square, it shaved that person from head to foot. It tortured the person to the point of babbling idiocy, fitted him out with a dunce cap and a lurid paper cloak. His or her face was painted or masked. Hey presto! A clown!

The idea, of course, was to make the victim comical rather than pitiful. Pity is like
Rumfoord's caustic denunciation of the wicked Malachi strongly resembles Samuel Danforth's castigation of the errant youth charged with sexual perversion (see Danforth quotation on p. 24 of this essay). Both preachers demand the exile of the offensive personage whose continued presence threatens to corrupt the society. Even their language is similar. Danforth reproaches the "carnal, sensual, debauched" nature of the boy, links the terms "Harlot" and "Beast," and rants that the community has become a "Brothel-house," a "Hog-sty." Rumfoord's tirade is tagged a "sermon":

'We are disgusted by Malachi Constant,' said Winston Niles Rumfoord up in his treetop, 'because he used the fantastic fruits of his fantastic good luck to finance an unending demonstration that man is a pig. He wallowed in sycophants. He wallowed in worthless women. He wallowed in lascivious entertainments and alcohol and drugs. He wallowed in every known form of voluptuous turpitude. . . . We are angered by Malachi Constant . . . because he did nothing unselfish or imaginative with his billions. He was as benevolent as Marie Antoinette, as creative as a professor of cosmetology in an embalming college. (pp. 251-52)

During his questioning by Rumfoord while in front of the massive crowd, the space traveler is asked, as is the pilgrim in Pilgrim's Progress, to mention one good deed he had done in his life. He proclaims that he had a

friend. But Rumfoord unmercifully reveals that Unk had unwittingly murdered his best friend, Stony Stevenson, while he, Unk, was a nearly brainless, radio-controlled soldier on Mars. Devastated by this final proof of his worthlessness, the discredited savior turned pariah willingly accepts Rumfoord's sentence of banishment to the isolated, uninhabited Titan. But Rumfoord proclaims that by climbing the long ladder to the space ship and journeying to Titan, Malachi will become the "most memorable, magnificent, and meaningful human being of modern times" (p. 256). Despite his seemingly reprehensible existence, Constant will symbolically rid his community of all of its evil by his removal, and he is also destined to attain much spiritual progress on Titan.

Like the jeremiads, The Sirens of Titan is quick to lambaste the community for its backslidings. Early in the novel, Vonnegut inserts a sermon preached by the fundamentalist Reverend Bobby Denton on the occasion of the grounding of Galactic Spacecraft's massive ship, The Whale, because of the dangers of chrono-synclastic infundibula. Structured precisely like the jeremiads, Denton's sermon is phrased for the technological age. He begins with a scriptural promise of punishment in response to the aeronautical tower built by science and technology which has replaced the Tower of Babel.

77
And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, 'Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.' (p. 31)

This opening is followed by a "spitting" and "roasting" of the congregation over the "coals of its own iniquity";

Have we not builded of steel and pride an abomination far taller than the Tower of Babel of old? . . . Quit talking the language of science to each other! Nothing will be restrained from you which you have imagined to do, if you all keep talking the language of science to each other, and I don't want that! I, your Lord God on High want things restrained from you, so you will quit thinking about crazy towers and rockets to Heaven, and start thinking about how to be better neighbors and husbands and wives and daughters and sons! (p. 32)

True to the tradition of the jeremiads, Denton ends with the promise that salvation is still possible on God's "wonderful space ship" Earth. "Where would you rather be tomorrow," he asks, "on Mars or in the Kingdom of Heaven?" He counts down the Ten Commandments and ends with an exultant "Blast off! Paradise, here we come!" (pp. 33-34).

