The American Jeremiad in Civil War Literature

By

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Preface

The motivation for this study comes from a variety of sources. First, I wanted to find a space in literary studies for religion and faith. As a professing Christian, it is important to me to infuse my faith constantly and consistently in all aspects of my life. Secondly, I have always been fascinated with reform literature and the implied notion in the nineteenth century that literary products could have socio-political and religious purposes. Subsequently, I wanted to work with writers who ascribed to or battled with Christianity, especially Calvinism, as they attempted to address civic crises. This led me to Angela Sorby's classes on Transcendentalism and Civil War Literature. In both classes, we discussed how the religious landscape influenced creative writers and shaped their literary products. My seminar papers on Emerson and Melville were incredibly helpful as I started to formulate my own opinions regarding the role of religious rhetoric in nineteenth-century literature, especially literature written by authors who spent much of their life resisting and at times rejecting orthodox Christianity.

What amazed me in both classes was the extensive amount of religious language, theology, and Biblical allusions appropriated by writers who did not necessarily adopt the Christian doctrine. What rhetorical role did this type of language have in literature responding to a national crisis? My exploration of the poetry, prose, and fiction led me to think about how other groups in American literature used religious language. And, this in turn led me to the Puritans, their jeremiad, and Sacvan Bercovitch's seminal work on the seventeenth-century political sermon. Ultimately, I decided that religious language creates a connection between the writer and the audience by assuming that the Biblical reference implied a community of like-minded individuals. What I discovered was that

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the language did not necessarily call for a religious conversion. In fact, I found that Civil War literature used Biblical language to convert the readers and listeners to adhere to the writer's socio-political platform. In a sense, writers were more interested in a united civic response than a religious conversion. The many issues revolving around the Civil War allowed the believer and non-believer alike to use religion and its language to recreate the jeremiad for a new era and possibly new ideologies.

Essentially, this project aims to redefine or broaden the definition of the jeremiad—to explain and better explore a particular genre that combines civic duty with religious obedience. My chosen texts for this project include Walt Whitman's war diary, *Memoranda During the War*; Herman Melville's *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War: Civil War Poems*; John Greenleaf Whittier's abolitionist poetry published in William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator* (1832-1865); and Harriet Beecher Stowe's abolitionist novel *Dred*. I chose to explore poetry, fiction, and nonfiction prose to demonstrate that the jeremiad should not be relegated merely to the structure of a traditional sermon. Moreover, reform literature during the Civil War, in light of jeremiad studies, takes on the rhetorical role of the sermon.

Therefore, this analysis provides connections among scholars working in the fields of American nationalism, religion, nineteenth-century literature, and genre studies. The jeremiad, according to Bercovitch, assumes consensus and control. In other words, the jeremiad was used to keep the congregation on track and constantly mindful of their historical, religious, political, and social past. This recognition of the past was used as a measuring stick by the preacher to point out any current back-sliding or declension; and, this chastisement always ended with the promise of renewal and the restoration of the

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covenant between God and God's people. I argue in this study that as the Puritans' hold on American culture began to lose its grip, other religious factions and ideologies maintained the structure, voice, and socio-political purpose of the jeremiad to convert listeners to particular ways of thinking.

Just as we can see jeremiadic tendencies in civil rights, environmental, and even current political literature, the jeremiad was also persistent during the Civil War as writers used their creative abilities to address secession and slavery.

My hope for this study is that more scholars will use the religious climate as a helpful lens for analyzing literature; and find that the religious perspective can be another angle from which to enter any particular literary discussion. I know that this study has influenced me to continue exploring American literature and its creative use of the Bible and Christian doctrine.

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Acknowledgments

I have several people to thank for their hard-work, dedication, and support. This dissertation process has been a wonderful experience, and I am indebted to many, many people who talked with me about my topic, who read drafts and outlines, and who allowed and encouraged me to venture down the pathway of religion and literature.

My wife, Julia, sacrificed many things so I could continue my education here in Milwaukee. She encouraged, supported, and grounded me throughout this process. My parents and my brother are an amazing foundation of faith and hardwork. They encouraged me to infuse my faith in all aspects of my life, including the academic world. To them, this dissertation is dedicated, as well as to my year-old son Ben and my soon-to-be niece, Ruthie. This study has certainly helped me locate and analyze the "big blueprint of life."

