LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

Moral Rivals:

The Intersection Between Puritanism and Piracy in the 17th and 18th Centuries

A Thesis Submitted to

the Faculty of the History Department

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts in History

by

Amy Stewart

Liberty University

June 2020

The Thesis of Amy Stewart is approved:

_____   _____

Dr. Carey Roberts   Date

Thesis Director

_____   _____

Dr. Sam Smith   Date

Second Reader

Table of Contents

Abstract

This thesis seeks to explore the relationship between American colonial Puritans and Atlantic pirates in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Due to their conflicting views on morality and faith, Christianity and piracy consistently tested the other's resilience for what they believed. Their contrasting moralities intersected in countless ways throughout the colonies, evident through an increasing pattern and shift towards piracy and seafaring in the subject matter of Christian sermons, as well as the introduction of execution sermons that presented an opportunity for preachers to minister to pirates, giving them a final chance at redemption before they were sentenced to hang on the gallows. Cotton Mather was one of the leading Puritan ministers that challenged the sins of seafarers, simultaneously preaching against the dangers of the Atlantic while also appealing to convicted pirates that eternal life awaited them if only they repented. Whether the intentions of Mather and other Puritan preachers were made in good faith or for their own benefit is additionally brought under examination. Overall, this thesis explores themes presented to history that provide interesting insight into the growing complexity of the Atlantic world at the turn of the 18th century. Religion, morality, and justice were key components to the expanding territories of North America, and pirates sought to oppose those formal structures in any way they could. Between 1680 to the late 1720's, Puritan ideals were challenged by the ethical freedom of pirates, thus a sense of urgency was born that lived on in the minds of the infamous preachers of the First Great Awakening that began in the mid 18th century.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my thesis director, Dr. Carey Roberts, for his valuable and constructive feedback during the development of this thesis topic, as well as his patience, generosity, and willingness to give his time to work with me throughout the rest of the process. Thank you, Dr. Roberts, for steering me in the right direction when I needed it and for expressing genuine interest in my research. This thesis would not have been possible without your incredible insight and guidance.

To my reader, Dr. Sam Smith, thank you for your honest comments on my thesis that allowed me to challenge myself and that opened my mind to new perspectives throughout my research. I thank you as well for your support, your knowledge, your kindness, and your encouragement during this process.

Finally, thank you to my friends and family for providing me with constant support, continuous prayer, and timely encouragement throughout my masters studies at Liberty University. This accomplishment could not have been possible without your love and support, so thank you.

I. The Historical Worlds of Puritans and Pirates in the 17th and 18th Centuries

In late June of 1726, the *Fames' Revenge* was captured along the North American coast. It was full of a pirate crew fresh off of a looting spree that stretched from North Carolina and upward into New England. Its captain was William Fly, a man who, two months prior, led a mutiny against his former captain, John Green, to overtake the ship and its crew for himself. John Green became lost to history, but William Fly soon carved his name into the history books. After their capture, Fly and his crew were privately given the opportunity to confess their crimes and repent by several Puritan ministers in a Boston prison. Fly refused, and instead approached the gallows on July 12, 1726 with a smile, choosing his damnation with eager anticipation over every offer of eternal salvation placed before him.[1] The Puritan ministers who had spoken to him were petrified. Fly uprooted their faith and challenged their morality in front of an audience of everyday Bostonians, average people whose lives were mostly centered around the strict moral ideals set forth by Puritan communities. William Fly, although his piracy days were short, solidified his place in history by publicly challenging one of the most dominant aspects of colonial society: Christianity. In retaliation, his body was displayed at the entrance of the Boston harbor for all to see, a warning to all seafarers of the eternal punishment of wicked, merciless sin.

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, Christianity and piracy tested the other's resilience for what they believed. The infamous pirates that live on in popular culture today were largely intertwined with the religious communities and preachers in North America. Their contrasting moralities intersected in countless ways throughout the colonies, evident through an increasing pattern and shift towards piracy and seafaring in the subject matter of Christian sermons. Furthermore, the introduction of execution sermons presented an opportunity for

---

[1] Daniel E. Williams, "Puritans and Pirates: A Confrontation between Cotton Mather and William Fly in 1726," *Early American Literature* 22, *3*, 1987: 233–4.

preachers to minister to pirates, giving them a final chance at redemption before they were sentenced to hang on the gallows. Cotton Mather was one of the leading Puritan ministers that challenged the sins of seafarers, simultaneously preaching against the dangers of the Atlantic while also appealing to convicted pirates that eternal life awaited them if only they repented. Whether the intentions of Mather and other Puritan preachers were made in good faith or for their own benefit can also be brought under examination. Overall, the themes presented to history from this time provide interesting insight into the growing complexity of the Atlantic world. Religion, morality, and justice were key components to the expanding territories of the New World, with Christianity largely dictating the social and political aspects of colonial society in North America. This period of turmoil in American Christian history, when Puritan ideals were challenged by the ethical freedom of pirates, was a precursor to the ideals and thought of the First Great Awakening in the mid 18th century.

To understand why piracy disrupted the Puritan way of life in such a sizable manner, it is necessary to first understand how each viewed life, both on earth and in eternity. One group focused itself around a faith-based moral compass, while the other centered its ideals around opportunities to attain success with no lawful bounds; they lived with the knowledge that they had the limitless ability to roam the high seas as they pleased. Puritans abided by their strict moral codes, as outlined in the Bible, in order to attain eternal life. For pirates, while they had a remarkably strict inner code of conduct, faith and salvation were not important. They had no hesitancy to partake in the many crimes they committed and were accepting of the damnation that awaited them if they were to be caught. The infamous pirate captain Edward Teach, or Blackbeard as he is more commonly remembered, embraced the common notion by the public that pirates were devils bound for hell and he, along with other pirates, cast themselves in a way

that society understood to be evil.[2] He presented himself in a way that actively defied all moral guidelines of Puritanism, notably dressing in all black to look as though he was a devil that had just stepped out of hell.[3] To pirates, testing the resilience of the Christian community in the colonies was part of the exhilarating lifestyle they chose to live.

The ruthless sprees of pirates in the Atlantic world flourished in the late 17th to 18th centuries, known to the modern world as the Golden Age of piracy. The triangular trade of the Atlantic opened up countless new shipping routes that transported a myriad of goods and resources from the Americas to Europe. As shipping increased, so did the competition among European nations. Each nation desired to have more power, influence, and wealth than the other. In the mid to late 17th century, France began to hire buccaneers to raid the coasts of other European colonies in the Caribbean and the Americas in an effort to reduce economic competition in those territories. Similarly, Great Britain commissioned privateers, like the infamous Francis Drake, to raid Spanish settlements along trade routes in the Americas. Buccaneers and privateers formed the fundamental ideals of piracy. Pirates however, differed from the former two individuals in that they acted, unauthorized by any political entity, on their own and worked outside of any socially acceptable morality.[4]

In addition to the use of privateers and buccaneers by European rulers as a contributing factor to piracy, the large quantity of valuable cargo on ships traversing the Atlantic Ocean enticed sailors who were serving in European navies to abandon their posts and join a more freedom-filled life at sea. In European navies men faced harsh conditions, violence at the hands

---

[2] Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), 151-153.
[3] M.L. Childs, "Blackbeard and his Infamous Pirate Ship, Queen Anne's Revenge," *Ancient Origins*, 2019.
[4] J.L. Anderson, "Piracy and World History: An Economic Perspective on Maritime Predation," *Journal of World History* 6, *2*, 1995: 176.

of their superiors, and low wages for long, laborious journeys. The chance at personal fortune

and the freedom offered through a life of piracy attracted sailors who saw their conditions as

unfit. Aboard pirate ships, they were free from the hierarchical command structure of their

former employers, and could live their lives more liberally, unrestrained by imperial rules or

threats of violence.[5] Furthermore, ineffective governing in Europe's overseas colonies, coupled

with the reduction of navies in certain Atlantic locales, created the perfect playground for pirates

and their crews. Pirate ships clashed frequently with countless merchant and naval vessels, losing

some of the battles they found themselves in, but often times successfully plundering precious

cargo and leaving devastation and fear in their wake.[6]

Beginning in 1721 George Lowther, captain of the *Happy Delivery*, captured thirty-three

vessels in the Atlantic and Caribbean over the span of seventeen months.[7] Along the coast of

North America, he plundered several ships docked in harbors or elsewhere along the shore. His

crew broke open the hatches to the cargo holds, helped themselves to any merchandise they

could find, and often badly whipped and beat any crew members who got in their way.[8]

Similarly, Captain Edward "Ned" Low captured, and often burned, over one hundred ships

---

[5] Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 43.

[6] Resources that detail the accounts of pirates terrorizing North America, and their encounters with merchant ships, naval vessels, fishing boats, and coastal towns are: George Francis Dow and John Henry Edmonds, *The Pirates of the New England Coast 1630 – 1730* (New York: Dover Publications, 1996); Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005); Mark Donnelly and Daniel Diehl, *Pirates of Virginia: Plunder and High Adventure on the Old Dominion Coastline,* First edition (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2012); Benerson Little, *How History's Greatest Pirates Pillaged, Plundered, and Got Away with It: The Stories, Techniques, and Tactics of the Most Feared Sea Rovers from 1500-1800* (Fair Winds Press, 2011); and Hugh Rankin, *The Golden Age of Piracy* (Virginia: Colonial Williamsburg, 1969).

[7] Dow and Edmonds, *The Pirates of the New England Coast 1630 – 1730*, 132.

[8] Ibid., 137.

during the course of his pirate career in the Atlantic and Caribbean.[9] His tactics along the coast

of North America were brutal, seldom allowing "a New Englander to go free without carrying

away some mark of his hatred."[10] When he was not satisfied with the cargo of a captured ship, he

ruthlessly tortured, maimed, burned, and often killed the crew. Pirates such as Lowther and Low

were among the many that ravaged the coastlines of North America, and their reputations

quickly spread far and wide.

Piracy was such a glaring issue in the Atlantic at the close of the 17th century and into the

18th century, that King James II of England ordered an official proclamation against the crimes

of piracy in an apparent effort to stop its frequency. An excerpt of the proclamation states,

> We do hereby expressly direct and command, that all and every such pers and persons
> shall be pursued with the utmost severity, and with the greatest rigor that may be, until
> they and every of them are utterly suppressed and destroyed; we declaring it to be our
> royal purpose and resolution, that they and every of them all from thenceforth be finally
> excluded and debarr'd from receiving any further favour or mercy.[11]

The proclamation addresses the general problem of pirates in the Atlantic, while also showcasing

what appears to be the disapproval of piratical acts by King James. Ironically enough, however,

once the king was deposed in favor of William and Mary in 1688, he fled to France and

commissioned several privateers to harass English ships in retaliation.[12] The privateers he

commissioned were captured and put on trial in England in 1693. Of the nine that were tried, six

---

[9] Detailed accounts of Edward "Ned" Low's encounters with merchant and navy vessels can be found in "The Brutal Career and Miserable End of Ned Low" in George Francis Dow and John Henry Edmonds, *The Pirates of the New England Coast 1630 – 1730* (New York: Dover Publications, 1996), 200-16.

[10] Ibid., 207.

[11] England And Wales. Sovereign, King of England James II, Charles Bill, Henry Hills, Thomas Newcomb, and Jay I. Kislak Collection. *By the King, a Proclamation for the More Effectual Reducing and Suppressing of Pirates and Privateers in America*. London: Printed by Charles Bill, Henry Hills, and Thomas Newcomb, 1688.

[12] See *an Account of The Tryals Of Captain J. Golden. Thomas Jones. John Gold. Lawrance Maliene. Patrick Whitley. John Slaughter. Const. D'Heaity. Richard Shewers. Darby Collins. John Ryon. Dennis Cockram. John Walsh. At the Court of Admiralty Held in The Marshalsea In Southwark, Before the Right Honourable The Judges: On Monday The 25th. Of Feb. 1693* (Globe London-Bridge: J. Clare, 1693).

were found guilty of "Piracies and Roberys on the Seas, under the colour of the late King *James's* Commission" and were subsequently hanged, drawn and quartered in 1694.[13] King James eventually ceased his dealings with privateers, but although he himself was guilty of partaking in the encouragement of piratical acts in his lifetime, the proclamation in 1688 gave off a general message of disdain for piracy, one that Puritans agreed with. Even though he, being Catholic, and the Puritans did not agree on their religious leanings, they did agree at one point that pirates were a glaring threat that needed to be stopped. After the royal decree, there was no longer any toleration of the actions and crimes of pirates by England or the American colonies, and anyone caught in the act was, without any exceptions, sentenced to execution, including those of King James's own commission years later. In the colonies, this harshly sentenced punishment in part stemmed from the strict moral code followed by colonial Puritans.

The Puritan contempt for pirates that caused their extreme punishments against them existed prior to the growing notoriety of pirate captains and crews in the Atlantic. In the Mediterranean surrounding North Africa, Barbary pirates terrorized European merchants and travelers in the 16th and 17th centuries. Europeans derived the name "Barbary," not only because the pirates stemmed from the native Berber people of North Africa, but from the word "barbarian," which referred to those who would not conform to Christianity.[14] The Barbary states, therefore, were the European term for the states of North Africa that campaigned against Christian seafarers from Europe. Consisting of Muslims, the Barbary pirates not only influenced how colonists observed piracy but also shaped how they viewed Islam as a whole religion. During this period, the North American impression of Islam was created through the stories, rather than direct contact, that they heard of English captives forced into slavery in North

---

[13] Ibid.
[14] Martin N. Murphy "The Barbary Pirates," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (2013): 27-28.

Africa.[15] The savagery of the stories of Barbary pirates caused a continued demonization of Islam in Puritan communities in the colonies. In addition, it also brought into question the role of Islam in Puritan eschatology as a whole.[16] Islam forced Puritan preachers to analyze God's final judgement after death more closely, thus they grew far more concerned with the salvation of one's soul, which would play out heavily in the execution sermons they preached to convicted pirates. To Puritan ministers like Cotton Mather, piracy had its roots in the evil teachings of Islam. Mather referred to Muslims as the "Filthy Disciples of Mahomet" in his published reaction to the captivity of several English slaves from North America.[17] Therefore, Islam was among the many contributing factors to the Puritan fear and rejection of pirates.

As piracy spread from the Mediterranean and into the Atlantic, Puritan preachers in North America increasingly began to teach on the dangers of seafaring and the immorality of the Atlantic's pirates. Starting in the 17th century, Puritans and their theological beliefs heavily influenced many of the communities in New England. Seeking out religious freedom, the Puritans had settled in New England between 1630-1640. These Puritans were dissenters from the Church of England, which they viewed as being insufficiently reformed under the ecclesiastical policies of the English monarchs Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I. They believed the Church of England retained too many roots in Roman Catholic doctrine and sought to establish their own churches separate from such doctrine. Once in North America, the Puritans established congregational churches and followed the Cambridge Platform as their system of

[15] Thomas S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 2.
[16] Ibid., 6.
[17] Cotton Mather, *The Glory of Goodness. The Goodness of God Celebrated; In Remarkable Instances And Improvements Thereof: And More Particularly In The Redemption Remarkably Obtained For The English Captives, Which Have Been Languishing Under The Tragical, And The Terrible And The Most Barbarous Cruelties Of Barbary* (Boston: T. Green, 1703).

church government. The preface of the Cambridge Platform states that, "the more we discern the unkind…unchristian contentions of our godly brethren and countrymen in matters of church government, the more earnestly do we desire to see them join together in one common faith."[18] According to one Congregational minister, Albert Elijah Dunning, the Cambridge Platform was the most important document produced by the Congregationalists in the 17th century, as it clearly represented the belief and system of government of their churches.[19] Puritans desired every person in the surrounding community to conform to their guidelines for everyday life, and those that refused were outcast or punished.