Malachi Constant's earthly profligacy and excesses are depicted in detail. In an attempt to make himself unfit to be Rumfoord's messenger, Constant indulges in a fifty-six-day party. The swimming pool, at the end of this orgy, presents the remains of a latter-day Babylon:
the breeze revealed a pool bottom paved with broken glass, cherries, twists of lemon peel, peyotl buttons, slices of orange, stuffed olives, sour onions, a television set, a hypodermic syringe, and the ruins of a white grand piano. Cigar butts and cigarette butts, some of them marijuana, littered the surface. (p. 53)

A panorama of his Hollywood estate reveals such additional representations of conspicuous consumption as a rhinestone telephone booth, and a gum-chewing, ravishing "brassy blond" recently-acquired wife. Being drunk for eight weeks, Malachi's mouth tastes like "horseblanket puree" (pp. 52-53, 60). Could this "notorious rakehell" from Hollywood, California (p. 11), be a divine messenger? Vonnegut creates such incongruities to jiggle the reader into disoriented questioning. Malachi's subsequent journey constantly breaks patterns and destroys connections, but he is a messenger who will transmit a spiritual communication to the technological society. Appearances can be deceiving; perhaps the Puritans erred by casting the misfits out of their community.

Prior to the onset of his space wanderings, Malachi Constant is the richest man in the world. Like the Puritans, Vonnegut carefully explores the implications of this commercial success, but he presents an ironic response to the belief that financial largess is a gift from God bestowed upon those He favors. Magnum Opus, Malachi's conglomerate, was assembled through the stock market wizardry.
of Noel Constant, Malachi's seemingly indigent and ever-absent father. With a bankroll of eight thousand dollars, Noel sat down on his bed in the small, sparc(e, unclean Room 223 of the Wilburhampton Hotel in Los Angeles to develop his investment strategy, armed with only a check book, government envelopes, and a Gideon Bible. In twelve months, rarely leaving his room, he increased his fortune to a million and a quarter.

His system was keyed to the Bible: beginning with the first sentence in Genesis, Noel "wrote the sentence in capital letters, put periods between the letters, divided the letters into pairs, . . . then he looked for corporations with those initials, and bought shares in them." Thus, his first investments were International Nitrate, followed by Trowbridge Helicopter and Electra Bakeries. "He invariably picked the stock market's most brilliant performers days or hours before their performances began" (pp. 72-75). What clearer indication could there be that such success was ordained by the Lord. Such unblemished good fortune was clearly more than luck, it was divine intervention. But why Noel Constant?--a filthy recluse who abandoned his only son whose mother was a whore, and who, despite his riches, never moved out of his eleven-foot hotel room.

Armed with two pieces of advice proffered by his father during their one and only meeting, Malachi inherits
the biblical system which never played his father false. The advice is less than sacred: "Don't touch your principal" and "Keep the liquor bottle out of the bedroom" (p. 82). The son is hardly more worthy than the father, as his debauched lifestyle testifies. He even stoops to utilize the portrait of the three gorgeous women who are the Sirens of Titan, shown to him by Rumfoord as an inducement for the forthcoming journeys, for advertising purposes. The three women, "one white, one gold, one brown" are so magnificent that they bring tears to Malachi's eyes, but he makes them the common trademark for MoonMist Cigarettes (p. 38). The use of art for merchandising was also a favorite ploy of the elder Constant. Unable to buy Leonardo's Mona Lisa at any price, Noel "punished Mona Lisa by having her used in an advertising campaign for suppositories" (p. 56). Under Malachi's care the empire continues to grow exponentially until it is totally lost due to the machinations of the Tralfamadorians who must get Malachi and his yet unborn son to Titan. So much, Vonnegut seems to say, for the Rockefellers and Carnegies who consider themselves God's favorites.

In accordance with the tradition of the jeremiads, Vonnegut's space pilgrimage ends with a promise of glorious salvation for those who come to understand "the purpose of human life." Fulfillment, it turns out, is achieved through a force much simpler, attainable, and
personal than cosmic understanding. While serving as the nearly brainless Martian trooper, Unk's only consequential feelings are affection for and dependence on his friend Stony Stevenson. Stripped of his money and his memories, an attachment to another human being is essential to his continued existence and is the force which drives him to struggle, despite the certain pain generated by the antenna in his head, to understand what is happening on Mars. He later learns more about the importance of friendship when he is detoured to Mercury, accompanied by the Black man Boaz, his commander in the Martian army. While the two are trapped for three years in a deep, dark cave on the planet, Unk witnesses a tough, hardened man fall in love with little kite-like translucent creatures called "harmoniums" that are nourished by the singing vibrations of Mercury. Boaz is adored by the harmoniums because he plays tape-recorded music for them, resulting in their sheer ecstasy. He would sometimes allow a favored harmonium to feed caressingly on his pulse. He also lovingly protects the little beings by vigilantly keeping them at a safe distance from the source of the music so that they will not get a lethal overdose of the concert. When the harmoniums spell out a message which gives Unk the clue to getting out of the cave, Boaz decides to stay behind forever with his charming friends. Like his famous namesake, the anthropologist Franz Boaz, Boaz decides to
dedicate his life to the primitive creatures.