My committee was incredibly helpful and critical at all the right times. Dr. Angela Sorby's two graduate classes on Transcendentalism and Civil War Literature were the starting points of my desire to work with religious language and American literature. Those classes gave me opportunities to experiment with different ideas and entry points that invariably led to this study. Dr. Sorby was a tremendous source of encouragement and guidance through every step of this process. Dr. Amy Blair and Dr. Sarah Wadsworth truly helped mold this dissertation with their constructive criticism and much needed comments on style and organization. I also appreciate the committee's willingness to sit and talk with me at random times throughout this process. My experience with this committee has been nothing but positive and remarkable. Thank you.

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Introduction: The Peculiarity of the Nineteenth-Century Literary Jeremiad

In 1847 Henry Ward Beecher accepted a pastoral call to Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn, New York. This calling was rather early in his career; Beecher had graduated from Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati just ten years prior. Short preaching tenures in Lawrenceburg and Indianapolis, Indiana helped Beecher gain national popularity as an orator before his move to New England. His presence at Plymouth attracted congregations in the thousands, catapulting this relatively new congregation to national attention. According to biographer Halford R. Ryan, one of the reasons for such a positive public response was Beecher's "ability to make sermons speeches and speeches sermons."[1] This sentiment's jeremiadic undertone helps readers understand the power and prestige of the nineteenth-century minister. Not only did parishioners come to worship, they also came to hear religious responses to such political issues as the Fugitive Slave law, the Kansas Act, and Women's Suffrage. Town Hall still had a steeple.

Beecher's national speaking tours and his weekly church services made him a celebrity. In an 1887 biography, Joseph Howard comically noted that "it became the fashion, among fashionable people, in fashionable churches where fashionable clergymen officiated, to look loftily upon this young man of the people. Well, he rather liked that."[2] It is not within the scope of this project to explain the phenomenon of a pastor turned "rock-star." What is important about Beecher's popularity is that, especially as the Civil War loomed, the pulpit became a place for worship and a place to discourse on national

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[1] Halford R Ryan, *Henry Ward Beecher: Peripatetic Preacher* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990) 32.
[2] Joseph R. Howard, *Life of Henry Ward Beecher* (Philadelphia, PA: Hubbard Brothers, 1887) 236.

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issues. To Beecher and other preachers, the socio-political issues of the day were indeed religious as well. He was the nineteenth-century incarnation of John Winthrop's desire for the American government to be both civic and ecclesiastic.

On April 10, 1861, Confederate forces at Charleston, South Carolina demanded the surrender of Fort Sumter. When the Union refused, Confederate soldiers attacked the fort. According to official reports, at 2:30 p.m., April 13, the Union army surrendered Fort Sumter, and the American Civil War had begun. The next day, approximately 800 miles farther north, Beecher climbed the staircase of Plymouth Church to preach his now celebrated war jeremiad "The Battle Set in Array." Using Exodus 14:15 ("And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward"), Beecher persuaded listeners that "peace" was the wrong choice if peace allowed for the splintering of the Union or turning a blind eye to slavery. To stand still, argued Beecher, would be to sin against God.

His sermon's source text referred to the plight of the fleeing Hebrews as they found themselves between the attacking Egyptians and the Red Sea. As chaos began to break out among the fleeing Jews, the Bible records that Moses prayed to God for help. The miracle that occurred afterward is well known. God led the people through the parted Sea and onto dried land, leaving the Egyptians drowned behind them. Although it is possible to take issue with several of Beecher's theological points, his use of metaphor and analogy helped persuade his congregants that God willed the North to go forward as they were caught between the attacking South and the immovable force that was violence and war. During a particular heightened moment, Beecher aligned the innocence of the abused Hebrews with the people of the North:

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> And now our turn has come. Right before us lies the Red Sea of war. It is red indeed. There is blood in it. We have come to the very edge of it, and the Word of God to us today is, "Speak unto this people that they go forward!" It is not of our procuring. It is not of our wishing. It is not our hand that has struck the first stroke, nor drawn the first blood. We have prayed against it. We have struggled against it. Ten thousand times we have cried, "Let this cup pass from us!" It has been overruled. We have yielded everything but manhood, and principle, and truth, and honor, and we have heard the voice of God saying, "Yield these never!" And these not being yielded, war has been let loose upon this land.[3]

This sermon is an example of how New England intelligentsia narrowed covenant theology to include only the North and its ideologies: America as God's chosen nation and a nation committed to abolishing slavery. Although not all northerners abhorred slavery or felt it the state's duty to defy federal mandates, these sentiments predominantly characterized, in the mind of Beecher and other Northern preachers, what it meant to be Northern.