Thus, many American colonists, especially those that lived in Puritan communities based in New England, lived their lives heavily grounded in their religious and moral ideals. Puritans were immensely religious, and those beliefs were reflected in their local church and government administration systems, as they saw the law as a mechanism to secure a "pure religious community that was free from sin and corruption."[20] This elevated concentration on morality highly contrasted with the life and crimes of pirates in the Atlantic. Everything the pirates did represented every blasphemy preached against by Puritan ministers, and while such ministers worked to prevent any apprehension from their congregations, the pirates reveled in it. In Puritan communities, "crime and sin were virtually synonymous...an offence against God was a crime against society; and a crime against society was an offence against God."[21] Puritan ministers made sure they emphasized this notion in their sermons, and often preached to parents against

---

[18] The Elders and Messengers of the Churches Assembled in Synod, *The Cambridge Platform of Church Discipline, 1648*, The Library of Congress (Boston: Perkins & Whipple, 1850), 47.

[19] Albert E. Dunning, *Congregationalists in America: A Popular History of Their Origin, Belief, Polity, Growth and Work* (New York: J. A. Hill and Company, 1894), 149.

[20] Rebecca A. Simon, "The Social Construction of Crime in the Atlantic World: Piracy as a Case Study," *Early America Review* 16.

[21] Samuel Walker, *Popular Justice: A History of American Criminal Justice* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1980), 13.

the youth of their congregations desiring to one day become seafarers, for fear they too would be enticed by the life of piracy.

Cotton Mather, a Puritan minister of the Massachusetts Bay Colony who is prominently known today for his involvement in the Salem witch trials of 1692, was among the many preachers to greatly oppose the spread and influence of piracy. Nevertheless, despite his contempt for piracy, Mather inevitably ministered to pirates who had been convicted and sentenced to hang, in an effort to have them publicly confess their crimes and affirm the values of Christianity before their deaths.[22] Beginning with the conviction of John Quelch and five of his crew members in June of 1704, who were among the first pirates to be tried in the colonies, Mather set out on a mission to preach sermons to pirates set for execution, establishing the common practice of the execution sermon, which ultimately extended beyond just pirates, eventually reaching other convicted criminals.

In Mather's case, after visiting Quelch and his crew in prison days before their executions, he reflected, "I went and pray'd with them, and preach'd to them. The text, in which the Lord helped me to discourse, was Jer. 2:26, 'The thief is ashamed, when he is found'. I hope I shall have some good fruit of these endeavors."[23] His sermon to Quelch and his crew, entitled *Faithful Warnings to Prevent Fearful Judgements* expressed sympathy for young men who had been seduced into local piracy, but cautioned against the impression that said pirates would be spared.[24] According to Margarette Lincoln in her book regarding pirates and society in the 17th and 18th centuries, Mather's later sermons suggested that "where piracy was involved, the energetic religious teaching in New England was increasingly pitched against the prevailing

---

[22] Cotton Mather, *The Diary of Cotton Mather, D.D., F.R.S. for the year 1712* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1964).

[23] Ibid.

[24] Cotton Mather, *Faithful Warnings to Prevent Fearful Judgements,* Sermon, 1704.

entrepreneurial spirit that had countenanced illegal trading."[25] Puritan ministers consistently found themselves at odds with pirates like John Quelch and the aforementioned William Fly, thus a spiritual battle transpired that had the potential to alter the directions colonial society and religion were headed. The common man living his life in the colonies could give in to the temptation of sin to live a life of risk and possible fortune, or he could continue to abide by the moral code presented to him during church sermons and live contently with the knowledge and promise of eternal life through God's unwavering grace. This battle ultimately dictated the spiritual aspect of colonial society as a whole and was a precursor to the First Great Awakening.

Over the years, several scholars have explored topics of historical interest similar to this that emerged from the complex social, political, economic, and religious matters of the American colonies in the 17th and 18th centuries. The influence of religion on crime and punishment is one of many reoccurring themes amongst historians studying colonial history. Its origins lie in the first political institutions in the colonies and was intertwined into social and religious matters from then on. While the colonies were considered a new frontier for settlers crossing the Atlantic, they were not exempt from the laws, or similar laws, established by the British crown. Laws existed and were enforced by colonial governors and other officials with the founding of the first permanent settlement in Jamestown, Virginia when, in 1611, the Virginia Company of London imposed the *Articles, Lawes and Orders Diuine, Politique, and Martiall for the Colony in Virginia* on the new colonists. In addition to laws to uphold the authority of the King of England by preventing speaking out against him, these articles outlined strict religious guidelines, which included the mandatory attendance of sermons twice a day on every Sunday,

---

[25] Margarette Lincoln, *British Pirates and Society, 1680-1730* (Routledge, 2016), 130.

morning and evening prayer, and the prohibition of speaking out against God in any way.[26] Oftentimes it was religious leaders, rather than those who held government positions, that made sure their congregations and communities abided by colonial Virginia's laws.

In the latter part of the 17th century, and beginning of the 18th century, crime and punishment were topics included in many religious sermons, as the immoral acts of criminals, such as the cruelty enacted by pirate captains and their crews, rose dramatically. Colonial law continuously overlapped with religion, and the lines between Christian institutions and government establishments blurred. With the increasing influence of crime, most notably piracy, on colonial society, the religious focus on sin and punishment rose. Preachers centered their sermons around it, and many chose to appeal to prisoners before audiences in the final moments before their executions in passionate public sermons. Many historians have chosen to explore the impact of crime and punishment in the American colonies, but their interpretations and focuses have varied over time.

Daniel E. Williams discusses the significance of religion within colonial crime and punishment in his article "The Structure and Significance of Criminal Conversion Narratives in Early New England" (1986). He begins with the story of Esther Rogers, a condemned criminal who publicly turned back to God at her own execution, and thus sparked curiosity and inspiration in the witnessing audience. Her execution was of such significance that several Christian preachers collaborated on a publication on sin and salvation, using her story as witness to God's miracles and forgiveness. They asserted that God punished sinners, but if even a condemned sinner such as Rogers could be spared by His mercy, then grace was still possible for every soul

---

[26] Sir Thomas Gates Knight, Lieutenant General, *Articles, Lawes and Orders Diuine, Politique, and Martiall for the Colony in Virginia*, 1610.

within New England.[27] Between 1700-1740, Williams states that twenty-seven publications were released to the public regarding sentenced criminals and their redemptions through Christ prior to their deaths.[28]

Williams goes on to detail the stories of other convicted criminals sentenced to death and emphasizes the role religion played in legal punishments, a key component in understanding why Puritan ministers were fixated on preaching to pirates in front of public audiences. Those that were sentenced to death for the most immoral crimes were to be judged and punished by God after death if they did not seek forgiveness for their sins. Many feared damnation, and the criminals who accepted the sermons and offer of salvation by Christian ministers were expected to publicly acknowledge their sins, justify their punishment, and warn others not to follow the same path.[29] This, Williams argues, was more to benefit the preachers rather than the prisoner.[30] A prisoner's fear of damnation was twisted into a longing for salvation, and their conversion prior to execution served as a narrative to the public promoting the wonders of God's grace and admonishing sinful behavior.

In a deeper analysis, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Belief in Early New England* (1989), author David Hall places his focus on the place of popular religion within the social and political structures in early New England, examining the religions of the 17th century from the perspective of the common people, and not through the lens of its religious or political leaders. However, he decides to overlook the Puritan movement as his central focus, and instead focuses on lesser known or misinterpreted religious matters of the time. His ultimate goal in this

---

[27] Daniel E. Williams, "'Behold a Tragic Scene Strangely Changed into A Theater of Mercy': The Structure and Significance of Criminal Conversion Narratives in Early New England," *American Quarterly* 38 (1986): 829.
[28] Ibid., 827-47.
[29] Ibid., 831.
[30] Ibid., 831-2.

work is to analyze the authority of spiritual leaders in colonial America, and the relationship between those in power and the common people. He also highlights the difference between Christian Europe and Christian America, asserting that there was a clear distinction between the two. The clergy in New England, in contrast to European society, helped maintain a common governmental system, as New England was radically decentralized in comparison to Europe, and thus there was no central urban center for church leaders to ambitiously climb in rank. According to Hall's conclusions, and in contrast with the conclusions of Daniel Williams, the legal system operated more freely than its European counterparts and functioned in a more secular light in accordance more so with English Common Law than the guidelines of Christian churches. While Hall does not explicitly focus his work on sin and punishment, his work provides his perspective on the relationship between Church and State in the American colonies.[31]

Building upon the societal structures exhibited in Hall's work is Scott Seay's *Hanging Between Heaven and Earth: Capital Crime, Execution Preaching, and Theology in Early New England* (2010). Seay's main purpose in this work is to assert that execution sermons mirrored the general theology of New England in the 17th and 18th centuries, but he outlines the clear importance of sin and punishment within colonial society. He, much like the work of Daniel Williams, stresses that preachers at the time emphasized human sinfulness in order to better appeal to their congregations. Accentuating this theme at the executions of criminals positioned Christian preachers in a place of authority over their audiences by instilling the fear of God through the public punishment of one's sin. Seay contrasts Hall's viewpoint that legal systems in the colonies were purely secular. Seay argues that the execution of criminals marked both a civic

---

[31] David Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Belief in Early New England* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989).

and religious ritual, oftentimes Godlier than not. Preachers were at the center of most executions preaching not only to those condemned, but to those who appeared to watch the execution as well. Crime and punishment therefore served as a basis for preachers to spread the Gospel message in the hopes of converting common people and asserting their authority within their local communities.[32]

Furthering Williams' and Seay's religious standpoint, Juliet Haines-Mofford closely examines crime and punishment through numerous colonial perspectives, most notably Puritanism, in *The Devil Made Me Do It!: Crime and Punishment in Early New England* (2012). She begins her work with an examination of Puritan society, in contrast with the work of Hall, and their ultimate theocratic goal of purifying the Church of England. Puritans were strict in their beliefs, and they aimed for godliness through how they lived out each day, firmly believing that life was constant battle between good and evil, and that Satan placed endless temptations before them in order to make them falter in their walk with God.[33] Puritans were so reliant on these principles that any harm or bad luck in one's community signaled a relaxed attitude towards the warnings of the Lord, which ultimately was considered as a form of disobedience in the minds of Puritans. Puritans considered the Bible and its warnings to be the legal guide of Colonial life, thus disobedience of its principles was met with lawful punishment.[34] Haines-Mofford asserts that Scripture formed the basis of New England's social and political structure, and many early Puritan leaders, such as John Winthrop, were formally trained in English Common Law. From this perspective, Haines-Mofford presents crime as a threat to the survival of the colonies as a

---

[32] Scott D. Seay, *Hanging Between Heaven and Earth: Capital Crime, Execution Preaching, and Theology in Early New England* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

[33] Juliet Haines-Mofford, *The Devil Made Me Do It!: Crime and Punishment in Early New England* (Guilford: GPP, 2012), 1.

[34] Ibid., 2.

whole. In a later chapter, she discusses the imprisonment and executions of several pirates, whose crimes went against the established laws and principles treasured so dearly by the Puritans.[35]

While Williams, Hall, Seay, and Haines-Mofford all examine crime and punishment with varying standpoints and emphases within the overall culture of new England during the 17th and 18th centuries, other historians have taken to writing various perspectives about the specific crimes of the Atlantic World's most notorious and cunning criminals: pirates. George Francis Dow and John Henry Edmonds examine the crimes of pirates that plundered settlements along the coast of New England in *The Pirates of the New England Coast 1630 – 1730* (1996), where they conclude that men were attracted to the lawless autonomy granted through a life of piracy. While they worked hard and with great risk, the satisfaction of wealth and prosperity outweighed any cost.[36] B.R. Burg has similar conclusions in his "Legitimacy and Authority: A Case Study of Pirate Commanders in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" (2010).[37]

Marcus Rediker also centers two of his works, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750* (1987) and *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (2005) around the lives and crimes of the Atlantic's most notorious pirates. In *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, Rediker lessens the modern romantic depiction of seafaring, which he claims is presented through a lens of idealistic misrepresentation. This outlook, he argues, obscures the significance of seafaring in

---

[35] Juliet Haines-Mofford, *The Devil Made Me Do It!: Crime and Punishment in Early New England* (Guilford: GPP, 2012).

[36] George Francis Dow and John Henry Edmonds, *The Pirates of the New England Coast 1630 – 1730* (New York: Dover Publications, 1996).

[37] B.R. Burg, "Legitimacy and Authority: A Case Study of Pirate Commanders in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *American Neptune* 37, 1977: 40-49.

the 18th century.[38] Rediker's *Villains of All Nations* explores life on the high seas during the 18th century, at the height of the Golden Age of piracy. Most importantly, Rediker examines how pirates sought to carry out similar ideas to that of the Puritan way of life. All leaders were elected and the common council, not the ship's captain, ultimately made the decisions. The distribution of goods after a raid was also aligned with Puritan ideals, with the captain receiving only about twice what the ordinary crewman got. Both of Rediker's works illuminate a relationship not only between pirates and their crimes with the American colonies, but a connection to Puritanism that stretched beyond execution sermons.[39]

Due to his prominence in colonial North America, Cotton Mather has long served as a subject of extensive historical research. Several scholars have studied his life, ministry, and theological ideals over the years, with varying opinions on who Mather was as a man. Many agree with the stance that he was an instrumental force in the Puritan world that set the standards for later ministers of the Puritan faith, while others believe he was a more selfish man who sought his own personal gain rather than the benefit of the people he reached. David Hall touches on Mather in his work, where he claims that Mather laid a foundation for other Puritans to preach to pirates. According to Hall, Mather was fundamental in popularizing the execution sermon, and he preached many himself in a last attempt to get pirates to convert.[40]

In Kenneth Silverman's *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (1984), Mather is explained in the perspective of his own inner self, as Silverman examines his writings to portray him in a unique light. While many of his followers celebrated Mather's heightened passion

---

[38] Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 4.

[39] See Marcus Rediker *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005).

[40] Hall, *Worlds of Wonder.*

throughout his days as a minister, Silverman also asserts that Mather did not handle life's afflictions well in later years, and he became weak and full of self-pity when personal troubles surrounded him. Thus, Silverman's view of Mather is split between one of admiration for his accomplishments and one of muddled judgement of his character.[41] Steven J. J. Pitt's "Cotton Mather and Boston's 'Seafaring Tribe'" (2012) examines Mather's views on what he saw as sailors' irreligiousness and immorality and his attempts to evangelize to them. Pitt paints Mather in a more sympathetic light than that of Silverman. He describes Mather's increasing empathy towards convicted pirates in his concern for order. Pitt concludes that Mather was a fine example of a man with prominent opinions, who battled against the pressures and limitations of the society he lived in.[42]

Ultimately, the gap that exists in these historical analyses of crime, punishment, religion, and pirates within the American colonies, is the direct relationship between piracy and Christianity, in this case Puritanism. While historians have explored each topic separately, there has been little to no connection made between the two. Through the works of Cotton Mather, who was influenced himself by Puritan preachers such as John Flavel, it is clear that there existed a tumultuous relationship between Puritan leaders and pirates. There was a spiritual and moral battle between the Christian and pirate communities as they intersected with one another, which sheds light into the social and religious atmosphere of the Atlantic world in the 17th and 18th centuries.