As a member of an oppressed race on Earth and as a secret commander on Mars, Boaz had little opportunity for close relationships. But in the cave on Mercury, the harmoniums surround him with affection. He explains to Unki:

I found me a place where I can do good without doing any harm, and I can see I'm doing good, and them I'm doing good for know I'm doing it, and they love me, Unk, as best they can. I found me a home. And when I die down here some day, . . . I'm going to be able to say to myself, 'Boaz--you made millions of lives worth living.' Ain't nobody ever spread more joy.

(pp. 213-14)

In an isolated cave deep inside Mercury, Boaz finds a purposeful existence and unquestioned love. Richard Giannone, in Vonnegut, A Preface to His Novels, maintains "the relationship between Boaz and the harmoniums has perfect communication. Nothing is lost between them; what is felt is the message. Boaz calls the message love, in an illusion that makes his life good. . . . By believing in his imagined rapport with the harmoniums, Boaz is made whole."\(^{115}\)

In contrast, the godlike Winston Niles Rumfoord is incapable of accepting the blessing of friendship. Clark Mayo, in Kurt Vonnegut; The Gospel from Outer Space, finds Rumfoord to be the "most intriguing" character in the novel. Vonnegut describes Rumfoord in "terms that would

do justice to a Hemingway 'code character,' "magnificently responsible," "un-neurotic courage," "style" and "gallantry." He appears to be a worthy descendant of the New England fathers celebrated in Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana*. Indeed, to Malachi, Rumfoord appears to be "something else again--morally, spatially, socially, sexually, and electrically" (pp. 21, 27-28). Yet, Mayo recalls, the New England elder "loves fraud," endlessly manipulates the other characters, and his "intended utopia becomes a gruesome dystopia." Leslie Fiedler labels Rumfoord a "guru, as articulate and omnipotent as Prospero on his Island . . . who seeming to want to rule the world turns out to have longed to create a religion." Fiedler goes on to explain that "the name Rumfoord appears over and over in Vonnegut's stories and novels, always signifying the kind of . . . Harvard-educated W.A.S.P., before whom--as a Midwestern German American--he feels that fascinated repulsion all of us Americans experience confronted by some absolute alien who happens to have got here before us." Yet despite his


117 Ibid.

inherited status, his ability to see into the future, his innate faculty for leadership, and his grandiose scheme for universal brotherhood, Rumfoord becomes a distraught, nasty, and abysmally lonely man who eventually ends up as nothing more than infinitely strung-out electrical charges doomed to formless wandering in the universe.

Salo, the Tralfamadorian robot, finds Rumfoord to be "a surprisingly parochial Earthling at heart" (p. 273) who turns against the robots who have manipulated him. Rumfoord's ignominious fate is determined when he rebuffs the offered friendship of Salo. In process of dematerializing permanently due to an intense explosion on the Sun, Rumfoord rebukes Salo as a representative of the Tralfamadorians who had so callously used him to retrieve the replacement part for Salo's ship. He also demands that Salo reveal the sealed message the robot is spanning the galaxy to deliver. Salo, a conglomeration of pins, clamps, nuts, bolts, and magnets, is psychologically tormented because he has been built as a machine to do only one thing --to deliver a message to the intended recipient without under any circumstances opening the message along the way. Yet despite his metallic composition, he finds he loves Winston Niles Rumfoord. The friendship he feels is a "fascinating novelty" (p. 278) to the machine. As Salo initially refuses the human's request, Rumfoord, "through a thin veil of noblesse oblige," pronounces to Salo that
"to be a machine was to be insensitive, was to be unimaginative, was to be vulgar, was to be purposeful without a shred of conscience--" (p. 285). Rumfoord thus discards what emerges as the most dominating, meaningful force in the universe, the one thing that makes existence worthwhile—a friend. Perhaps because of his insensitivity, the final dematerialization separates Rumfoord from man's best friend, his loyal, constant companion, Kazak, his dog. The narrator comments, "a Universe schemed in mercy would have kept man and dog together" (p. 295). Salo, "pathetically vulnerable" (p. 285) to Rumfoord's accusation, eventually unseals his message but too late to share it with his dematerialized friend. Faced with failure as an efficient machine and rejection by Rumfoord, Salo's unbearable distress compells him to self-destruct. Rebecca Pauly contends that Salo commits suicide "to punish himself for crimes against himself." The machine who is subsequently humanized is faced with the "danger of a morally intolerable schizophrenia."\textsuperscript{119}