Much like his Puritan fathers, Beecher borrowed Scripture to rally against the sins of the nation and unify those covenanted to do Right. Spiritual righteousness collided with civic responsibility. Beecher validates the war as the only way to effectively purge the nation of its religious and national violations by uniting the founding fathers with the Sovereign Father:

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[3] Henry Ward Beecher, "The Battle Set in Array," *Freedom and War* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1971) 172.

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> Before God we cleanse our hands of all imputation of designing injustice or of seeking wrong . . . We have simply said, "God, through our fathers, committed to us certain institutions, and we will maintain them to the end of our lives, and to the end of time . . . Give me war redder than blood, and fiercer than fire, if this terrific infliction is necessary that I may maintain my faith of God in human liberty, my faith of the fathers in the instruments of liberty, my faith in this land as the appointed abode and chosen refuge of liberty for all the earth! War is terrible, but that abyss of ignominy is yet more terrible.[4]

This last sentence invokes the spirit of Winthrop and the Puritan desire for America to lighten and enlighten the world as a "city on a hill." Disgrace and shame were inimical to God's call for America to shine for its own people and for the world. The high place in the Bible represented an affinity to God and God's will; the abyss reflected detachment and isolation from God. For Beecher, the war signaled a call for reunification and rededication to God and to America; and the sermon created the space for such discourse.[5]

Defining the problem

There is one overarching question that drives this project. What are the rhetorical roles of the religious imagery and Biblical allusions found in American literature written during the Civil War? The initial research question that led me to this larger question

[4] Beecher 174 and 179.
[5] For further discussion on the relationship between secular literature and the Bible during the time between the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, please read the highly influential article "Literature and Scripture in New England Between the Revolution and the Civil War" by Lawrence Buell (*Notre Dame English Journal*, Spring 1983.)

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was why is there an overabundance of religious rhetoric in Civil War poetry and prose written by believers and non-believers alike? The general human tendency to appeal to God during crisis was not a sufficient answer. Through my initial reading of such abolitionist poets as Whittier, Bryant, Frances Harper, and Emerson, as well as political poets such as Melville, Julia Ward Howe, and Lucy Larcom, I came to the conclusion that their religious writing had less to do with prophecy and Christian evangelism and more to do with creating a civic response to a moral crisis. Emerson's Unitarianism and Transcendentalist beliefs, Whittier's Quakerism, and Howe's Protestantism all coincide with the need for community and unity, and even for the interrelation between an individual's spirituality and his civic obedience. The literature, therefore, becomes a platform on which to mix both religious and civic duty in an attempt to form a community.

I do not suggest that this "community" is the same for every writer. The shape of the community is in fact the primary element of difference between the nineteenth-century literary jeremiad and the Puritan jeremiads. Nineteenth-century America was a hotbed for budding religions and a variety of responses and reactions to old creeds. Yet, the jeremiad—the quintessential Puritan sermonic form—didn't die. It just took new shapes and appropriated new ideologies. With Calvinism on the decline and Unitarian and Transcendental beliefs on the rise, the sometimes harsh language of the Puritans softened in nineteenth-century writing. New jeremiadic voices, promoting a variety of ideologies, surfaced within American literature during this time, creating a multi-vocal, civic space for worship.

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By invoking God in a national crisis, the literature attempted to unite a people around a common cause, whether it was abolition or secession. According to Louis Menand, "the [civil] war was fought to preserve the system of government that had been established at the nation's founding—to prove, in fact, that the system was worth preserving, that the idea of democracy had not failed."[6] Underlying this patriotic notion was covenant theology: the conviction that God chose the Puritans to travel across the ocean and set up a community that centered on doing God's will.[7] Thus, the focus on community-building in the jeremiad helps us understand how religious rhetoric fits into a battle to advance democracy, eradicate slavery, and promote nationalism. Each chapter of this study explores how writers promulgate certain ideologies, namely national unity or abolition, by invoking religious and civic responsibility to form or reestablish a national community. The jeremiad is the obvious rhetorical formula to effectively meet these objectives.