There is a clear shift in Puritan sermons during this period that was geared towards the dangers of a life at sea. The lifestyles and crimes of pirates directly contradicted the theology and

---

[41] Kenneth Silverman, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984).
[42] Steven J. J. Pitt, "Cotton Mather and Boston's 'Seafaring Tribe,'" *New England Quarterly* 85 (2), 2012: 222–52.

morality of the church. Sermons against sin, and warnings of subsequent punishment, became commonplace within the Puritan community in the colonies. Preachers started to warn their congregations against the dangers of seafaring and the sinful temptations it included. Furthermore, despite the religious dishonor pirates displayed through their criminal activities, many Puritan ministers took to visiting the jails where convicted pirates were set to be hung, in an effort to convert them to Christianity before their executions. Their motives for doing this, as Daniel E. Williams examines, can be brought into question, as it can be argued that they appealed to pirates to convert in order to secure Christian authority within the community. With the rise of piracy came not only an increased zeal for their capture and subsequent punishment, but an opportunity for Puritan preachers to provide offers of salvation publicly. Pirates were not exempt from hearing the execution sermons examined by historians, and many were converted publicly just as any other criminal at the time.

Overall, while crime and punishment within the context of religion has been a topic researched by different historians over time, as well as the lives and exploits of Atlantic pirates, the connection between the two has room for exploration. Cotton Mather, among others, was a leading Puritan minister that preached to and against pirates and works similar to his provide evidence that the rise of piracy influenced a spike in Puritan attempts to preach about and to convicted pirates. The following thesis will examine the theological beliefs of Cotton Mather and his fellow Puritan communities, and how those ideals contradicted those of the pirates they encountered. The next chapter will take a deeper look at Puritan theology in the colonies and the works and influences of Cotton Mather in order to provide context for the overall opposition to piracy. The following chapter will center around several Atlantic pirates, examining their articles of agreements, crimes, and beliefs regarding morality, furthering the context for this thesis. The

final chapter will examine the preexisting colonial disdain towards piracy before it became a

problem in the Atlantic, the emphasis colonials put on crime and punishment, and the encounters

between Puritans and pirates through their numerous exchanges at execution sermons. The

Puritan works of Cotton Mather, piratical work of Daniel Defoe, and the various recorded

accounts of the trials of pirates are the central primary pieces of evidence that prove there existed

an interesting relationship between these two groups. Their unusual intersection led to a focus on

seafaring, crime, and punishment in the sermons of many Puritan preachers throughout New

England and the rest of the North American colonies. This centric focus on Christianity in

colonial life during this period ultimately contributed to the passionate shift towards evangelical

faith that occurred throughout North America during the First Great Awakening, which began in

the mid 18th century

II. John Flavel, Cotton Mather, and the Puritan Ideals that Defined Their Society

The Puritan faith in North America largely centered on high moral and spiritual sincerity in one's daily life. Puritans arrived in the colonies after experiencing turmoil and corruption within the Church of England, thus when they settled in North America they sought a fresh start. They desired a cleansed Christian community free of the immoral practices that had plagued the Church they left behind in England, leading them to support local colonial governments intervening on moral matters. They believed sins like drunkenness, swearing, and gambling were the worst offenses to God and their belief system supported ample punishment for such deeds. Puritanism also centered around the belief that Puritan believers lived their life under a covenant formed between them and God. They lived strictly according to the Scriptures in order to appease God and set a good example to others, in the hopes it would get non-Puritans to convert. In addition, church attendance was not an option, so preachers regularly had the opportunity to preach to a captive audience. This allowed preachers like Cotton Mather to advocate against corrupt developments plaguing the colonies, namely the rise of piracy, which exemplified every sin Puritans were so against.[1]

Cotton Mather was the most notable minister who preached against piracy and the sins of seafaring and influenced many others to do the same. He was influenced by John Flavel, an English Puritan minister who gave several sermons against seafaring to his congregation in the seaside town of Dartmouth.[2] Flavel's congregation consisted of many men who made their living

---

[1] Daniel E. Williams, "'Behold a Tragic Scene Strangely Changed into A Theater of Mercy': The Structure and Significance of Criminal Conversion Narratives in Early New England," *American Quarterly* 38 (1986): 828-32.

[2] The works of John Flavel that may have been of some influence to Mather were *Navigation Spiritualized, or A New Compass for Seamen* (London, 1664); *The Seaman's Companion* (London, 1675); and *A Pathetical and*

at sea, thus he was inspired to preach and publish works to spiritualize seafaring and protect

sailors from the temptation and wickedness that could too often be found at sea. His *Navigation*

Spiritualized, or A New Compass for Seamen was written specifically for sailors to take with

them when they went on their voyages and encouraged them to find spiritual parallels in even the

most mundane tasks aboard a ship, while also cautioning them against the cunning works of the

devil. With this work, Flavel capitalized on a unique opportunity for seamen to live their lives at

sea dedicated to God, rather than by getting distracted by the lust and temptation of worldly

sins.[3]

In another of his works, entitled *The Seaman's Companion*, which is comprised of six

different sermons geared towards reaching sailors in his congregation, Flavel again cautions

against the prevalent sins of seafaring while promoting a more moral lifestyle aboard ships.

These abhorrent sins included drunkenness and swearing, which had become synonymous with

crime and piracy in England at the time and were two of the most wicked sins in the eyes of the

Puritan community in the colonies. In Flavel's collection of sermons he emphasizes that sailors

must protect their own hearts against the temptations of sin. One excerpt, which is an appeal to

sailors to witness to their fellow seamen, reads that "all that sin of theirs which you may prevent,

and do not, becomes your own sin…I beseech you, and it is my last request, that you will

faithfully labour, that you and your companies may serve the Lord."[4] According to Flavel,

seamen were easily vulnerable to the temptations of the devil when out at sea, and thus these

sermons served as a resource to help keep themselves grounded. However, being out at sea for

---

Serious Disswasive from the Horrid and Detestable Sins of Drunkenness, Swearing, Uncleanness, Forgetfulness of Mercies, Violation of Promises, and Atheistical Contempt of Death (London, 1698).

[3] John Flavel, *Navigation Spiritualized, or A New Compass for Seamen* (London, 1664).

[4] John Flavel, *The Seaman's Companion* (London, 1675), 416.

long periods of time was also an excellent way for sailors to witness to nonbelievers aboard ships about the grace and promises of God. Flavel cautioned against falling towards temptation but did not necessarily condemn all of seafaring as a whole, as long as sailors used their time and resources wisely. In Flavel's eyes, there was nothing wrong with being a sailor, as long as one did not live in sin and instead chose to navigate a spiritual life in a similar way to a life at sea. In comparing spiritual and maritime navigation, he wrote,

> It is a gallant thing to be able to carry a Ship richly laden round the World: but it is much more gallant to carry a Soul (that rich loading, a Pearl of more worth than all the Merchandise of the world) in a body (that is liable to leaks and bruises as any Ship is) through the Sea of this World (which is as unstable as water, and hath the same brinish taste and salt gust which the waters of the Sea have) safe to Heaven (the best Haven) so as to avoid splitting upon any Soul sinking Rocks…Humane wisdom may teach us to carry a Ship to the *Indies;* but the Wisdom only that is from above can teach us to steer our course aright to the *Haven* of *Happiness.*[5]

Flavel believed that pursuing a relationship with God was exactly like navigating the sea. In comparing the two, he paved the way for his congregation to observe, reflect, and apply spiritual principles to their time in the Atlantic. While sin was a prevailing threat to sailors, Flavel aimed to equip men with the right tactics to avoid the devil's traps.[6]

In an essay published by Flavel in the decades following *Navigation Spiritualized* and *The Seaman's Companion*, entitled *A Pathetical and Serious Disswasive from the Horrid and Detestable Sins of Drunkenness, Swearing, Uncleanness, Forgetfulness of Mercies, Violation of Promises, and Atheistical Contempt of Death,* he aimed to reform those that were affected by sins of drunkenness, swearing, uncleanliness, and a lack of mercy. Like his aforementioned works, it was mainly directed towards seamen, but also to others not abiding by the strict moral

---

[5] Flavel, *Navigation Spiritualized*.
[6] Ibid.

code of the Puritans. Flavel asserts to his audience that those who sin and seek no repentance are in danger of God's reckoning, as the day of judgment is nearer than they think. He states that if such behaviors "be not improved by you, be sure it will be produced as a witness against you."[7] Flavel cautioned that these warnings, to seamen and to all others, were not to be taken lightly.

Flavel's writings about piracy, and sin in general, were heavily influential for Cotton Mather, especially pertaining to his view of seafarers' vulnerability to sin. Mather believed that the works of Flavel were essential to every minister's library, and Mather's own works hold obvious signs of Flavel's influence. Flavel's works related to seafaring are evidence of a general fear of the effect seafaring had on a sailor's lifestyle. Sailors were isolated from the mainland for weeks or months at a time, and therefore had more freedom to make sinful decisions away from the prying eyes of their families and local communities and ministers, like excessive drinking, swearing, and a lack of general hygiene. But Flavel, and later Mather, cautioned in their sermons that man could hold no secrets from God, who was omniscient, and that "when Death and Eternity look you in the face, Conscience may reflect upon these things to your horror and amazement, and make you cry out…"[8]

While the concern for salvation of one's soul was the main focus of their sailor-centric sermons, Flavel and Mather may have been equally as intrigued by seafaring and piracy due to the early Puritan experience in the Atlantic. Early Puritan immigrants to the colonies had to undergo a long and crucial journey from England to America aboard ships and go over, as Mather referred to it, a "terrible" and "unpassable" ocean for the "pure enjoyment of all His

---

[7] John Flavel, *A Pathetical and Serious Disswasive from the Horrid and Detestable Sins of Drunkenness, Swearing, Uncleanness, Forgetfulness of Mercies, Violation of Promises, and Atheistical Contempt of Death* (London, 1698), 117.
[8] Ibid., 118.

ordinances."[9] According to David Cressy, Puritans viewed their passage on the Atlantic as a journey of revelations and tests and "a primary occasion for bonding and socialization, a rehearsal and preparation for community life."[10] These travels revealed to colonial Puritans the reality of God's power and providence, while simultaneously establishing deep communal connections and strengthening religious beliefs. A sermon was preached aboard the ships every day, and in return God supplied "the poor people in the wilderness" with their every necessity.[11] Puritans held fast to a certain social order aboard their ships, and religion was central to life on the high seas for them. In their providential worldview, Puritans believed that "every crashing wave carried the breath of God and every league of distance was a step towards heaven."[12] While the Atlantic was a dangerous sea of uncertainty, Puritans found the trip exhilarating and spiritually refreshing. They rejoiced upon their arrival to the colonies, as God had delivered them just as He had promised.

This spiritual outlook on sailing established by the first Puritan immigrants to America, which included infamous Puritan figures such as John Winthrop and Anne Hutchinson, may have influenced Mather and Flavel's interest on the matter. For the two preachers, the early Puritan immigrants had intertwined their faith with their journeys on the Atlantic as they crossed over to the colonies; for them, being unfaithful in the journey proved that one was not saved. Through their journey overseas, they were able to build intense communal relationships with one another and retain their unwavering reliance on and faith in God, no matter what trials they faced aboard their ships. If the early Puritans could achieve this, then Mather and Flavel believed it possible

---

[9] Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana: Or the Ecclesiastical History of New England From its First Planting in the Year 1620. Unto the Year of our Lord, 1698.* (London: Bible and Three Crowns, 1702), 64, 69.
[10] David Cressy, "The Vast and Furious Ocean: The Passage to Puritan New England," *The New England Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (1984): 511.
[11] Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana,* 242.
[12] Cressy, "The Vast and Furious Ocean," 517.

for the sailors of their time, thus they emphasized abiding by the moral codes and strict

communalism of Puritanism to their seafaring congregations. Leading by the example of the

Puritan immigrants, it should have been easy for sailors to maintain their spirituality with a

communal mindset and build sound relationships with their fellow seamen. In free moments

aboard ships, there was ample time to continue with the daily works of righteousness outlined in

Puritan doctrine in order to appease God and ensure their salvation. Mather and Flavel believed

that the lengthy maritime journeys for many men were also the perfect opportunity to build

lasting kinships, spread the morals and ideals of Puritanism, and increase the scope and influence

of the Puritan community as a whole.

Early Puritans certainly modeled the ability of an individual to sail the high seas while

retaining their strict belief in, and righteous practices for, God, yet there was always the

underlying fear within their communities that their members would be entranced by worldly

ideals when they set sail. Puritans constantly feared the disintegration of the society that

surrounded them, so the rising piratical problem that plagued the Atlantic and threatened their

morality and righteousness certainly must have heightened that fear and may have been what led

many to speak out in opposition. This Puritan experience of Atlantic passage was central to

Mather and Flavel's later sermons regarding seafaring and piracy, but its message was even more

impactful in the colonies.[13] While Flavel recognized the spiritual significance of the Atlantic

journey, his congregation was based solely in England. Mather's congregation consisted of many

first- or second-generation Puritans who had experienced the voyage firsthand or had heard the

---

[13] For more examples of the central ideals of Puritan righteousness and communalism in regard to seafaring, see John Flavel, *Navigation Spiritualized, or A New Compass for Seamen* (London, 1664); John Flavel, *The Seaman's Companion* (London, 1675); Cotton Mather, *The Religious Marriner* (Boston: B, Green and J. Allen, 1700); Cotton Mather, *Faithful Warnings to Prevent Fearful Judgements,* Sermon (1704); and Cotton Mather, *The Vial Poured Out Upon the Sea* (1726).

stories of others' experiences. The colonial Puritan outlook on the sea and its connection to a providential spiritual journey was more deeply personal than that of the Puritans back in England, and that also speaks to why piracy was so highly opposed by them. In New England, Mather and others felt as though pirates were corrupting a voyage and experience that was sacred to their faith, and this was deeply insulting.

Before Cotton Mather took to his pulpit to admonish piracy and the sins of the high seas, he gained high recognition in New England for his extraordinary intellect, namely his love of science and his later desire to inoculate the colonial population against smallpox. Early on in his adult life, Mather was equally as passionate about the Bible as he was science and was subsequently ordained as a minister in Boston's Old North Church in 1685.[14] Even though he was deeply devoted to his Puritan faith, he spent much of his life worrying that his soul would be condemned to hell, and struggled with the guilt of drawing too much fame, and enjoying it, from his numerous printed works.[15] Puritans held a belief in predestination, meaning that God already chose those who were to be saved and those who were to be damned. Puritans did not know if they were among those graced with salvation, and they spent much of their lives strictly abiding by the Scriptures and doing good works in order to appease God and live a righteous life in His eyes.[16] Their strict outlook on life also stemmed from their belief that all human thought and action had to be consciously committed to glorifying God. Even if one felt assured of his faith and salvation, he still lived his life under intense personal scrutiny as he sought to appease God in everything he did. In many of his written works, Mather examined the human nature and the

---

[14] Kenneth Silverman, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 26.

[15] Ibid., 199-200. See also page 22.

[16] Richard A. Bailey, *Race and Redemption in Puritan New England* (Oxford University Press: 2011), 24.

ideals of good versus evil, which are also prevalent themes in his works and sermons concerning pirates. He believed individuals were responsible for their own sins and were the only ones that could make the choice for themselves to repent before God.

As one of the more popular Puritan ministers of his time due to his high intellect, Mather regularly had the privilege to preach against seafaring to the captive attention of his congregations. While Puritanism relied heavily on abiding by strict moral codes, they were not against members of their community partaking in some fun every once and a while.[17] According to Mather though, too many Puritans were slacking in their commitment to their faith, as they were getting too distracted by earthly pleasures.[18] He believed the sailors that made up a large part of his congregation to be at the top of this list, believing them to have given in to more promiscuous, sinful lifestyles when they were away from the strict guidelines of their communities. Although Mather claimed that there were many Christian sailors that exceeded even normal men in their piety, the issue was that "Seamen, too many of them, too commonly indulge themselves, in those miscarriages, which declare them to be destitute of the Fear of God."[19] In this case, Mather's use of the "Fear of God" refers to religion, without which he asserts there is a lack of wisdom. Without a prevalent fear of God, sailors lacked the wisdom to make moral decisions, both spiritually and physically, which only led to destituteness and wretchedness.