Unlike Rumfoord, Malachi's humanization, the result of his wanderings in the universe, is completed with his family on Titan. He becomes Salo's friend after painstakingly reassembling the robot from the pile of scrap and finally comes to accept and love his estranged mate and

\textsuperscript{119}Pauly, p. 69.
son. While their initial union was the result of rape, in their old age Malachi and Beatrice accept each other with simple affection. Like a fond and responsible caretaker, Malachi takes food that he has cultivated himself to his mate along with a home-made broom and shovel to clear out the "mess" of refuse which accumulates in Rumfoord's old palace now inhabited by Beatrice. Malachi's lifestyle has significantly changed—from a wasteful consumer of the Earth's resources, and a giver of chaotic, garbage-producing parties, he has been transformed into a caretaker and a self-sufficient farmer. His achievement of spiritual unity has corresponded to the mythic pattern of departure following recognition of guilt or evil, purification through a journey in the wilderness, and reemergence as an innocent Adam.

Beatrice, too, has changed. The little girl depicted in an oil painting dressed totally in white with a strange expression of worry about "getting the least bit dirty" (p. 23), and whose marriage to Rumfoord remains unconsummated because of her fear of contamination, now lives surrounded by rubbish as a kind of earth mother. At seventy-four she is a "springy, one-eyed, gold-toothed, brown old lady—as lean and tough as a chair slat" (p. 307). Beatrice works constantly on her book, The True Purpose of Life in the Solar System, a "refutation of Rumfoord's notion that the purpose of human life in the Solar
System was to get a grounded messenger from Tralfamador on his way again" (p. 308). The "roughly used" old lady has found her own truth: "'The worst thing that could possibly happen to anybody . . . would be to not be used for anything by anybody'" (p. 310). Just before she dies, she thanks Constant for using her.

Chrono, their son, works out a kind of religious response to his life. After running away at age seventeen to join the Titanic bluebirds, "the most admirable creatures on Titan" (p. 304), Chrono spends most of his time making little shrines of sticks, stones, and bluebird feathers—representing Saturn and its moons. Malachi conscientiously tidies his son's shrines, weeding and raking and replacing decaying elements. Such care is the father's way of feeling spiritual contact with his son (p. 305). Tony Tanner points to these shrines as Vonnegut's indication that man is a "compulsive perceiver and maker of patterns." In fact the "plurality of patterns and messages in the book undermines the notion of any final truth." The Sirens of Titan presents no absolute answers. While the protagonists discover the fraudulence of purpose in history and divine meaning in the universe, they are still compulsively drawn to create and preserve designs and myths which are religious in nature.

In his seventy-fourth year and after his mate's

120 Tanner, p. 300. 88
death, Malachi confesses to Salo that he misses Beatrice and recognizes that he "finally fell in love, but only an Earthling year ago." He then voices the ultimate conviction that has evolved from his humanizing odyssey:

> It took us that long to realize that a purpose of human life, no matter who is controlling it, is to love whoever is around to be loved. (p. 313)

As Giannone states, Malachi has made his "path through worlds that check his decent impulses, finally to be cleansed by a restoration of the human values that had been sacrificed." Pauly also finds the message clear: "Vonnegut has indeed a strong moral response to man's fate—that of basic humanism ... love your fellow man, with compassion, with caritas not eros." Thus, the purpose of human life is not to be a cog in a grand national progress but is the growth of the individual toward genuine sensitivity to his fellows, that is, the ability to love in the spirit of the New Testament concept of agape. Man is to be loved not because he represents a becoming godliness but simply because he is a man. Vonnegut once pleaded with a graduating class "to believe in the most ridiculous superstition of all: that humanity is at the center of the universe, the fulfiller or the frustrator