In its simplest form the jeremiad is a type of literature that fuses religion with politics for a particular rhetorical purpose. This project explores the jeremiadic voice in literature before and during the Civil War, paying particular attention to texts by Stowe, Whitman, Melville, and Whittier. The uniqueness of the literary jeremiad of the period 1850-1870 has much to do with the national crisis. Because Puritans depended so much on the solidity of their dogma, preaching the Word seldom met with opposition. At least initially, in the New World, within Puritan faith communities, there was little competition for religious, political, or social identity. But the very nature of a civil war involves the fracturing and even severing of those ideologies. The civil war literary jeremiad, then,

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[6] Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001) ix.
[7] I do not argue that Civil War society was entirely a covenant theology society; however, it is clear that nineteenth-century writers certainly struggled with and responded to this type of theological community.

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takes on many forms, promulgating and defending various contradictory ideologies circulating within the same community. Philip Fisher claims that "periods of civil war are periods without a national ideology because two or more rhetorics of self-representation, national purpose, and historical genealogy are in wide enough circulation to elicit complete support, even to the point that people are willing to die for them."[8] A time of national strife is fertile ground for new ideologies to flourish. The North and the South used the rhetoric of the jeremiad to persuade listeners to unite and rally around certain ideologies, such as slavery, states' rights, or secession.

The Civil War alone stimulates a change in how we define the jeremiad. As each chapter illustrates, Puritanism no longer had a proprietary grasp upon the sermon. The term "American" replaced "Christianity," creating a larger space for more participants, therefore, creating new communities—not one solely based on Calvinism. The oncoming civil war, along with the religious fervor of the mid-nineteenth century, created a space for redefining and reasserting the term and limits of "community." Loyalties were tested, national boundaries expanded and threatened to split, and religious devotion was no longer a national homogeny.

Benedict Anderson's now very familiar definition of community serves an important purpose in this project. Defining the term as "imagined," Anderson argues that Nationalism invents the nation where it may not have existed otherwise. Citizens do not know each other, but their camaraderie is fixed upon the ideologies they share. This was so for the Puritans, and was perpetuated by the Civil War Jeremiahs in order to restore the community after slavery and secession had caused a national schism. In summary,

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[8] Philip Fisher, "Introduction" *New American Studies* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1991) xv.

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Anderson defines the "imagined community" as "both inherently limited and sovereign."[9] He asserts that no matter how large the community becomes, it will always have boundaries, whether they are ideological or geographical. Secondly, the sovereignty of the community acts to persuade and guide citizens through personal and public trials. Anderson argues that this sovereignty can turn into oppression, using camaraderie to mask hierarchies imbedded in the ideological structure. Many critics have argued that Puritanism was in fact both hierarchical and oppressive.[10] What is distinctive about the nineteenth-century jeremiad is that it presupposes that the religious community and the civic community continually inform and reform each other and that each citizen has an equal share in its message; suffering is justified by the citizen's moral response to the civic problem. Although Anderson's definition of nationalism de-emphasizes religion, the jeremiads studied for this project argue that an individual's religion, or at least religious rhetoric, plays a vital role in how the nation is imagined by the community.

Although Protestantism was obviously widespread in New England in the 1850s, issues such as slavery and states' rights forced the religious sector to question the church's role in community affairs. The nineteenth-century literary jeremiad, sometimes using Puritan language and other times rejecting Calvinist tenets, appropriates Biblical language to "re-found" the nation. Its rhetoric is no longer filled with prophesies of chastisement and rebuke. These conventions in Civil War literature do utilize corrective

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[9] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991) 6.

[10] Although this sentiment is growing among early Americanists, I found Philip Gura's forum "Early American Literature at the New Century" (*William and Mary Quarterly* Volume LVII, Number 3, July 2000) most helpful. From this essay, I also discovered David Harlan's essay " A People Blinded from Birth: American History According to Sacvan Bercovitch" in the *Journal of American History*, 78 (1991). Harlan's argument is that the literature of the Puritans, and contemporary scholarship's reliance on it, demonstrates one key lesson: "how a monolithic and hegemonic American culture has absorbed all challenges and repressed every possibility" (964-65).