Men who worked at sea were away from their homes for long periods of time, so many of them did not attend church regularly and were not held accountable to their local ministers while

---

[17] An excellent work on the acceptable leisure activities, and the Puritan attitude towards leisure in general, is Bruce C. Daniels, "Sober Mirth and Pleasant Poisons: Puritan Ambivalence Toward Leisure and Recreation in Colonial New England," *American Studies* 34, no. 1 (1993): 121-37.

[18] Cotton Mather, *The Religious Marriner* (Boston: B, Green and J. Allen, 1700), 6.

[19] Ibid., 9-10.

they were away. Oftentimes, religion was not even accepted aboard ships, and many ship captains rejected any attempts at spreading the Gospel aboard.[20] These men lacked the fear of God which Mather urged was vital. In his own words, "Sea-faring People should be God-fearing People…No men, are more bound unto the Fear of God, than Seamen."[21] In a diary entry from April 1718, almost two decades after his remarks on God-fearing seamen, Mather noted that seafaring was a "horrible spectacle" and that sailors were "a wicked, stupid, abominable generation; every year growing rather worse."[22] Yet Mather saw their lack of faith and still saw an opportunity, claiming "I must continue crying to GOD for them, and I must watch all Occasions to drop suitable Admonitions upon them, and I must scatter Books of Piety among them."[23] At the time of this entry, Mather had been preaching about seafaring and ministering to pirates for close to two decades. His ministry did not necessarily change his view on the atrocities of piracy, but he saw valuable opportunity in the ability to spread the ideals and principles of Puritanism to men who were in desperate need of salvation.

Cotton Mather's personal encounters with pirates, outside of his sermons on seafaring, began in the late 17th century. When the infamous pirate Captain William Kid was captured in Boston in 1699, Mather was present. His meeting with Kidd sparked a unique relationship with sailors for Mather, and much of his adult life thereafter was dedicated to seeking out how the life of a sailor could fit within the bounds of a godly Puritan society.[24] According to his diary, much of Mather's congregation was made up of "seafaring people", which he claimed to be "a very

---

[20] Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 169-75.

[21] Mather, *The Religious Marriner*, 7.

[22] Cotton Mather, "April 14, 1718", *Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681-1724* (Boston: The Society, 1911), 528.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Steven J. J. Pitt, "Cotton Mather and Boston's 'Seafaring Tribe,'" *New England Quarterly* 85 (2), 2012: 222–3.

numerous people, in my Congregation…"[25] Thus, alongside his external mission of preaching to the condemned, he had the opportunity to preach against the dangers of seafaring in the confines of his own church, many of whom the topic directly applied to. In his eyes, they could be "God's ambassadors" and spread the ideals of Puritanism throughout the world.[26] He stated, in a brief discourse entitled *The Religious Marriner,* that "by means of *Navigation…*it will come to pass, *That the Knowledge of the most Glorious Lord will fill the Earth…*and shall be carried into all Corners of the World."[27] While Mather's motivations for preaching from the pulpit to his congregation about the sins of the sea are evident, his motivations for speaking with pirates as he walked them to their fates at the gallows is more curious.

From one perspective, Mather, along with much of society at the time, wished to keep order. This applied to both local governments and, in Mather's case, within Puritan congregations. The growing network of transatlantic and intercolonial shipping meant the rapid rise of colonial ports. Larger ports and more frequent and substantial shipping called for sizable crews of sailors to handle the loading and unloading of cargo and the everyday maritime tasks aboard ships. Ships carrying cargo and passengers to and from Europe could take weeks, sometimes even months, to arrive at their destinations, thus sailors had a lot of free time on their hands to partake in sinful deeds. Ironically, the maritime commercial system that sailors were a part of endorsed policies of corporal punishment, impressment, and exploitation in order to maintain tightly regulated and disciplined crews, which cultivated an environment of wicked practices, namely violence, gambling, and drunkenness, that fed the rise of mutiny and piracy.[28] Mather struggled with his

---

[25] Cotton Mather, "November 26, 1699", *Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681-1724* (Boston: The Society, 1911), 323.

[26] Pitt, "Cotton Mather", 2012: 227.

[27] Mather, *The Religious Marriner* (1700), 3.

[28] Ibid., 223.

desire to see order while grappling with the idea of men losing their souls to the sea. As a minister, it was his faithful duty to witness to others about God, yet his desire to maintain control within society often conflicted with that mission.

In his personal encounters with pirates Mather often accompanied them to the gallows, where in their final conversations before death he began to see them in a somewhat sympathetic light. Not because they were suffering from their punishment, as he believed their punishment was justified through their crimes, but because they were men whose souls had been lost through the horrible corruption and exploitation on the high seas. They had lived free from societal constraints, and that freedom caused them to drift away from a belief in any religious system, and ultimately away from a relationship with God. After his encounter with Captain Kidd, Mather frequently started to deliver execution sermons to condemned pirates, whether privately or in front of the crowds that had gathered to watch the criminals be hanged. He remarked that "if we mark the ways of wicked men, which is indeed, an old way, we shall find in it some things that are truly remarkable."[29] Some of the things he claimed to be remarkable included the truths that when one allies himself with evil he hastens his downfall, committing a sin only leads one to greater sins, once facing justice sinners claim to repent but they are not sincere in doing so, and most importantly, that God knows all sins the wicked commit and sooner or later all sinners must face their just punishments.[30]

Execution sermons began to appear in the late 17th century, after those condemned to death after their trials requested to listen to the preaching of local ministers. Ministers usually delivered

---

[29] Cotton Mather, *Useful Remarks. An Essay Upon Remarkables In the Way of Wicked Men. A Sermon on the Tragical End, Unto Which the Way of Twenty-Six Pirates Brought Them; At New Port on Rhode-Island, July 19, 1723. With an Account of Their Speeches, Letters, & Actions, Before Their Execution* (Connecticut: T. Green, 1723).
[30] Ibid.

these sermons a few days before the execution, where the prisoners, in chains and under guard, provoked the interest of local church congregations and their surrounding population. Criminal executions drew crowds that sometimes numbered into the thousands, and the sermons that preceded them often drew in close to equal attendance.[31] They were the leading public event in the colonies, and an excellent platform on which Puritan ministers could reach larger crowds of people outside their own congregations. In his own execution sermons geared towards pirates, Cotton Mather focused primarily on human nature, as he was himself entranced with the notions of good versus evil. His messages were usually delivered in three sections, beginning with a passage from the Bible, which he then restated as a fundamental belief. Next he proposed a series of ideas that backed up that doctrine both morally and spiritually. Finally, he provided his listeners ways in which they could integrate those ideas into their lives so they turned away from sin. In his eyes, following a righteous path was a daily steppingstone to attain salvation, whereas evil occurred to those who ignored God's lessons. In the case of the pirates who listened to his sermons right before their deaths, he claimed it was not too late for them to repent and make things right before God, so they had a chance at eternal life.

One of Mather's first meetings with pirates after his experience with William Kidd occurred when Captain John Quelch and his crew were captured in Massachusetts and imprisoned in Boston in 1704. Quelch was elected as captain after the crew of the *Charles* mutinied against its former captain, Daniel Plowman, and had a brief, but successful, pirate career that lasted a little under a year. As Quelch and his crew were marched to the gallows, Cotton Mather accompanied them and delivered his *Faithful Warnings to Prevent Fearful Judgements* sermon. Quelch's

---

[31] Daniel A. Cohen, "In Defense of the Gallows: Justifications of Capital Punishment in New England Execution Sermons, 1674-1825," *American Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (1988): 147.

crew, after listening to Mather's preaching, repented before they were hanged. Quelch was the only one who refused. *Faithful Warnings* reveals some of Mather's aforementioned sympathy towards young men that were seduced into piracy. He did not want pirates to think that the authority of the colony was weak or a safe haven for piracy by pardoning those convicted of the crime. He still describes pirates as enemies of all mankind, which was the general conception of pirates at the time. However in his more sympathetic statements, he asserts that "the works of Sin…are *Unfruitful works*" and that sin and evil pursue those that are vulnerable to temptation and do not possess a fear of God.[32]

In 1717, Mather released a pamphlet entitled *Instructions to The Living, From the Condition of The Dead*. This pamphlet serves an interesting perspective of the encounters between ministers and pirates as the criminals approached their deaths, as it includes some discourse of a conversation he had with 6 pirates on the way to their executions. Mather published his pamphlet a month after the execution of the pirates of the ship *Whydah*, which sank off the shore of Cape Cod on April 26th, 1717. He published this work to appease the great curiosity that the horrific fate of the pirates had caused, while also using the event as an opportunity to teach his congregation.

As the story goes, thirty-foot waves destroyed the ship and drowned almost all of the pirates and their prisoners. The next morning inhabitants of the nearby towns discovered a gruesome sight on the beach – countless gnarled bodies, at least 102 of them, washed ashore by the tides along with wreckage from the ship. This was the fate of Captain Bellamy and his pirate crew, except for seven survivors who were arrested and sent to Boston for trial. One of the seven,

---

[32] Cotton Mather, *Faithful Warnings to Prevent Fearful Judgements,* Sermon (1704) 28-9.

Thomas Davis, was found innocent and released. The other six men were found guilty of piracy

through their trials: John Brown, Simon Van Vorst, Hendrick Quintor, Thomas Baker, Peter

Hoof and John Shuan. An interesting excerpt from Mather's pamphlet, which describes a short

speech by one of the pirates, John Brown, who repented and broke into prayer on the platform

before he was to be hanged, states that he advised "Sailors, to beware of all wicked Living, such

as his own had been; especially to beware of falling into the Hands of the Pirates: But if they did,

and were forced to join with them, then, to have a care whom they kept, and whom they let go,

and what Countries they come into."[33] Mather was impressed with the way Brown made things

right with God before he was executed, and states later that the repentance of so many pirates

before their deaths signaled the imminent end of piracy. He stated that the "compassion of God

has done wonders for New England in their encounters with Atlantic pirates", but this pamphlet

also brings up an interesting perspective on why Mather visited these condemned pirates before

their deaths.[34] He may have seen it as an opportunity to bolster his position within the Puritan

community, or to spread the influence of Puritanism far beyond his communal circle. If he could

save the souls of the most wretched men in the colonies, then people would turn their attention to

him with curiosity surrounding Puritan belief.

   In 1723, Mather again preached regarding a crew of condemned pirates, this time twenty-six

of them in Rhode Island. In his sermon entitled *Useful Remarks. An Essay Upon Remarkables In

the Way of Wicked Men*, he presents the ways of wicked men, and uses those as examples of how

not to live a righteous, Puritan life. He proclaims to his audience that the twenty-six men that

---

[33] Cotton Mather, *Instructions to The Living, From the Condition of The Dead. A Brief Relation of Remarkables In the Shipwreck of Above One Hundred Pirates, Who Were Cast Away in The Ship Whido, On the Coast of New-England, April 26. 1717. And in The Death of Six, Who After A Fair Trial at Boston, Were Convicted & Condemned, Octob. 22. And Executed, Novemb. 15. 1717. With Some Account of The Discourse Had with Them on The Way to Their Execution. And A Sermon Preached on Their Occasion* (Boston: Printed by John Allen, 1717), 37-8.
[34] Ibid., 5-6.

were sentenced to death in Rhode Island "call upon you, to *Repent* of your Sins & not Persist in such Crimes as have brought them to what they are now come unto. If you will not hear the Warnings of your Faithful *Pastors,* hear the Roarings of Twenty Six *terrible Preachers…*calling upon you to *Turn & Live* unto GOD."[35] He uses the condemnation of the pirates in order to instill a sense of urgency into his congregation, but he also uses them as examples of God's grace. He lists all that the pirates had done that was wicked, but in the end they decided, under the direction of a minister, to give the last of their lives to God and publicly repented. Even though they were wicked men, God's "mysterious grace" enabled them to be saved. So while warning his congregation not to follow in the steps of the wicked, he also reassures them that God has mercy on even those that commit the most atrocious and evil deeds.

In 1724, Mather again appealed to several men convicted of piracy and sentenced to hang. He begins his *The Converted Sinner* sermon with a warning and prayerful statement to seafaring people, that they may know the wrath of God's punishment against the sins of pirates. Like his *Instructions to the Living* pamphlet, this sermon includes a discourse between Mather and two pirates a week before their executions. In this discourse, the pirates each admit to their most terrible sins, which include profane swearing, blaspheming the name of God, Sabbath breaking, rebelliousness towards their parents, drunkenness, running away from their friends, and finding themselves in the acquaintance of wicked company.[36] Mather continues to question them regarding their sins, to make sure they understand the depth of the choices they made. At the end

---

[35] Cotton Mather, *Useful Remarks. An Essay Upon Remarkables In the Way of Wicked Men. A Sermon on the Tragical End, Unto Which the Way of Twenty-Six Pirates Brought Them; At New Port on Rhode-Island, July 19, 1723. With an Account of Their Speeches, Letters, & Actions, Before Their Execution* (Connecticut: T. Green, 1723), 21.

[36] Cotton Mather, *The Converted Sinner. The Nature of a Conversion to Real and Vital Piety: And the Manner in Which It Is to Be Pray'd & Striv'n For. A Sermon Preached in Boston, May 31, 1724. In the Hearing and At the Desire of Certain Pirates, A Little Before Their Execution* (Boston: Nathaniel Belknap, 1724), 38.

of the conversation, after he makes sure the pirates are truly remorseful of the sins they committed, he pleas to God that, "He go on, to send forth His Good SPIRIT, and you will be Created over again; Yea, He will Renew the Face and the Choice of your Souls before Him."[37]

After the pirates' executions, Mather remarked that they died with "such expressions of repentance to the satisfaction of the spectators."[38] This final statement provides an interesting insight into Mather's perspective on why preaching execution sermons was so vital. It alludes to the fact that Mather was preaching to the pirates with the hope of them repenting in front of an audience, in order to reinforce the position of ministers in society and maintain influence over those in attendance. While it is evident that Mather cared for the lives of seafarers to some degree, there is also an underlying motive of desiring to maintain order. By showing spiritual authority over pirates, who were considered the most wicked sinners of the time, witnesses were taught not to doubt the place or influence of Puritanism within society. Some bystanders may have even been curious enough to convert to Puritanism themselves and join the congregations of Mather or his fellow ministers. In Margarette Lincoln's *British Pirates and Society 1680-1730,* she concludes that Mather's later sermons suggest that where "piracy was involved the energetic religious teaching in New England was increasingly pitched against the prevailing entrepreneurial spirit that had countenanced illegal trading."[39] This "prevailing entrepreneurial spirit" extended beyond just pirates to any individual who received "a Penny by doing a *Sinful* Thing."[40] In Mather's eyes, those that were corrupt in their social, economic, or political relations were, in a way, responsible for the continuous problem of piracy. If pirates, for

---

[37] Ibid., 47.
[38] Ibid., 48.
[39] Lincoln, *British Pirates and Society,* 130.
[40] Ibid.

example, were able to bribe local authorities to look the other way from their illegal dealings, then Mather believed that those authorities were equally as guilty of sin as the pirates themselves.[41] As an entrepreneurial mindset arose in the colonies, so too did complicity with pirates, and thus it was at the forefront of many execution sermons in order to dissuade this type of behavior.