---

121 Giannone, p. 25.
122 Pauly, p. 69.
of the grandest dreams of God Almighty."\textsuperscript{123}

Salo has a reward for his successful Earthling friend. In his repaired spaceship, powered by UWTB, the Universal Will To Become, the Tralfamadorian returns Malachi to the heartland of America, Indianapolis. Through hypnosis, the robot provides a beautiful ending to Constant's life. Freezing to death in a snowstorm while waiting for a bus, the former Space Wanderer sees a golden space ship descend on a sunbeam to his side. Stony Stevenson, the best friend, is at the controls and promises to whisk Malachi off to a Paradise where he will be reunited with his friend and his family. A final vision of the attainment of Heaven evolves in spite of the meaninglessness and triviality of human life. While the novel opens with Malachi's tentative statement, "I guess somebody up there likes me," at the end Stony drops the words "I guess" and proclaims, "Don't ask me why, old sport, but somebody up there likes you" (p. 319). As in the jeremiads man is left with hope and even a feeling of election, however illusory. But in The Sirens of Titan the ultimate force and dispenser of favors is not God but a robot, albeit a sentimental machine, but still nuts, bolts, and magnets. So it goes.

\textsuperscript{123}Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., "Address to the Graduating Class at Bennington College, 1970," in Wampeters Foma and Granfaloons, p. 163.
The effective use of literary devices is as essential to *The Sirens of Titan* as to the jeremiads. Like the Puritan preachers, Vonnegut inserts into his science fiction tale typological parallels, imagery and metaphor, and a unique style of language, noteworthy for its incongruities and brevity, in order to raise his fiction to the status of myth, to stimulate his audience, generate questioning of accepted assumptions, and promote involvement with the message. James M. Mellard terms *The Sirens of Titan* "naive literature," and continues with a description that is remarkably apropos to the jeremiads as well:

... it is a formulaic type, employs formulaic characters, episodes, themes, properties, and settings, and is written in a remarkably simple style that, though not particularly formulaic, nevertheless includes evidence of formulaic epithets and phrase-tags.124

Typology is a primary ingredient in the characterizations of Winston Niles Rumfoord and Malachi Constant. Throughout the novel, Rumfoord acts like an all-powerful and vengeful Old Testament god. His passage through the chrono-synclastic infundibulum allows him to manipulate Earthlings to serve his lordly plan of establishing a new religion. He is emotionally detached from his subjects, rejecting all pleas for mercy even from his dependent wife Beatrice. The fate of millions who obediently serve in

the Martian attack is totally controlled by the almighty orchestrator from New England. His callous treatment of Salo demonstrates a merciless infliction of punishment on anything that impedes his grand design for the world. However, his status is cleverly belittled by the superimposition of another typological identification, not to the Old Testament, but to another classic of western literature—*Alice in Wonderland*. Those few privileged to enter Rumfoord's Newport compound must arrive through a small, "Alice in Wonderland" door (p. 15), and as Rumfoord dematerializes, the process resembles the gradual disappearance of the Cheshire Cat:

> Winston Niles Rumfoord vanished slowly, beginning with the ends of his fingers, and ending with his grin. The grin remained some time after the rest of him had gone. (p. 39)

Fantasy, then, is marvelously mingled with the Bible and religion. Such a connection satirizes reality and established belief so that they can be considered in the context of fiction and illusion. The effect achieved is a forced questioning of certainties or final truths.

Malachi Constant, the exiled space wanderer, is also linked to the Old Testament. For the purpose of anonymity, as he leaves Rumfoord's estate, he dons the assumed identity of Jonah Rawley. Constant, since he later serves as a returned messiah, intermingles types from the Old and the New Testaments. Concerning his use of such archetypal
figures in his fiction, Vonnegut has informally responded as follows:

Jonah is interesting because he is forced to work for God, even though he doesn't much want to. The Messiah is an enthusiastic volunteer. They amuse me because they are polar, and both suggest that God wants things, which I find hard to believe. Awful things, of course, are commonly perpetrated because some crook says God wants them. Some Jonah or Messiah, he says, has told him so.125

To emphasize Malachi's position as an exile, Vonnegut inserts an additional biblical parallel as Constant, disguised as the bearded Jonah, makes his way through the huge crowd assembled for Rumfoord's scheduled materialization:

The police held open a narrow path to the limousine door. Constant scuttled down it, reached the limousine. The path closed like the Red Sea behind the children of Israel. (p. 43)

This brief reference is similar to Increase Mather's use of the same typological parallel in The Day of Trouble is Near (quoted above on pages 45-46).