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themes (i.e. patriotism, obedience, duty, etc.) in order to create a community solely devoted to the preservation of the union—a union created and sanctioned by God. But if Protestant Christianity is not the driving force of American society, what is? It is not my intent to enter entirely the "civil religion" or "nationalism" debate; however, definitions and explanations help clarify how the Civil War literary jeremiad (once a Puritan tool) is used both to deify the nation founded upon Puritan theology and, conversely, to resist that ideology in search of a more vernacular and inclusive national ideology.

This is the beauty of the jeremiad—it is a flexible genre, not a dogmatic tool owned by one Christian sect. I use elements of genre theory throughout the study to help elucidate the social responsibility and fluidity of genre. According to John Frow, "genre, like formal structures generally, works at a level of semiosis—that is, of meaning-making—which is deeper and more forceful than that of the explicit 'content' of a text."[11] To call a work anything brings meaning to the work before textual interpretation can occur. In other words, to refer to any work as a "jeremiad" or any other label is to presuppose a particular ideological, philosophical, and even theological framework. What this study attempts to do, especially in the chapters concerning John Greenleaf Whittier and Harriet Beecher Stowe, is to pry the reader's understanding of the jeremiad away from a definition solely linked with the Puritans and Calvinism. Like Frow, Alastair Fowler asserts that "genres are functional: they actively form the experience of each work of literature."[12] In each chapter, I argue that the experience that the jeremiad preaches should be shared by all members of the reading community. Using the term jeremiad, I argue, invokes the notions of secular community and religious congregation.

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[11] John Frow, *Genre* (London: Routledge, 2006) 19.
[12] Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982) 38.

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Therefore, each chapter will explore how the jeremiad uses religious rhetoric to empower the nation to change in some particular way.

The following theories aligned with nationalism drive the individual chapters of this project. This line of discourse is vast and complex, so my goal is to summarize key theories that aid my discussion of how the literary jeremiad in the nineteenth century can be a useful genre to discuss ideas of nationalism and civil religion:[13]

1. Nationalism invites both freedom and oppression. To unify, a nation must contain, foster, and promulgate certain ideologies that ultimately reject dissenters and outsiders. Each nation adopts codes, rituals, laws, and conduct for its citizens. To act outside of these prescriptions is to act outside the nation.
2. Nationalism is constructed as an emotion, so citizens feel invested and committed to seek common goals. Moral suasion, according to this theory, creates a certain type of unity that fosters virtue among its citizens, rather than military persuasion that evokes fear.
3. A nation is identified by its literature—its vernacular language. This project asks if the Bible is the master text that defines the development

[13] Please refer to the following texts that were instrumental in deducing these five points. Graham Day and Andrew Thompson, *Theorizing Nationalism* (Hampshire, Eng: Palgrave, 2004); Peter J. Parish, *The North and the Nation in the Era of the Civil War* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003); Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1953); Susan-Mary Grant, *North Over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2000); Knud Krakau (editor), *The American Nation—National Identity—Nationalism* (Munster, Germany: Lit Verlag, 1997); Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Peter Alter, *Nationalism* (New York: Edward Arnold Press, 1994); Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism* (Cambridge, Eng: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

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and function of a socio-political and religious nation as it is combined with the popular fiction, poetry, and essays of the day.

4. American nationalism, at this nineteenth-century historical moment, is based on moral principles instead of nostalgia or commemoration; therefore, again, moral suasion is the tool for conversion in schools, churches, and literature.
5. Nationalism is like a contract granting rights to its citizens bound by ideals. To disobey the nation is to break the contract. This project, reflecting the definition of civil religion, tries to combine the national contract with covenant theology.

Discussing nationalism with the jeremiad is another way to persuade readers of the hold symbolic "America" had on the people as the adherence to organized religion strained.