Cotton Mather's most famous encounter with pirates, one which also showed an underlying desire to maintain Puritan authority within society, occurred in 1726, when the pirate William Fly publicly defied all offers of repentance from Mather or any other minister that attempted to preach to him. Fly's impact on the surrounding community was so great that Mather, along with works by a few of his fellow Puritan ministers, had to publish *The Vial Poured Out Upon the Sea* in order to lessen the damage. This was Mather's final narrative that was focused around condemned pirates. In it he largely addresses Fly's refusal to convert to Christianity, or even acknowledge it, before he was hanged. Through this publication, Mather wanted to assure that Christian authority in the surrounding community was left unquestioned, especially in the wake of the huge public attention Fly provoked through his defiance.

Mather believed that any person, no matter the sins they had committed, could repent and still attain eternal life after death. Mather stated to Fly and his crew that without their confessions of their sins, only damnation lay before them. But Fly refused to accept responsibility for his crimes or confess to his sins despite Mather's urgent warnings. This, Mather stated, was an act of stupidity on Fly's part. Mather emphasized in *The Vial Poured Out Upon the Sea* that Fly did not have any wisdom and sealed his own fate by failing to turn towards God in the end. In response

---

[41] Ibid.

to Fly's insistence that he would not die with a lie in his mouth, Mather stated, "what criminal and prodigious nonsense are you guilty of—and yet you'll go out of the world, with what is as bad in your heart; even with murder there, you will go out of the world, in a plain rebellion against a command of God our Savior, the Glorious One, who is the Judge of the world; whose judgment-seat you must appear before".[42] This was not an act of defiance against Christianity in Mather's eyes, but rather a lack of understanding and foolishness. Daniel Williams states that Mather found that "Through careful presentation and description he could render the pirate more foolish than courageous, more damned than defiant," thus swaying the public attention of Fly's death into his favor.[43] In no way would Maher allow for Fly to be victorious in his endeavors to shake the peoples' confidence in their Christian ministers. He ultimately displayed the authority of God's Word over the crimes of piracy, reinforcing the authority of the church and instilling resentment against pirates in the minds of his readers and listeners.

Cotton Mather was the leading minister preaching to and about pirates in the colonies in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. His high intellect had gained him the trust of his local communities, and so his sermons regarding seafaring had a significant impact on his congregation. However, it was his execution sermons that drew those not of his congregation towards the ideals and teachings of Puritanism. Not only did he speak to the pirates that were about to be hanged for their crimes, but he spoke to the audiences, who came from all walks of life, that showed up for them as well. Many of his execution sermons were later published for all to read, thus spreading his Puritan agenda even further.

---

[42] Cotton Maher, *The Vial Poured Out Upon the Sea,* 1726.

[43] Daniel E. Williams, "Puritans and Pirates: A Confrontation between Cotton Mather and William Fly in 1726," *Early American Literature* 22, *3*, 1987: 234.

Mather and other Puritan ministers were in a sense the colonial spokespeople of the time that promoted Puritan ideals and rejected a life of sin and wickedness. In rejecting piracy specifically, Puritans were able to protect the interests of their churches and congregations by promoting a lifestyle of strict morality. Religion and politics blurred for the Puritans, as they believed in a system of self-government led by abiding by the Scriptures. Once they arrived in America after dissenting from the Church of England, Puritans established congregational churches and followed the Cambridge Platform as their local system of church government. The preface of the Cambridge Platform states that, "the more we discern the unkind…unchristian contentions of our godly brethren and countrymen in matters of church government, the more earnestly do we desire to see them join together in one common faith."[44] Using this platform of self-government, Puritans not only influenced local religious matters in their communities, but greatly impacted political matters as well. They held a spiritual authority in society that was directly challenged by seafarers and pirates defying God, thus Mather and other Puritan ministers sought to subdue the threat while simultaneously promoting Puritan ideals.

Pirates were the antithesis to the Puritan way of life, thus they clashed quite often. According to Puritans, pirates were "possessed by Satan, 'Led Captive by him to do his will.'"[45] Since they did not have the "fear of God before their eyes," they partook in the unrighteous acts of swearing, drunkenness, gambling, uncleanliness, pillaging, violence, murder, and the exploitation of women.[46] In contrast, the Puritans condemned swearing, gambling, greed, adulterous acts, the excessive consumption of alcohol, or any other act that went against their

---

[44] The Elders and Messengers of the Churches Assembled in Synod, *The Cambridge Platform of Church Discipline, 1648*, The Library of Congress (Boston: Perkins & Whipple, 1850), 47.

[45] Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), 132.

[46] Ibid.

desire to live righteously before God day in and day out.[47] Puritans observed the Sabbath, attended church services, and read their Bibles daily. They lived their life grounded in simplicity and faith, while pirates sought wealth and prosperity and reveled in violence and destruction. Where one praised God, the other ran defiantly in the other direction. Cotton Mather sought to combat this unethical force against his community. He ministered to all those he could, not only to ensure that the wicked had a chance at redemption, but also to safeguard the interests of Puritanism in the colonies. Without the strong moral compass and justified punishments of the wicked enacted by the Puritans, Mather, along with his fellow Puritan preachers, believed colonial society was subject to corruption and disorder.

---

[47] Bruce C. Daniels, "Sober Mirth and Pleasant Poisons: Puritan Ambivalence Toward Leisure and Recreation in Colonial New England," *American Studies* 34, no. 1 (1993): 126-9.

III. The Golden Age of Piracy in the Atlantic: Piratical Beginnings, Society, and Immorality

In contrast to the pure society centered around God that Puritans strived to achieve, pirates lived a life detached from conventional authority and rooted in resistance. Their ideals were opposite to those of the Puritans, and they often showed their rejection of God by likening themselves to the devil in any way they could, whether this was by changing their physical image, partaking in acts of ruthless violence, drinking, swearing, taking advantage of women, or chanting their merriment in their journeys toward hell.[1] Pirates like Bartholomew Roberts, William "Captain" Kidd, Henry Avery, and Edward Teach left behind legacies of violence that traumatized those they encountered and served as stark warnings to seafarers. Their stories show the lengths they were willing to go to rebel against oppressive authority, while also highlighting the complex ways in which they structured their societies. The rise of piracy challenged the limits of state authority and spread fear along the coasts of the Atlantic, but it also provided the grounds for evangelical opportunities by Puritan ministers in the colonies. Pirates strived for a Godless lifestyle filled with sin, but their actions often ultimately led them towards the very thing they rejected and landed them within the immediate vicinity of ministers that sought to save their souls. Piracy was far from a small gang of murderous thieves, rather it was a large and complex society of its own that was interwoven with every aspect of the Atlantic world.

Piracy has existed as long as man has sailed upon the high seas. In ancient Greece, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* was laced with references to pirates abducting women and children

---

[1] Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 151-3.

and selling them into slavery, while classical Greeks looked upon piracy as a disgraceful livelihood. Within the Roman Empire, pirates stalked the coasts and threatened its booming maritime commerce. Much like in Classical Greece, they were marked in Roman law as *hostis humani generis,* Latin for the "enemy of all mankind".[2] However, Roman pirates roamed freely without consequence, as they provided Roman Senators with slaves that were valuable assets to maintaining their wealthy plantations. In later centuries in the Aegean Sea, Cilician pirates captured and held a young Julius Caesar prisoner briefly in 75 BCE, and in the 8th to 12th centuries CE Vikings sailed and terrorized Europe, North Africa and parts of the Middle East and instilled fear within their inhabitants.[3] Piracy, while it took on different forms and names throughout different centuries and locales, played a prominent role from the beginning of maritime history.[4]

The historical definition of piracy is the "indiscriminate taking of property (or persons) with violence, on or by descent from the sea," a fitting description for the pirates that roamed the Atlantic.[5] The most notorious pirates known to modern popular culture were those that lived during the Golden Age of piracy that plagued the territories bordering the Atlantic between 1650

---

[2] Ibid., 26.

[3] Plutarch, *The Life of Julius Caesar* in *Parallel Lives: Julius Caesar,* trans. B. Perrin, Loeb Classical Library, vol. VIII (1919), 445-7.

[4] The stories and myths of pirates did not become popular only in modern times. The escapades of pirates in the 17th and 18th centuries were widely known as they happened. Their captured bodies hung for all to see as warnings against the treacherous profession, and newspapers wrote of their exploits in both Europe and North America. Henry Morgan was hailed a hero in England in the late 17th century, while William Kidd was prominent in British press before his capture and execution in the early 18th century. Blackbeard was widely written about and feared in the colonies both before and after his death, and many colonists increasingly called for the capture and executions of other pirates in the area. Most notably, Daniel Defoe, the anonymous author of *A General History of the Pyrates,* wrote a comprehensive, multi-volume work on the lives of pirates in 1724 as the Golden Age of Piracy was coming to a close. See B.R. Burg, "Legitimacy and Authority: A Case Study of Pirate Commanders in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," American Neptune 37, 1977: 40-49 for a case study of pirate commanders and their impact on society at the time.

[5] J. L. Anderson, "Piracy and World History: An Economic Perspective on Maritime Predation," *Journal of World History* 6:2, 1995, 176.

and 1730 CE. Infamous names such as Bartholomew Roberts, Edward Teach, known notably as Blackbeard, William "Captain" Kidd, and Henry Avery terrorized the coasts of North America and the Caribbean. These men, with the addition of thousands of others, including a few notable females, held no allegiance to any government and committed atrocious crimes as they pleased. They captured and destroyed ships, exploited, tortured, and murdered crews, as well as pillaged and plundered coastal towns and islands of all their riches. They took advantage of women they encountered, gambled, drank, and cursed. The reputations of pirates preceded them, and they were the most sought-after criminals in North America in the 17th and 18th centuries. Their principal beliefs and lack of ethical convictions directly contrasted with the ideals of Puritanism in the colonies, but in some ways they structured their societies at sea in similar ways to the communal Christian model. Puritan society revolved around a self-governing church model led by ministers that emphasized equal rights and privileges for all members of the congregation.[6] Pirate ships ran similarly, with mutually agreed upon articles, fair distribution of goods, and a balance of power so the captain did not always have supreme authority over all decisions.[7]

In modern popular culture the escapades of pirates are idealized as adventurous, treasure-seeking journeys filled with humor, romance, and mythical creatures. These portrayals paint a picture of pirates that is more lighthearted than it is revolting. The historical rhetoric of piracy is much more grim than modern retellings, but equally as intriguing. History is filled with characters immortalized in popular culture, such as the aforementioned Bartholomew Roberts, William "Captain" Kidd, Henry Avery, and arguably the most famous of all, Blackbeard. Each

---

[6] Puritan churches were modeled after democracy, as explained in Albert E. Dunning, *Congregationalists in America: A Popular History of Their Origin, Belief, Polity, Growth and Work* (New York: J. A. Hill and Company, 1894), 60.

[7] A more detailed description of the social structure aboard pirate ships can be found in Rediker, *Villains of All Nations,* 64-70.

of these men, and hundreds of other pirate captains, led their men into a life of murder, robbery, and exploitation. Pirates were ruthless, held little remorse, and rejected the imperial societies that birthed them. Yet, piracy was a practice that arose from the conflicts among European powers colonizing Africa, the West Indies, and North and South America. While ultimately many governments in the 17th and 18th centuries collectively detested the issue of piracy and the financial devastation it caused on colonial trade, many political leaders in the 16th century, including Elizabeth I and Edward VI of England, encouraged its rapid spread through the use of privateers and buccaneers for their own economic and political gain against their competitors, with one Atlantic merchant stating that privateering would "'breed so many pirates that…we shall be in more danger from them than we are now from the enemy'".[8]

For years, these men sailed under letters of marque granted by European governments that legally allowed them to attack vessels at war with their home nation. However, privateers often went rogue, blurring the lines between privateering and piracy, and the legal trade began to disappear as the violence increased. Henry Morgan, one of the most distinguished privateers in history, operated out of Port Royal in Jamaica in the latter half of the 17th century. Through the letters of marque granted to him by the English monarch, Morgan was legally covered for all of his operations against Spanish fleets, but he often went above and beyond his orders. The letters of marque he sailed under allowed him to attack the Spanish at sea, but there was no mention of the many land raids Morgan partook in. The Spanish accused him of unjust torture and violence and branded him as a pirate, a title he strongly admonished. Despite the Spanish accusations against him, he was hailed a hero by the English monarch, served as lieutenant governor of

---

[8] Ibid., 19. The political motives behind privateers and buccaneers that paved the way for the rise of pirates can be found in Rediker's chapter entitled "The Political Arithmetic of Piracy," in *Villains of All Nations*.

Jamaica, and lived the rest of his life surrounded by wealth that he often defended he acquired perfectly legally.[9]

Privateers like Henry Morgan were the precursors to refined piracy in the Atlantic. The very nations that rejected its practice were the ones that fed its rapid rise. The lines between legal, justified raids against colonial competitors in the age of privateering were increasingly blurred as the 17th century came to a close. Only legal terminology separated the actions of privateers from pirates, but the legality of privateering operations was often questionable.[10] Throughout the 17th century, the Atlantic became a breeding ground for men dabbling in piracy, all seeking to attain some sort of wealth and glory. In 1704, Cotton Mather warned his congregation that "the privateering stroke so easily degenerates into the piratical, and the privateering trade is usually carried on with an unchristian temper and proves an inlet into so much debauchery and iniquity."[11] Privateering undoubtedly gave way to the age of piracy in the Atlantic, a time where men threw decency overboard in exchange for a life filled with greed, robbery, and violence.

Atlantic pirates were not born into a life of crime and sin, rather they chose to pursue such a lifestyle after their upbringing and experience in European society. According to Marcus Rediker, a distinguished professor of Atlantic history, most pirates originated from the lowest social classes in Europe and saw a life of piracy as an "opportunity in which they had little to lose".[12] The oppression many faced in lower social classes made the chance at acquiring wealth attractive to most, as they found the barriers of society constricting and the gamble of something

---

[9] Mark Donnelly and Daniel Diehl, *Pirates of Virginia: Plunder and High Adventure on the Old Dominion Coastline,* first ed. (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2012), 2-3.
[10] Ibid., 2.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Rediker, *Villains of All Nations,* 50.

even slightly greater appealing. The lifestyle attracted those of the working class as well, as those

men found the prospect of escaping the horrific conditions they faced in the workplace

promising. The vast majority of future pirates started as sailors with little social standing in

European navies. The hierarchies aboard those vessels, often enforced through violence and

abuse, were equally as suffocating as the obstacles many of the men faced on land.[13] For a sailor,

his experience aboard a merchant or navy ship contributed to his ability to adapt to life on a

pirate ship, and oftentimes guaranteed him a higher rank within its crew.

While sailors found the escape from hierarchies appealing when joining a life of piracy,

there was still a complex social structure and governance in place to maintain peace among

pirate crews. Much like the strict moral laws in place within Puritan communities in the colonies,

pirates abided by a set of rules when they set sail, albeit they were not faith-based laws like their

Christian counterparts. When sailors joined a pirate crew, they signed and committed to articles

of agreement, also referred to as pirate codes. The articles ensured and enforced rules for

discipline, fair division of plundered goods, and compensation for injured pirates.[14] Essentially, a

pirate code limited a pirate captain's power and kept order among his crew in order to counteract

the experiences of men who had suffered from their superiors prior to joining a life of piracy.[15]

Ironically, some pirates swore an oath upon a Bible, but more often than not they took their oath

upon the closest weapons or objects within their reach.[16] While pirate codes were unique to each

pirate captain, their general principles were the same. Daniel Defoe's 18th century work *A

General History of the Pyrates* includes most of the surviving examples of pirate articles, taken

---

[13] Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 43.
[14] Ibid., 16-17.
[15] Ibid., 43-44.
[16] When George Lowther became the captain of the *Happy Delivery*, he drafted up his own articles of agreement, which were sworn to upon a Bible by his crew. George Francis Dow and John Henry Edmonds. *The Pirates of the New England Coast 1630 – 1730* (New York: Dover Publications, 1996) 133.

from records kept at the court proceedings of the trials of several different pirates.[17] Many pirates

on the verge of capture however, burned their articles so they could not be used against them at

their trials and are thus lost to history. The ones that remain provide valuable insight into the

complex social and political world of piracy.