Like Jonah, Malachi is a reluctant emissary. Following Rumfoord's revelation about the coming voyages to Mars, Mercury, and finally Titan, Malachi explodes "Titan, Triton . . . What the blast would I go there for? . . . Why the hell should I go there? . . . I tell you right now,

. . . I'm not going" (p. 35). Despite the protestations, this Jonah eventually ends up on the enormous gleaming white space ship, named The Whale, on its way to Titan. Vonnegut cannot resist mocking the imagery of The Whale, which in its excessive size and pristine alabaster hue automatically brings to mind all the symbolism of natural power and frustrated human desire attached to the sea creature in Moby Dick. The rocket ship, The Whale, turns out to be a whitened sepulchre. As Malachi and his family enter the "seemingly inviolable" machine, the accommodations indicate that the precincts have been the site of wild parties:

  The bunks were all unmade. The bedding was rumpled, twisted, and wadded. The sheets were stained with lipstick and shoe polish. Fried clams crunched greasily underfoot. Two quart bottles of Mountain Moonlight, one pint of Southern Comfort, and a dozen cans of Narragansett Lager Beer, all empty, were scattered through the ship. Two names were written in lipstick on the white wall by the door: Bud and Sylvia. And from a flange on the central shaft in the cabin hung a black brassiere. (p. 263)

While Vonnegut utilizes typology to link his characters to biblical types and, thus, to elevate them to myth, he departs from the practice of the Puritans with his coincidental intent of satire. The archetypes serve as aids in understanding the plight of such characters as Malachi who is forced into his role of messenger, but they are also generated so that cherished beliefs can be made into shams.
Careful use of language, often accompanied by startlingly incongruous metaphors, is, perhaps, Vonnegut's primary method of influencing the attitudes of his readers. A fine example is Vonnegut's studied engineering of reactions to technology. The precise enumeration of artillery shot off and casualties in the pathetic Martian attack demonstrate the horror of modern war: 2,542,670 thermo-nuclear anti-aircraft rockets; of the somewhat over 200,000 Martian attack forces 149,315 killed, 46,634 missing (pp. 166, 169). Such careful counting is also indicative of the war-mongering, overkill mentality that enjoys war as sport. However, a rather dichotomous outlook toward some kinds of machines is evident in Vonnegut's description of Salo. Instead of a menacing, metallic contraption, the robot is adorable. The description is accomplished through the use of terms connoting familiarity, endearment, innocence, goodness, and fun:

Salo was eleven million Earthling years old . . . had a skin with the texture and color of the skin of an Earthling tangerine. Salo had three light deer-like legs. His feet were an extraordinarily interesting design, each being an inflatable sphere. By inflating these spheres to the size of German batballs, Salo could walk on water. By reducing them to the size of golf balls, Salo could bound over hard surfaces at high speeds. When he deflated the spheres entirely, his feet became suction cups. Salo could walk up walls . . . . Salo's head was round and hung on gimbals. His voice was an electric noise-maker that sounded like a bicycle horn. (pp. 267-68)
It is obvious that Salo's creator is sympathetic to this robot who has more human sensitivity that his Earthling acquaintances, and who, for love, fails all the tests of a good machine. He is neither "dependable, efficient, predictable," or "durable" (p. 299). Salo is wonderful because he surpasses the assumed limitations of his mechanical construction to feel genuine love for his companions. The reader is left without absolute attitudes toward the products of technology.