Civil religion is very much entrenched in Nationalism. Although the Puritan jeremiad uses Protestant Christianity as its central teaching, Whittier uses Quakerism, and writers like Whitman, Emerson, and Melville reject organized religion. It can be argued, however, that the resulting ideologies of these writings conform more to the conventions of American civil religion than any particular branch of Christianity. Influenced more by the ancient Hebrews than the early Christians, the jeremiad's pure intention is to combine politics and religion.[14] This is also the case for civil religion. In Rousseau's political treatise "On Social Contract," he defines civil religion as a religion "established in a

[14] It is often argued that Jesus called for separation between Church and State. Proponents of this idea often quote a parable recorded by all three Synoptic Gospels. To trick Jesus, Pharisees asked him if God instructs God's people to pay taxes. Upon looking at a Roman coin, he says to the people, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God what is God's" (Luke 20:25). However, dissenters point to the theological notion that God should be a part of all things under heaven, including politics. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes in chapter 1 verse 22, "God placed all things under his feet and appointed him [Jesus] to be head over everything for the church." And again in chapter 4 verse 6, Paul writes that there is "one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

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single country, giving it gods, its own tutelary patrons: it has its dogmas, its rites, its outward form of worship prescribed by law; outside the single nation that practices it, this religion considers everything infidel, foreign, barbarous; it extends the duties and rights of man only as far as its altars."[15] Rousseau, nearing a working definition of nationalism, is clear to point out the necessity of such religion as well as its drawbacks. He writes, "It unites divine worship with love of the laws, and by making the homeland the object of the citizens' adoration, it teaches them that to serve the state is to serve its tutelary god."[16] Conversely, when the city-state is based upon "error and falsehood," according to Rousseau, the city "drowns true worship of the divinity in empty ceremonials" or "it becomes exclusive and tyrannical and makes a people bloodthirsty and intolerant, so that it breathes only murder and slaughter, and believes that it performs a holy act in killing anyone who does not accept its gods."[17] This is the tension inherent in the jeremiad, as well as in the practice of nationalism. Both nationalism and the jeremiad invoke simultaneous feelings of inclusion and exclusion—reaching consensus as a community necessitates shunning those who resist or reject the consensus. I argue, however, that the jeremiadic structure and voice in the nineteenth-century are not dependent upon the strict Puritan need for consensus. As creeds and national ideologies change and evolve, the jeremiad creates space for dissent and ideological conversation both inside and outside of the hegemony.

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[15] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "On Social Contract," *Rousseau's Political Writings* ed. by Alan Ritter and Julia Conaway Bondanella (New York : WW Norton and Company, 1988) 169.
[16] Rousseau 169.
[17] Rousseau 169.

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Evolution of the jeremiad

A brief explanation of how the jeremiad evolved from the verses of its namesake to the sermons preached by Civil War ministers like Beecher should point to the great consistency of themes regarding community-building, covenant, and restoration. Although ideologies and doctrine changed, the essence of the American jeremiad remained intact—a message to recall a backsliding nation and remind its citizens of their covenant with a sovereign deity. For much of the jeremiadic tradition, this cohesion revolved around the Judeo-Christian God and the Puritan notion that America is the new Israel. However, this project will point to another "deity" that writers used to proselytize among the people—the nation.

The term jeremiad derives from the 7th century B.C.E prophet Jeremiah and his ministry before the Babylonian attack of Jerusalem. Known as the "weeping prophet," Jeremiah was depicted as the passionately remorseful messenger who mourned for the Hebrews' rejection of God's covenant and the commandments passed down from Moses. To the Hebrews, there was no separation between social and religious life. To condemn civil practices was to make judgment against an individual's religious practices as well. Because the Torah consists of over 600 commandments regarding spiritual, relational, and civic matters, it is evident that God desired to be the center of all community life and individual decisions. Therefore, if the people swayed from those commandments and forgot the promises made to the patriarchs, prophets and judges were sent to remind the people of their covenant with God, usually through prophecy and teaching. Suffering and testing, however, always preceded the prophet's arrival. The book of Jeremiah is one of promise and encouragement, although many verses lament the abominations of a people

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and illustrate how God will judge their misdeeds and declension. Contemporary interpretation of the jeremiad focuses on the railings and the lamentations, forgetting the larger framework devoted to the covenant between God and God's people.[18] The series of laments begins with chapter 11, verse 18; however, the first five verses relay the intent of such laments:

> The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. You shall say to them, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Cursed be anyone who does not heed the words of this covenant, which I commanded your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt, from the iron-smelter, saying, Listen to my voice, and do all that I command you. So shall you be my people, and I will be your God, that I may perform the oath that I swore to your ancestors, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day. Then I answered, "So be it, Lord."[19]

Picture the Puritans on the Arbella, or New Englanders right before the Revolutionary War, or even Northern churches on the eve of the Civil War, and consider how they might transfer their experience onto these words. God expects the actions of God's chosen people to fall in line with God's will and command. Any deviation in the road will inflict God's judgment upon the people, not for punishment's sake, argues Sacvan

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[18] Contemporary lexicon uses the term to refer to complaints. This seems to be perpetuated by dictionaries. The Oxford English dictionary defines the jeremiad as "a lamentation; a writing or speech in a strain of grief or distress; a doleful complaint; a complaining tirade; a lugubrious effusion." I do not argue that the original jeremiads lacked mourning, complaining, and rebuking; however, every prophetic book in the Bible ends with the promise of restoration and the renewal of God's covenant with God's chosen people.

[19] Although I will use the King James Bible in the body chapters (essentially what the writers used), I choose to use the New Oxford Annotated Bible (New Revised Standard Version) here it is the preferred academic Bible for most scholars. Its notes and editorials are written for a research audience and not centered on life application.

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Bercovitch, the foremost authority on the Puritan jeremiad. The jeremiad (at least, those found in the Old Testament and those issuing from Puritan writers) was "corrective, not destructive . . . God's vengeance was a sign of love, a father's rod used to improve the errant child. In short, their punishments confirmed their promise."[20] The prophetic and Wisdom books follow a similar pattern of railing against the faults of the chosen people in order to reinstate the nation and perpetuate the errand for both citizen and religious followers.

Even though this project explores the American jeremiad exclusively, Bercovitch's explanation of how the sermon flourished in Europe is important to see what exactly the Puritans brought with them on the journey and how preachers and writers in eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century America appropriated the Hebrew and seventeenth-century European techniques, along with Puritan nuances to promulgate their own ideologies. From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, the sermon became more inclusive, reaching out to all citizens. This type of jeremiad, instead of focusing on spiritual obedience, focused on civic morals and situational ethics. Bercovitch emphasizes that the European jeremiad "pertained exclusively to mundane, social matters, to the city of man rather than the city of God. It required not conversion but moral obedience and civic virtue. At best, it held out the prospect of temporal, worldly success. At worst it threatened not hellfire but secular calamity."[21] Instead of inspiring worship, the Euro-jeremiad exhorted its citizens merely to *be good.* The Bible was not used for religious purposes, necessarily. This type of jeremiad retained the themes of lament and remonstrance; however, the integral hope of restoration was sometimes

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[20] Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978) 8.
[21] Bercovitch 9.

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discarded for more lamenting and warnings of God's wrath. According to Raymond Ide, the European jeremiad "offered little hope, except the wrath of God for their many failings."[22] As an aside, Bercovitch quips that "even as the preachers exhorted, they knew enough about their listeners not to expect much from them."[23] In a sense, what the Puritans brought with them from Europe was a resistance to merely ridiculing the people without first loving them and, next, investing them with hope for renewal.

Implicit throughout this study is the idea that Jesus' teachings do promulgate a certain separation between the spiritual home and the earthly, political city; however, the American Puritans responded to such depressing and hopeless European sermons by reinvesting in the Hebrew notion of amalgamating one's spiritual truths with his daily civic actions. Therefore, the Puritan jeremiad combined ancient Hebrew rhetoric with a sometimes conflicting Christian theology.

Michael Wigglesworth's 1662 verse sermon "God's Controversy with New England" follows the jeremiads of Europe with stark denouncement of the New Englanders. He rebukes their greed and carnal nature:

> Are these the men that prized liberty
> To walk with God according to their light,
> To be as good as he would have them be,
> To serve and worship him with all their might.
> If these be they, how is it that I find
> In stead of holiness Carnality.
> They, that too much do crave,

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[22] Raymond C. Ide, Jeremiadic *Voices in Herman Melville's Typee, Omoo, Mardi, and Moby-Dick* (Dissertation Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1998) 4.
[23] Bercovitch 7.

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