A well-preserved example of a pirate code was left behind by Captain Bartholomew

Roberts, who was one of the most accomplished Atlantic pirates during the golden age.

Throughout his career that spanned the years between 1719 and 1722, he captured or attacked

over 400 vessels.[18] His career in piracy began after his slave ship, of which he was the second

mate, was overtaken by pirates while docked in West Africa. Roberts, excellent at navigation,

caught the eye of the pirate Captain Howell Davis and was forced to set sail alongside them.

Interestingly, Roberts was not immediately drawn to a life of piracy, in fact he rather despised it,

Defoe citing that "he was very averse to this sort of Life, and would certainly have escaped from

them, had a fair Opportunity presented it self."[19] It took time for him to come around to the

opportunities piracy could offer, but the longer he was aboard Davis' ship the profession began

to grow on him.

When Captain Davis was shot dead by the Portuguese in Príncipe six weeks after Roberts

was taken aboard, he was quickly elected as the new captain of the *Royal Rover*, stating that if he

must be a pirate, "it was better being a Commander than a common Man."[20] According to him,

sailing aboard his former slave ship offered nothing but "thin commons, low wages, and hard

---

[17] Daniel Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates, 1724*, ed. Manuel Schonhorn (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1999).
[18] Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 33.
[19] Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 194.
[20] Ibid., 162.

labour."[21] Piracy, he stated, offered "plenty and satiety, pleasure and ease, liberty and power," with the worst consequence being "only a sour look or two at choking."[22] Roberts, now a newly elected captain, began to accept a life, however short it may be, of potential prosperity rather than go back to a life burdened by the constraints created by European maritime commerce. However according to *A General History of the Pyrates*, although he partook in the vile crimes associated with piracy at the time, he always held on to an aversion towards forcing men into the profession like he had been himself.[23]

In 1719, Roberts's first act as captain of the *Royal Rover* was to sail to Príncipe to avenge the loss of Captain Davis. It was here that Roberts gained the loyalty of most of Davis' crew. Landing in the dead of night, they murdered the majority of the male population and looted as many valuables as they could before escaping back to their ship and sailing away.[24] They sailed on to Brazil with the hope of encountering merchant ships carrying goods along the coast. With no luck for over two months, they were about to sail to the West Indies when they discovered forty-two Portuguese merchant ships docked outside of Todos de Santos Bay. Concealing their cannons and weapons, they slipped within the midst of the ships, discretely took a random captain prisoner, and discovered which of the ships had the most valuable cargo. Roberts and his men overtook the ship easily and plundered sugar, tobacco, furs, forty thousand gold coins, jewelry, gems, and a diamond-studded gold cross intended for the king of Portugal, all before a single one of the other forty-one ships could catch them.[25] Reveling in their success, they landed in Suriname to stash their treasures and trade their other loot. Here, Roberts learned of an

---

[21] Ibid., 244.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Donnelly and Diehl, *Pirates of Virginia*, 125.
[25] Ibid., 127.

American ship carrying provisions from Rhode Island that was landing on the island soon. Still basking in the success of their Portuguese victory, he and forty other men went after it in a smaller ship, leaving the *Royal Rover* in the hands of Walter Kennedy.

Walter Kennedy saw an opportunity that would most likely never present itself again. He and the rest of Roberts's crew were left alone with the entirety of the Portuguese loot, as it had yet to be unloaded from the ship. Selfish desire won out against loyalty to his captain, and Kennedy sailed off with the ship and treasure. Kennedy's betrayal infuriated Roberts, who then drafted his articles of agreement and demanded that his remaining crew agree to them. Roberts's new articles protected the peace amongst his own crew and also countered the unfair, hierarchal regulations of the European navies he had formerly belonged to. He wished to prevent further betrayal by creating equity in stolen goods and compensation for injured pirates, among other provisions, and firmly believed his articles would resonate with his crew and win over their complete and lasting loyalty.

Men aboard Roberts's ship had "equal Title to the fresh Provisions, or strong Liquors, at any Time seized, and use them at pleasure, unless a Scarcity."[26] The rest of his articles are direct and strict but show evident signs that they were created to protect the livelihood and peace of Roberts's crew and prevent further mutiny. Lights and candles were put out at eight in the evening, although men could still stay awake and drink up on the deck, pistols and cutlasses were to be kept clean and ready for use, and desertion in the midst of battle was punishable by death, which was also the consequence for seducing women and bringing them aboard in disguise, as most sailors in general considered women to be bad luck at sea. Interestingly, and unlike any

---

[26] Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 211.

other articles of agreement, Roberts's code also prohibited gambling and swearing aboard his ship and demanded Sunday be observed as the Sabbath. Uncharacteristically for pirates of the day, he himself was respectful to women and clergymen, rarely swore, and stayed away from consuming hard liquor.[27] Roberts, however, was the odd exception in a sea of ruthless pirates who held little to no regard for morality.

Many of the pirate codes that still exist to history are similar to that of Roberts's ship. While every pirate captain commanded his crew differently, for the most part there exists an overarching theme of equality and respect within their articles of agreement. The pirate John Smith, who adopted the alias John Gow during his time as a pirate, wrote that "every man shall obey his commander in all respects, as if the ship was his own," and everyone aboard "shall have an equal share" of the ship's provisions.[28] Captain George Lowther's articles argue against quarrels among the crew, stating that any man found guilty of "taking up any unlawful Weapon…so as to strike or abuse one another, in any regard" shall suffer a punishment agreed upon by the captain and the majority.[29] In his sixth article, Lowther also references reparation for those who suffer the "misfortune to lose a limb" during battle.[30] Men who were loyal to their ships and sacrificed parts of themselves for their captain's cause were often given a suitable compensation in return, as well as the offer to stay with the crew for however long after that they desired.

Opposite to the oppressive and abusive environments of their former employers, most pirates agreed to the terms set forth by their captains. Nonetheless, pirates did not center their

---

[27] Donnelly and Diehl, *Pirates of Virginia*, 128.
[28] *John Gow: Captain of a Notorious Gang of Pirates. Executed at Execution Dock, 11th of August, 1729 for Piracy*, The Newgate Calendar.
[29] Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 307.
[30] Ibid., 308.

lives upon utter reverence for their captains. While they may have abided by the guidelines of their ship, what defined piracy at the time was each man's underlying greed and self-interest. Every man aboard a pirate ship sought personal fame and fortune, and not everyone conformed to the wishes of their captain. Men were drawn into a life of piracy to attain wealth and freedom from the authoritarian limitations of formal society, not drawn in to serve underneath one man for the entirety of their trade. Harsh punishments for mutiny included in many pirate codes did nothing to deter mutiny from occurring. Walter Kennedy is but one example of many who betrayed their captains in order to bolster their own wealth and importance.

While piracy as a whole sought to rebel against the constraints of the oppressive societies they targeted with their raiding, they formed and followed a similar structure to them. They abided by what some would consider a democracy and were strict about making sure their pirate codes were honored by all. Much like Puritan communities, harsh punishments awaited those who broke the codes they swore allegiance to. The difference between Puritans and pirates, however, was the little regard pirates held for imperial laws, morality, and religion.

Pirates were the complete moral opposites of colonial Puritans. While many pirates did not keep a diary or record their plunders, so much of what history knows about them is taken from primary sources written about them at the time, such as letters, royal decrees, publications, and diary entries from those that had encounters with them. A lot of these personal accounts are found in Puritan sermons, most notably execution sermons given at the trials and hangings of convicted pirates. Undoubtedly, pirates were keen on living a rebellious lifestyle that did not conform to any moral standards. Despite their filthy, oftentimes miserable time aboard pirate ships, they stayed committed to the trade because of the small hope they would attain immeasurable wealth, and a lot did. They formed comraderies with their fellow crew members

who held equal disgust for organized society and found themselves relishing in equal shares of plundered treasure after successful voyages. While the life of a pirate was risky, many were either killed in action or captured and then hung before they could retire with their wealth, men found it exhilarating and committed themselves to the trade.

Nonetheless the life if a pirate was revolting to formal society, especially religious communities like the Puritans, who centered their faith on high moral and spiritual sincerity in their daily lives. While the Puritans lived strictly according to Scripture, pirates paraded the seas drunk, swearing, gambling, stealing, and murdering. This atrocious lifestyle deterred the Puritans from seafaring in general, considering the sins of pirates to be the worst offenses to God and their faith. In contrast to the conservative lives of the Puritans, religion was a widely rejected practice aboard pirate ships, one captive claiming that "everything that had the least face of Religion and Virtue was entirely banished".[31] Within the seafaring profession in general, religion came second to the tasks at hand, as it served as a dangerous distraction to men trying to do their jobs aboard a ship in the rougher waters out at sea. However, a pirate's distaste for religion went deeper than a simple distraction from one's duties. Daniel Defoe argued that the irreligious tendency of pirates was reinforced by the social and spatial isolation of life at sea.[32] Since they lived distanced from society, their disenchantments with its constraints only increased over time.

The spirit of revolt against the oppressive laws and governments included a rejection of religion, as it was heavily tied into the very societies they detested. The life of a pirate was constructed in defiant contradiction to the societies he left behind, and his success was

---

[31] Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 176.
[32] Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea,* 175.

determined not only by his wealth, but by his disruption of society.[33] Pirates held an aversion

towards figures of power, corrupted social systems, and authoritative governments, and religion

was entangled within it all. They sinned because they could freely do so, and because it was an

act of rebelliousness against all that they hated. Above all else, vengeance and spitefulness fueled

the violence of pirates, which highly contrasted with the Puritan message of love and

forgiveness. Cotton Mather believed that their detestable lifestyles "banished every Social

Virtue," while individuals, kings, and nations looked upon them as "wild fragments of nature

that could be tamed only by death."[34] They were, as history remembers them, the enemies of all

mankind, yet they found solace and pleasure in the very things the world hated them for. Puritans

despised their every trait, from their blatant disregard for authority, to their daily iniquities that

contrasted with the Puritan ideal of living out each day to glorify God.

The sins and crimes of pirates were vile, and they often held no remorse when they

committed such acts. They thrived off of the power they found in lawlessness and answered to

no imperial authority. Even Captain Bartholomew Roberts, who unique to any other like him

held a Sabbath day aboard his ship and rarely drank or swore, partook in countless wretched

deeds. A passage from Defoe's work recounts Roberts and his crew's escapades in a harbor on

the North American coast, where they sailed in loudly drumming and trumpeting, their black

jolly roger waving in the wind. Here they encountered twenty-two ships whose crews fled at the

sight of the pirates, Defoe stating,

> It is impossible particularly to recount the Destruction and Havock they made here,
> burning and sinking all the Shipping, except a *Bristol* Galley, and destroying the
> Fisheries, and Stages of the poor Planters, without Remorse or Compunction; for nothing

---

is so deplorable as Power in mean and ignorant Hands, it makes Men wanton and giddy, unconcerned at the Misfortunes they are imposing on their Fellow Creatures…They are like mad Men, that cast Fire-Brands, Arrows, and Death, and say, are not we in Sport?[35]

Defoe goes on to describe Roberts and his crew sailing out of the harbor and overtaking several more ships, on which they boarded forcefully, handled the passengers roughly, tore up the stores with their axes and cutlasses, cursed and swore repeatedly, and if threatened with retaliation, proclaimed they'd set fire to the ship and go "all merrily to Hell together."[36] Roberts's convoy of pirates was only one of thousands of pirate crews roaming the Atlantic at the time, all partaking in similar raids to coastal towns, harbors, and merchant ships. Roberts and his crew embodied the traits of pirates that Puritans, as well as the world, despised. The violence of these pirates characterized the rejection of any sort of formal societal structure, as well as an overall indifference toward human life in general. An account of Captain Edward "Ned" Low details his capture of a French ship, where he tortured its captain and crew in order to find where they hid the money. When it was revealed the ship's captain had thrown it into the sea upon the ship's capture, Low "raved like a fury" and tied the captain to the mast, slashed off his lips, broiled them, and then forced the man to eat them before murdering him and his entire crew.[37] Low was infamous for brutally maiming and torturing his prisoners before killing them, and his legacy lasted long after his death.[38]

---

[35] Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 216.

[36] Ibid., 217.

[37] George Francis Dow and John Henry Edmonds, *The Pirates of the New England Coast 1630 – 1730* (New York: Dover Publications, 1996), 201.

[38] In August of 1892, the *New York Times* punished an article entitled "The 'Great' Edward Low: The Most Merciless Pirate Known to Modern Times," where they referred to Low as a torturer equal to the darkest days of the Spanish Inquisition. They detail his grotesque methods of torturing his captured prisoners. See full article, "The 'Great' Edward Low: The Most Merciless Pirate Known to Modern Times," *The New York Times*, August 14, 1892.

Similar in violence, Captain William Kidd, a privateer commissioned by England and then later branded a pirate, killed one of his own crewmen who had questioned him, striking him over the head with a bucket and fracturing his skull. Shortly after, one of his crewmen was killed ashore one of the islands they had sailed to, causing Kidd to plunder the natives' houses, burn the village, and tie prisoners to trees and shoot them.[39] While he believed his actions were justified by his letters of marque issued to him by England, Kidd's voyages became as ruthless as any other pirate's, and he was eventually convicted of the crime when he returned to England. He was publicly hung, then his body dipped in tar, wrapped in chains, and placed in a steel cage where he remained for all to see for many years, a warning to all pirates who passed his way.[40] While there are many other accounts of the violent crimes of pirates as they threatened the Atlantic world, ultimately their main goal was to capture and loot ships with minimal conflict, as to protect their crew from unnecessary bloodshed. A successful pirate captain knew when to engage in a fight and when to run, as there was no profit found in naval ships seeking to capture pirates.[41] Oftentimes, however, their rage overcame this desire, and they lashed out at prisoners that refused to reveal where their treasures were or admitted to throwing it overboard.[42] It was instances like these that caused the merciless acts of most pirates.

The most famous of all the pirates in North America was Captain Edward Teach, famously known by his alias Blackbeard. He was one of the most feared pirates of his time, looked upon by others as "a most cruel and hardened Villian, bold and daring to the last Degree,

---

[39] Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 446.

[40] Juliet Haines-Mofford, *The Devil Made Me Do It!: Crime and Punishment in Early New England* (Guilford: GPP, 2012), 176.

[41] Benerson Little, *How History's Greatest Pirates Pillaged, Plundered, and Got Away with It: The Stories, Techniques, and Tactics of the Most Feared Sea Rovers from 1500-1800* (Fair Winds Press, 2011), 138.