The shortcomings of the presumably almighty Rumfoord are correspondingly exposed through inclusion of a word with derogatory associations. His final dematerialization includes the following pyrotechnics:

Rumfoord held his hands high, and his fingers were spread. Streaks of pink, violet, and pale green Saint Elmo's fire streamed from his fingertips. Short streaks of pale gold fizzed in his hair, conspiring to give him a tinsel halo. (p. 279)

The "tinsel halo" effectively indicates the dubious nature of the New Englander's divinity. His appalling lack of sympathy for those who are forced to serve as cogs in the machinery of his grand schemes strips away his humanity and reduces him to a spark plug in space. One of his previous fizzes also includes a belittling-reference: "He began to shrink, to fizz crazily on the foyer floor like a ping-pong ball in a frying pan" (p. 64).

Vonnegut's prose generally consists of short sen-
tences where the meaning is often conveyed by the sudden appearance of an incongruous metaphor. The brief sentence structure accurately reflects the conversational idiom of his twentieth-century audience. The initially alien metaphors prove on reflection to be delightfully apropos and thus present a shortcut to meaning. They serve to short-circuit the reader's conventional thought patterns and promote creative associations. The rapid advances in space exploration are summed up in three sentences:

Mankind flung its advance agents ever outward, ever outward. Eventually it flung them out into space, into the colorless, tasteless, weightless sea of outwardness without end.

It flung them like stones. (p. 7)

Powerful rockets seem to have little in common with inert stones, yet the comparison reveals the thoughtlessness, lack of direction, and eventual commonness of such aeronautic ventures. The manner in which perpetrators often dismiss the actual horrors of war is suggested in the kind of nursery-rhyme description of scout ships zooming off to the impending war with Earth:

Three flying saucers, blue scout ships, skimmed low over the city, making sweet cooing sounds like singing tops. 'Toodleoo,' they seemed to sing, and they skimmed away in a flat course while the surface of Mars curved away beneath them. In two shakes of a lamb's tail, they were twinkling in space eternal. (p. 135)

War, Vonnegut shows us, can be so easily masqueraded as a
children's crusade. A woman's reactions to the dangers of war can be unique. Beatrice holds a grenade "as though it were a vase with one perfect rose in it" (p. 155).

The following association effectively connotes the impact of Beatrice's fear and frustration when forced to be Rumfoord's puppet:

From between Beatrice's clenched teeth came a frail, keen, sustained note so high as to be almost above the range of the human ear. The sound bore the same ghastly promise as the whistle of fins on a falling bomb. (p. 51).

Not only her horror, but the doom inexorably descending on her are conveyed. In contrast, the actual impotency of the massive crowd drawn to Rumfoord's compound for the materialization is bared by the ridiculousness of an attack on Constant's limousine:

A bald man made an attempt on Constant's life with a hot dog, stabbed at the window glass with it, splayed the bun, broke the frankfurter--left a sickly sunburst of mustard and relish. (p. 43)

The homely, everyday objects predominantly used by Vonnegut in these constructions provide yet another link with the jeremiads.

As has been demonstrated by the symbols of the spiral and the fountains, Vonnegut employs imagery more extended and concrete than the brief metaphors already discussed. Such imagery often serves to promote a feeling of irreverence for established conventions. While one of the follow-
ing symbols could be expected, another is a surprise. Salo, during his long wait on Titan, carved a forest of statues out of the extremely hard Titanic peat. Beatrice leans up against one which at first glance appears to be a pious, dedicated scientist:

\[
\ldots \text{the laboratory-gowned scientist seemed to be a perfect servant of nothing but truth. As he beamed at his test tube, one thought that he was as much above the beastly concerns of mankind as the harmoniums in the caves of Mercury. There was a man without vanity, without lust.}\ldots
\]

But the title given to the sculpture by Salo is "Discovery of Atomic Power," and, lo, underneath the gown "one perceived that the young truth-seeker had a shocking erection" (pp. 288-89). This can be interpreted as a comment on the facade of purity in scientific investigation, and it can also be seen as a sneer at the lusty enthusiasm accompanying the development of devastating modes of destruction.