[42] Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 14.

and would not stick at perpetrating the most abominable Wickedness imaginable."[43] Blackbeard

was the embodiment of piracy's rejection of God and religion. In addition to his heightened

immorality exhibited through his excessive drinking, swearing, and viciousness, Blackbeard

altered his physical appearance to appear similarly to the devil. He "intentionally developed" the

"evil renown" of his alias Blackbeard to cultivate a fearsome reputation and aid in "encouraging

his victims to promptly surrender."[44] Blackbeard was known to light long burning fuses

underneath his beard when he entered battle, so that he would appear to his enemies as though he

had just emerged from hell. Defoe describes the lengths to which Blackbeard went to accomplish

his fearful appearance and devilish persona, stating,

> In the Commonwealth of Pyrates, he who goes the greatest Length of Wickedness, is
> looked upon with a kind of Envy amongst them…The Heroe of whom we are writing,
> was thoroughly accomplished this Way, and some of his Frolicks of Wickedness, were so
> extravagant, as if he aimed at making his Men believe he was a Devil incarnate; for being
> one Day at Sea, and a little flushed with Drink: - *Come,* says he, *let us make a Hell of
> [our] own, and try how long we can bear it;* accordingly he…went down into the Hold,
> and closing up all the Hatches, filled several Pots full of Brimstone…and set it on Fire.[45]

Additionally, the night before Blackbeard was killed, he asserted that only he and the devil

would ever know where he buried all of his treasure.[46] No pirate blatantly disregarded morality

and God quite like Blackbeard, and his legacy inspired the continued sins and crimes of many

pirates after his death. Even colonial authorities feared him, although they equally desired to rid

the North American coast of his presence. Alexander Spotswood, the Lieutenant Governor of

Virginia from 1710-1722, was a fierce opponent against piracy in the colonies, and it was on his

---

[43] Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 96.
[44] Donnelly and Diehl, *Pirates of Virginia*, 99.
[45] Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, 85.
[46] Ibid.

orders that Blackbeard was found and killed.[47] Showing how widespread Blackbeard's presence

was in the colonies, a poem attributed to Benjamin Franklin reads,

> Come all you jolly sailors
> You all so stout and brave;
> Come hearken and I'll tell you
> What happen'd on the wave.
> Oh! 'tis of that bloody Blackbeard
> I'm going now for to tell;
> And as how by gallant Maynard
> He soon was sent to hell.[48]

The actions described against the infamous captain only fueled the rage against state authorities

of other pirates. Over time, Governor Spotswood's passive outlook on pirates grew to be more

fearful, even refusing to travel to London without sufficient protection.[49] Blackbeard's death did

not rid the colonies of piracy, but rather fueled pirates like Captain Roberts to target colonial

authorities even more in vengeful rages. Equally, opinions towards pirates in the colonies

continued to become more prominent and distasteful, and many colonists called for their

governors to hang any and all pirates that were captured.[50]

---

[47] The letters of Alexander Spotswood describe his commission of Lieutenant Maynard, who sailed out of Hampton Roads in November of 1718 and killed Blackbeard in hand to hand combat. Maynard then returned with the head of Blackbeard hung at his bowsprit. Spotswood also references the superstition of Blackbeard's immense buried treasure, of which were diligently hunted by credulous people. See Virginia. Lieutenant-Governor, Alexander Spotswood, and R. A Brock. *The official letters of Alexander Spotswood, Lieutenant-Governor of the colony of Virginia, 1722, now first printed from the manuscript in the collections of the Virginia Historical Society*. Richmond, Va., Virginia Historical Society, 85, 1882.

[48] Donnelly and Diehl, *Pirates of Virginia*, 98.

[49] Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 82.

[50] See the chapter "Pirates and the Law" in Margarette Lincoln, *British Pirates and Society, 1680-1730* (Routledge, 2016) for a deeper analysis on the changing attitudes towards piracy of Britain and the colonies.

Ultimately, piracy was defined by a lack of regard for any structured government or rulings that existed in formal society. Pirates considered themselves citizens of the sea and of no other nation, and thus acted as freely as they desired.[51] They did not wish to conform to the standards set by society, government, or religion. They drank, swore, plundered, and killed, all the while testing the authorities that dared to act against them. Most pirates did not fear capture nor death, as the reward of a life of piracy was worth the risk. Those that did not receive a hero's end at sea or slip away to a life of seclusion and wealth were captured, and eventually encountered religious leaders while they stood at death's door. These leaders, most notably the Puritan Cotton Mather, offered pirates one last chance at redemption before God and the surrounding public witnesses. Interestingly, many pirates chose to repent when offered the chance by ministers at the gallows. They publicly admitted to all of their crimes and sins for a chance at attaining eternal life. Many of them claimed that while they did not fear their imminent deaths, they did fear God.[52] Others, however, like the unwavering and arrogant William Fly, refused to repent of their sins and challenged the authority of religion until their last breath.

The lifestyles of pirates contrasted with the strict moral guidelines of Christian communities. For religious people like the Puritans, who were kin to many seafarers, pirates were at the forefront of their thinking. For pirates, the rejection of society came with an overall disregard for religion as well. There was an absence of God aboard their ships, and not a thought was tossed towards a higher power as they acted with greed, power and violence. The authority of the Puritans, however, was threatened by these pirates defying God, thus Mather and other Puritan ministers sought to subdue this danger while simultaneously promoting Puritan ideals

---

[51] Ibid., 8.

[52] *An Account of the Behavior and Last Dying Speeches of the Six Pirates* (Boston: Boone, 1704), 2.

within colonial society. The two moral opposites clashed, and their interesting encounters are

telling of society within the Atlantic world.

IV. Encounters Between Puritans and Pirates: Preexisting Relations, Crime and Punishment, and the Execution Sermon and its Evangelical Power

As they encountered one another, whether it was distantly through a minister's local pulpit or more personally within prison walls as pirates faced their deaths, the contrasting moralities of the Puritan and pirate communities were on full display in the Atlantic world. Their intersections with each other speak into the social and religious atmosphere of the colonial world during the 17th and 18th centuries, a world that was centered on religion, crime and punishment, and influence. Pirates were commonly despised by all individuals and nations, because they represented a universal rejection of all types of religion, society, and government.[1] However, the colonial disdain for piracy originated long before the terrifying escapades of Captain Bartholomew Roberts and Blackbeard or the popular and passionate execution sermons of Cotton Mather and other Puritan ministers. While the most infamous intersections between pirates and Puritans occurred during the Golden Age of piracy in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, piracy had been on the minds of colonists long before that time. The Puritan aversion towards piracy originated from the raids of the Barbary pirates in the Mediterranean, who terrorized its coasts from the 14th to early 17th centuries. The escapades of Mediterranean pirates and privateers during this period, along with their association with Islamic groups in North Africa, staged the perception of pirates by colonials in North America, and heavily influenced the way Puritans regarded piracy.

The Barbary pirates of North Africa stemmed from the rapid rise of the Ottoman Empire

---

[1] Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 146.

and the Berber people of modern Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. In the 14th century, as the Arab-populated coastal cities of North Africa began to lose control over the resources coming from the Berber inhabitants living in the more remote territories further inland, economic interests shifted towards the promising income of piracy, thus cementing its prominence throughout the region for centuries to come.[2] The main source of income for the Barbary pirates came from their capture of hundreds and thousands of slaves from European coastal cities and merchant ships, who were then sold into the Ottoman slave trade.[3] In the Ottoman Empire, Barbary privateering and piracy was tolerated and supported by the sultan due to its provision of slaves towards the empire's economy. They did not consider themselves to be outlaws, as the Ottoman law agreed with their motives and actions.[4] The Barbary pirates became such a threat to European, Mediterranean, and African coastlines, that many settlements were abandoned until their influence had all but disappeared in the latter half of the 17th century.

Political and religious conflicts in the 15th through 17th centuries further contributed to the issue of piracy in the Mediterranean. The Barbary pirates were just one piece of the ongoing clashes between Muslims and Christians. The Iberian *Reconquista* that ended in the late 15th century had wiped Islamic influence from the Iberian Peninsula and replaced it with Christian rulers that sought to convert heretics to their faith. Those that did not convert or that continued to practice their non-Christian faith in secret were imprisoned, executed, or exiled. While many Muslims converted over resorting to exile, many others decided to flee to North Africa or Turkey, where they would be safe from persecution in Ottoman-controlled territories. Piracy was an appealing and profitable stroke of revenge for many of these exiled Muslims, as well as

---

[2] Martin N. Murphy, "The Barbary Pirates," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (2013): 19-42, 24.
[3] Todd H. Green, *The Fear of Islam: An Introduction to Islamophobia in the West* (Fortress Press, 2009), 73.
[4] Ibid., 28.

members of other non-Christian religions, mainly Sephardic Jews.[5] They sought to attack

Spanish and Portuguese shipping within the Mediterranean in the aftermath of the *Reconquista*

that had caused their religious persecution. The Barbary States considered their corsairs to be the

heroes of Islam. They were the *mudjâhid*, the fighters of their faith, who considered those that

fought at sea as possessing ten times the virtue of those that fought on land.[6]

Due to many of the Barbary pirates originating from the Muslim-controlled Ottoman

Empire, North American colonials learned to associate piracy and Islam with each other,

considering each a disgrace to Christian principles. While many colonials had never encountered

Islam firsthand, their perception of Muslims came directly from the many stories of vicious

Mediterranean pirates that terrorized European vessels and coastlines. According to Thomas S.

Kidd, they included Muslims in their "mental array of conflicting world religions", stemming

from printed materials within the colonies that caused them to believe they had "legitimate

'knowledge' of Islam".[7] Christian colonials used this "knowledge" of Islam to assert their

religious superiority over their religious rivals, as well as undermine Islam's religious, moral,

and racial ideals.

The disregard of Islam from colonial Christians fed into their disgust of pirates, because

they associated one with the other due to the Mediterranean experience with Islamic piracy.

Word of the Barbary pirates capturing Christians in the Mediterranean and coastal Europe and

selling them into slavery reached the colonies quickly. Many English captives wrote about their

---

[5] Edward Kritzler, *Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean: How a Generation of Swashbuckling Jews Carved Out an Empire in the New World in Their Quest for Treasure, Religious Freedom and Revenge* (New York: Anchor, 2009), 59-60.

[6] Daniel Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs: The End of a Legend, 1800–1820*, trans. Victoria Hobson, completed by John E. Hawkes (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 21.

[7] Thomas S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 2.

experiences after they had escaped or were freed from their Muslim tormentors. Some North

Americans knew of relatives or friends that were subject to the terrors of Barbary pirates.

Captain William Foster, a Massachusetts resident, was the first case of captivity that generated

colonial interest in Mediterranean pirates. He and his son were captured in 1671 and held for

close to three years, finally escaping after their captor suddenly died, which Puritan preacher

Increase Mather considered to be a miraculous result of prayer and God's intervention.[8] Increase

Mather's son, the infamous Cotton Mather, considered the Barbary pirates, and Muslims in

general, to be the "Fierce Monsters of Africa" and "Mahometan Turks and Moors, and Devils."[9]

Cotton Mather spoke and wrote of Islam often, but, along with the majority of his fellow

colonial residents, he refused to believe that any Muslims actually lived in the colonies, even

though many slaves of African descent were devoted to the Islamic faith or some hybrid version

of it.[10] He stated that colonists lived in a land "afar off" which never had "one *Mahometan*

breathing in it," yet it was the colonial Christian's duty to sympathize with those "groaning under

the *Mahometan* Tyranny."[11] There was a fine line between Christian tolerance as outlined in

Scripture and the desire to assure Puritan influence within New England by speaking out against

the atrocities happening in the Mediterranean.[12] Thus, Mather spoke out and asserted that those

that followed Islamic practices, Barbary pirates included, were entranced under the power of

Satan and Christianity was the only solution that could rectify that influence. Mather's *A*

Pastoral Letter to the English Captives in Africa (1698) and *The Glory of Goodness* (1703) both

---

[8] Ibid., 3.

[9] Cotton Mather, *Decennium Luctuosum* (Boston, 1699), 231.

[10] Richard A. Bailey, *Race and Redemption in Puritan New England* (Oxford University Press: 2011), 53.

[11] Cotton Mather, *American Tears upon the Ruines of the Greek Churches* (Boston: 1701), 38; Richard A. Bailey, *Race and Redemption in Puritan New England* (Oxford University Press: 2011), 53.

[12] William P. Hyland, "'American Tears': Cotton Mather and the Plight of Eastern Orthodox Christians" *The New England quarterly* 77, 2 (2004): 284.

highlight the atrocities of the Barbary captivities. His *Pastoral Letter to the English Captives* was addressed to New England readers and asserted Christian superiority over Islam, pleading with the English captives to stand firmly in their faith against their Muslim captors. In his eyes the captives' situation was temporary, but the captivity to sin equaled eternal torment in hell.[13] *The Glory of Goodness*, which was preached in Boston in the company of several freed captives, emphasized the power of prayer in New England that allowed the captives to return home safely, while simultaneously regarding Islam and its followers as "Filthy Disciples of Mahomet."[14] Throughout the sermon were notes of the Puritan notion of exceptionalism, which was their need to demonstrate that they had indeed been chosen by God for a special purpose in the world, and that other non-Christian religions were inferior to their faith and ideals.[15]

Mather's writings, as well as many other narratives of Barbary captivity and piracy, created an American understanding and stereotype of Islam that, even though it was oppressive and biased, would last for years to come, living on in Western culture as a religion rooted in deceit, violence, and misogyny.[16] The Islamic association with piracy in the Mediterranean, therefore, set up the colonial perception of piracy when it flourished in the Atlantic. Americans were horrified by the violence and torment of Barbary pirates, so when it reached their shores they reacted with equal parts terror, caution, and disgust.

---

[13] Kidd, *American Christians and Islam*, 5.

[14] Cotton Mather, *The Glory of Goodness. The Goodness of God Celebrated; In Remarkable Instances and Improvements Thereof: And More Particularly in The Redemption Remarkably Obtained for The English Captives, Which Have Been Languishing Under the Tragical, And the Terrible and The Most Barbarous Cruelties Of Barbary* (Boston: T. Green, 1703), 50.

[15] Randall Fowler, "Puritanism, Islam, and Race in Cotton Mather's The Glory of Goodness: An Exercise in Exceptionalism," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 21 (4), 2018: 572.

[16] Green, *The Fear of Islam,* 75.

Terrified of the violence, cautious towards the temptation, and disgusted at the filth and immorality, piracy was a central topic of discussion in Puritan sermons. In a Christian culture that focused heavily on crime and punishment, it was only natural that piracy and its countless offences found its way into Puritan dialogues. In Puritan communities, sinfulness was considered criminal in the eyes of its spiritual leaders. Laws focused on ensuring God's blessings upon the community and also maintained order in ways that would be beneficial to the entire colony.[17] The Puritans lived out their daily lives with the high ambition of achieving godliness. Every step they took and situation they encountered was related back to God in some way. When misfortune arose either personally or within their community, they believed God was warning them that they were straying from their faith and giving in to Satan and his endless temptations.

Puritans believed that the Bible was a God-given legal guide for daily life, and thus Scripture formed the basis of New England's social and political structure.[18] Ministers and local political leaders were the "earthly administrators of morality," and asserted it was their duty to oversee orderly and peaceful communities.[19] However, when the Puritans first arrived they were forced to deal with colonial settlers whose ambitions were not an idealistic society based upon the same religious convictions and moral ideals, thus they worked quickly to establish laws that would protect their clerical interests. Any act that went against Scripture was considered unlawful and punishable. Partaking in earthly pleasures outside of marriage, theft, murder, drunkenness, swearing, and civil quarrels were among the myriad of crimes that resulted in

---

[17] Juliet Haines-Mofford, *The Devil Made Me Do It!: Crime and Punishment in Early New England* (Guilford: GPP, 2012), viii.

[18] Ibid., 2.

[19] Ibid.

various public penalties that ranged from fines, public humiliation, whippings, imprisonment, or worst of all, death.