When Malachi reaches Titan, he learns that the three gorgeous Sirens of Titan in the photograph given him by Rumfoord, are actually elements of a cold statue submerged in the pool at Dun Roamin, Rumfoord's Titan estate. Their unworldly sensuality that was once "to the beauty of Miss Canal Zone as the glory of the Sun was to the glory of a lightening bug" (p. 38), becomes, during the tenure of Beatrice and Malachi, encrusted with slimy algae. The pool is lined with "a blanket of viscid slime" and the
three Sirens are under a "mucilaginous hump." The sexual come-on has been transformed into a nauseously revolting mess. Malachi is acutely aware of the significance of the change—"the three great beauties didn't mean so much to him now, really, except to remind him that sex had once bothered him" (p. 309). The eventual replacement of sex in favor of family ties and friendship is somewhat unexpected from the seemingly non-conventional and free-spirited Vonnegut.

As in the jeremiads, Vonnegut's literary effort is convincing because of the complementary relationship of theme and style. Like the Puritans, convictions are dressed in a stylistic apparel which conforms to the lifestyles and experiences of the intended audiences. The use of paradox or startling incongruities is a predominant feature in the jeremiads and in The Sirens of Titan to grab attention and to force new connections. Finally, through imagery, the Puritan preachers and Vonnegut consciously create a myth of America.

The kinship between these American writers, separated by centuries which have been witness to extensive cultural change, demonstrates the essential nature of the authors' interests to the American literary tradition. The primary concern of both the Puritan preachers and Kurt Vonnegut is the role of America in a providentially devised historical plan. To display America as the New Jerusalem and
its inhabitants as the Chosen People, these authors are forced to reject reality and create an essentially illusory world. The Puritans achieve this through the cunning transformation of evident failure into presumed success, while Vonnegut turns to science fiction. The New England ministers cling to their ideal of an American community which will lead the world toward the City of God. Vonnegut rejects such an assumption and demonstrates the devastation it has engendered. Instead, he calls for the discrediting of ideas of divine design and glorious purpose and replaces them with sensitivity toward one's fellows, not because they are the image of God but because of their humanity. Surprisingly, however, even Vonnegut does not totally escape the traditions within which he has developed—he embraces the American Adam, the lonely individual, overcome by the degradation and evil of his culture as well as of himself, who through a wilderness trial reemerges in a state of innocence worthy of salvation. The American Dream endures, but it is transformed from a community ideal to an individual quest.
Bibliography


———. *Things To Be Look'd For*. Cambridge, Mass.: Samuel Green, 1691. Evans number 567.


Renewal of Covenant the Great Duty Incumbant on Decaying or Distressed Churches. Boston: Phillips, 1677. Evans number 239.

Returning Unto God the Great Concernment of a Covenant People. Boston: John Foster, 1680. Evans number 293.


Sewell, Samuel. Phaenomena Quaedam Apocalyptica, Or, Some Few Lines Toward a Description of the New Heaven as it Makes to Those Who Stand upon the New Earth. Boston: Bartholomew Green, 1697. Evans number 813.

Shepard, Thomas. Eye-Salve, or A Watchword from Our Lord Jesus Christ unto His Church. Cambridge, Mass.: Samuel Green, 1673. Evans number 182.


———. "Hypocrites You Always Have With You." The Hill Rag, 1 June 1980, p. 35.


107
Vita

Judith Adams Mistichelli was born in Long Branch, New Jersey on April 20, 1945, of parents Alvin A. and Mary Lee Adams. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, magna cum laude, from Wilkes College in 1967; and a Master of Science in Library Science from Syracuse University in 1974, where she was elected to the Library Science honorary, Beta Phi Mu. From 1974 to 1979 she held the positions of Reference Librarian then Senior Reference Librarian at Linderman Library, Lehigh University. She was a Reference Librarian at the Library of Congress from 1979 to 1981, and is presently Senior Librarian, Kennedy Institute, Center for Bioethics, Georgetown University. Her publications include co-authorship of Beyond Technics: Humanistic Interactions with Technology (Lehigh University 1978), Technology and Values in American Civilization (Gale Research Co. 1980), Jules Verne: A Primary and Secondary Bibliography (G.K. Hall 1980), a series of articles titled "Technology and Culture in America: Recent Publications" published since 1980 in the Journal of American Culture, and the column "META: Mankind, Ethics, Technology and the Arts" for the Newsletter of the Science, Technology and Society Program, Lehigh University. She has also published articles, bibliographies, and reviews in the field of Library Science.