The first execution within the New England Puritan community occurred in 1630, when former *Mayflower* passenger John Billington killed his fellow colonial John Newcomen.[20] Even though this execution occurred before the formal establishment of laws and punishment in the colonies, murder, according to the local authorities, was deserving of the death penalty, and God was on their side. To Puritan and political leaders, punishment cemented their authority within society, and through such public triumphs of justice they hoped to deter future crime. They used repressive criminal justice measures to suppress deviance within their surrounding communities, so when Atlantic piracy became an undeniable threat to the colonies in the latter half of the 17th century, it was quickly declared a capital offense.[21] In the 1680s, the crimes of piracy, which included murder, sodomy, bestiality, concealing bastards, incest, and rape, warranted the death penalty for all who were captured and convicted.[22] In Boston, the home of Cotton Mather, executed pirates were left to rot in cages put on public display. These decaying criminals acted as stark warnings to the local community as well as traveling seafarers of the punishment of crimes against God.[23]

The Puritan fixation on crime and punishment contributed to their intersection with pirates as the Golden Age of Piracy flourished in the Atlantic at the turn of the 18th century. The most sought-after criminals were no longer residents making minor offenses against Scripture

---

[20] Ibid., 3-4.

[21] Samuel Walker, *Popular Justice: A History of American Criminal Justice* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1980), 22.

[22] Haines-Mofford, *The Devil Made Me Do It*, 168.

[23] Cotton Mather, *The Vial Poured Out Upon the Sea* (1726), 49; See also Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 146.

within local Puritan communities, rather they were the immoral, unlawful pirate captains and

their crews that suddenly found themselves the subjects of passionate sermons against the

dangers of seafaring and the eternal punishment of sin. Puritan sermons themselves had seen a

considerable shift in the 1680s, from lamenting over the lethargy of the rising generation and

weeping and mourning over New England's decline, to the focus on the common question of

salvation.[24] People wondered what they had to do to be saved, and ministers took the opportunity

to preach reassuring messages that emphasized actively partaking in good works. In order to

foster a spirit of harmony and confidence in their faith, ministers assured that one who lived a

"morally upright life and believed in Christ could be fairly certain of salvation."[25]

There was an overall disdain for piracy within the Puritan population because, not only

were they feared for their merciless violence, but pirates so actively defied all moral guidelines

dictated by Scripture. Every principle that ministers emphasized to their congregations was

corrupted by pirates as they raided the North American coastline. Thus, Puritans were wary

about seafaring in general. While preachers did not altogether admonish seafaring due to its

significance to the maritime trade that supported the colonial economy, they did caution against

its dangers, the most wicked temptation being the draw into a life of piracy.

In their mercantile-centric congregations, Puritans did not see the accumulation of wealth

done in a Christian manner as immoral, but it was those that chose to participate in or support

piratical commerce that were considered criminals.[26] The early colonial Puritans, led by John

Winthrop, viewed the hierarchies of wealth and poverty that existed in the world as an

---

[24] Emory Elliot, *The Power and the Pulpit in Puritan New England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 175.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Lincoln, *British Pirates and Society*, 130.

opportunity for a godly society to create solidarity, if the wealthy shared their finances and goods with those less fortunate rather than claim them solely for themselves.[27] According to Mark Valeri, Puritanism "sanctified capitalistic behaviors by imbuing them with Christian virtues that protected the commonwealth," but at the same time their moral ideals rejected all illegal activities in the colonial market.[28] Piracy was the epitome of illegal economic dealings occurring in the colonies. They attacked trade routes, plundered valuable goods from merchant ships, and found safe havens that were willing to trade these stolen goods, or they otherwise slipped past government authorities turning a blind eye.[29] This manufacturing of their own power and lack of conventional authority in order to attain wealth was a highly attractive way of life for the common seafarer.[30] While seamen were warned by colonial authorities and Puritan ministers that God would follow them into the sea and that His eye was continuously upon them, they also recognized the limits that these authorities had over the sea, since it's expansive emptiness encouraged free will with little punishment, unless caught.[31]

While Cotton Mather looked upon seafaring people as one of the "several tribes" of his "flock," he often considered them a stupid generation more vulnerable to wickedness.[32] According to Mather, the seafarers that strayed from their legal duties made a "Trade of Sin," and sin was their "Business and their Delight."[33] While some colonists defended pirates who had acted under letters of marque, Mather argued that privateering often blurred into piracy, and that

---

[27] Mark Valeri, "Religious Discipline and the Market: Puritans and the Issue of Usury," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (1997): 747-8.

[28] Ibid., 750.

[29] Hugh Rankin, *The Golden Age of Piracy* (Virginia: Colonial Williamsburg, 1969), 56-8.

[30] Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 136.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Richard Gildrie, *The Profane, the Civil, and the Godly: The Reformation of Manners in Orthodox New England, 1679–1749* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 144.

[33] Mark G. Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire, 1570-1740* (UNC Press, 2015), 345.

privateering itself stemmed from unchristian principles that should be condemned accordingly. Just because a seafarer held papers issued by a colonial governor, his violent actions and crimes were not justified in the eyes of the faithful members of Puritan congregations.[34]

There were thousands of pirates that roamed the Atlantic in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and while many evaded capture by colonial communities, hundreds were caught, convicted, and hung.[35] It was during this time that the popularity of the execution sermon rose rapidly. Sixty-nine printed sermons given at executions, written by forty-nine different ministers, have been preserved to history, although the real number of these sermons is impossible to determine.[36] As pirates had committed capital crimes against the established laws of the colonies, many of which were rooted in Christianity, ministers saw a chance to bolster and reassure the authority of the church. Execution sermons were the perfect opportunity to reiterate the act of piracy as sinful and spiritually destructive. By ministering to imprisoned pirates and sharing the message of salvation, ministers, "warned of the wages of sin, reconciled the convict to both God and the community, and demonstrated the cooperative authority of church and state."[37]

These sermons hoped to maintain church authority by encouraging the public repentance of pirates, which showed the surrounding community that even the most wretched and repulsive

---

[34] Ibid.

[35] Some examples of the trials of pirates during this time, which include a list of their crimes and the names of those convicted, can be found in *The Trials of Eight Persons Indited for Piracy, Of Whom Two Were Acquitted, and the Rest Found Guilty. At a Justiciary Court of Admiralty Assembled and Held in Boston within His Majesty's Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England, on the 18th of October 1717* (Boston: B. Green, 1718); *The Tryals Of Sixteen Persons For Piracy, &C. Four Of Which Were Found Guilty, And The Rest Acquitted. At A Special Court Of Admiralty For The Tryal Of Pirates, Held At Boston Within The Province Of The Massachusetts-Bay In New-England* (Boston: Joseph Edwards, 1726); and *Tryals Of Thirty-Six Persons For Piracy, Twenty-Eight Of Them Upon Full Evidence Were Found Guilty, And The Rest Acquitted. At A Court Of Admiralty For Tryal Of Pirates, Held At Newport Within His Majesties Colony Of Rhode-Island And Providence-Plantations In America, On The Tenth, Eleventh And Twelfth Days Of July, Anno Dom. 1723* (Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1723).

[36] Wayne C. Minnick, "The New England Execution Sermon," *Speech Monographs* 35 (1968): 77.

[37] Scott D. Seay, *Hanging Between Heaven and Earth : Capital Crime, Execution Preaching, and Theology in Early New England* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 14.

beings could be shown God's grace and have a chance at eternal life.[38] There was a "moral identification between the condemned person and the audience," which made each execution sermon more personal to those who were in attendance.[39] Due to the individual conviction provoked by Puritan ministers during these moments, execution sermons became a key weapon to the deterrence of the potential attraction to a life of piracy, instead encouraging a turn towards Puritanism as a moral compass for how to live out one's life. It was also both an opportunity for ministers to highlight the faults of their congregations, as well as an awakening to a moral degeneracy that stemmed from dwindling clerical influence.[40] Thus the frequent opportunity to minister to criminals publicly, while it was a reminder of the brief triumph of evil, gave ministers the chance to make sure their influence did not disappear.

Since 1686, Cotton Mather had visited prisoners set for execution, and noted that the "*Dying Speeches* of such as have been Executed among us, might be of singular Use, to Correct and Reform, the *Crimes*, wherein too many do *Live,*" and that such accounts should be "preserved and published."[41] Mather and other Puritan ministers hoped that by publishing the penitent words of pirates they could encourage others in their journeys of faith. It was their God-given Puritan duty to minister to lost souls, but it seems there was also an underlying desire for societal control driving ministers to meet with imprisoned pirates. They gave deep thought to how the sad, pitiful stories of criminals could be profitable to their congregations.[42] While they

---

[38] Ronald A. Bosco, "Lectures at the Pillory: The Early American Execution Sermon," *American Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1978): 159.

[39] Seay, *Hanging Between Heaven and Earth*, 53.

[40] Minnick, "The New England Execution Sermon," 78-9.

[41] Cotton Mather, *Pillars of Salt. An History of Some Criminals Executed in this Land; For Capital Crimes. With some of their Dying Speeches; Collected and Published, For the Warning of such as Live in Destructive Courses of Ungodliness. Whereto is added, For the better Improvement of this History, A Brief Discourse about the Dreadful Justice of God, in Punishing of Sin, with Sin* (Boston, 1699), 59.

[42] Walter Lazenby, "Exhortation as Exorcism: Cotton Mather's Sermons to Murderers" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 57 (1971): 51.

rejoiced when pirates admitted their sins in their private meetings, ministers truly wished for them to repent in front of the curious crowds of people that gathered to watch them die. Not only would this show that even fearless, prideful pirates were brought to their knees through God's Word, but it would bolster the authority of the Puritan church and restore its influence in New England. If ministers could get pirates, the worst of the criminals at the time, to admit their wrongdoings, then more people would look to them as the moral, spiritual, and political leaders in society.

While pirates sailing the Atlantic rejected all forms of religion aboard their ships, their encounters with Puritan preachers as they stared at the gallows filled some with fear of eternal judgement, but they did not always admit this publicly. As Captain John Quelch approached his execution stage in 1704, he confessed to one of the ministers accompanying him, "I am not afraid of Death, I am not afraid of the Gallows, but I am afraid of what follows; I am afraid of a Great God, and a Judgment to Come."[43] When the minister urged him to share this admittance in his final speech in front of the gathered crowd, Quelch instead publicly declared, "Gentlemen, 'Tis but little I have to speak: What I have to say in this, I desire to be informed for what I am here, I am Condemned only upon Circumstances. I forgive all the World: So the Lord be Merciful to my Soul."[44] He goes on to teasingly warn the crowd to take care how they brought money into New England, as they may just be hanged for it. In contrast, the majority of Quelch's crew did cry out their repentance in front of the crowd. John Lambert's last words before he dropped were, "Lord, forgive my Soul! Oh, receive me into Eternity! blessed Name of Christ

---

[43] *An Account of the Behavior and Last Dying Speeches of the Six Pirates* (Boston: Boone, 1704).
[44] Ibid.

receive my Soul," while his comrade John Miller repeatedly shouted, "Lord! What shall I do to be Saved!"[45]

Mather's *Faithful Warnings Against Fearful Judgements* was preached at the execution of Quelch and his men, and in it he addresses Quelch's legal justifications for his crimes by stating, "There were some Unhappy Advantages, which the Sinners took, to shelter themselves in the Prosecution of their Piracies" but that the "Government of New-England will by a severe Procedure of Justice, forever make it an Unjust thing."[46] Rather than expressing sympathy towards the convicted men in his sermon, he reiterated that they were not to be seen as innocent men, but rather as "Runawayes" and "Malefactors".[47] Pirates, he said, left God on their own will and fell into a life of iniquities. They strayed from his mercies, and became robbers, murderers, traitors, and rebels who openly defied the "Great King of Heaven and Earth."[48] He made sure the crowd knew that while these men could still be saved from evil and shown God's grace, they were not innocent of their crimes. Quelch's defiance towards the law, even after he privately admitted his fear of God, certainly brought about a swift response of justice on Mather's behalf.

In 1723, Mather was once again present for the trials and executions of pirates, this time twenty-six in Rhode Island. He claimed that, "It was the Hand of the Glorious GOD, which brought these Criminals, to Dy in a Place, where His Faithful Servants took uncommon Pains, for their Instruction & Conversion."[49] John Browne, one of the pirates set for execution, wrote

---

[45] Ibid.

[46] Cotton Mather, *Faithful Warnings to Prevent Fearful Judgements,* Sermon (Boston, 1704), 46.

[47] Ibid., 19.

[48] Ibid., 20.

[49] Cotton Mather, *Useful Remarks. An Essay Upon Remarkables In the Way of Wicked Men. A Sermon on the Tragical End, Unto Which the Way of Twenty-Six Pirates Brought Them; At New Port on Rhode-Island, July 19, 1723. With an Account of Their Speeches, Letters, & Actions, Before Their Execution* (Connecticut: T. Green, 1723), 21.

his own remarks in his private ministerial meeting, after which Mather reiterated publicly.

Browne's testimony of his repentance served as a warning to all in attendance at the execution

that a life of piracy was an isolating experience that led to nothing but pain and sorrow. He

encouraged people to live in the fear of God, surround themselves with good company, and

eagerly listen to and obey the spiritual leadings of their ministers.[50] Similarly in 1724, several

more pirates attested to the misery that a separation from God through sin caused. They admitted

to there being no number to their sins, that they had "never done anything else but Sin against

our Maker, all our days."[51] In 1726, local Boston preacher Benjamin Colman addressed his own

audience of pirates before their executions. He too warned against the sinful ways of piracy in a

passionate sermon, of which an excerpt reads,

> Yours, *our Seafaring friends*, is the danger of turning *robbers* and *murderers*; and so of a
> life of horror and terror here, and of wailing and anguish for ever; because of those *vices
> and lusts* that reign among and over the men of the Sea; Namely, *profaness, cursing* and
> *bitterness, swearing* and *blasphemy, drunkenness* and *revellings, contempt of religion* and
> *profanation of the Lord's Day, whoredom* and *uncleanness*. These quench conscience and
> the convictions of God's Spirit, stupify and harden mens hearts; take away all fear of God
> and sense of sin; or regard to men, their estates or lives. And so while you *sail* on the
> waters, *(beholding the wonders of God in the deep*, but never thinking of him, always
> defying and blaspheming him) you *drown* your Souls in destruction and perdition;
> turning robbers and murderers till neither the Land or Waters can bear you any longer.[52]

Essentially, these published accounts of Puritan interactions with pirates served as an early form

of propaganda for the Puritan church. Puritans used these encounters, and the public repentance

of pirates, to reinforce their presence and influence within the community. What may have

started as a sense of duty to their faith, continued as a way to make sure they stayed relevant

---

[50] Ibid., 31-5.

[51] Cotton Mather, *The Converted Sinner. The Nature Of A Conversion To Real And Vital Piety: And The Manner In Which It Is To Be Pray'd & Striv'n For. A Sermon Preached In Boston, May 31, 1724. In The Hearing And At The Desire Of Certain Pirates, A Little Before Their Execution* (Boston: Nathaniel Belknap, 1724), 38.

[52] Benjamin Colman, *It is a Fearful Thing to Fall into the Hands of the Living God. A Sermon Preached to Some Miserable Pirates July 1, 1726. On the Lord's Day, Before Their Execution,* Sermon (1726), 27.

within society at the time, as Cotton Mather wrote, "Have you not heard the Dying Pirates, pouring out their Complaints of the Evil Company which had Entangled them, & Crying out, This Evil Company has brought me, to what I once little thought of ever coming to?"[53]

However, not all pirates were so willing to admit their faults and save their souls. No one is a greater example of this blatant disregard at all attempts of reformation than Captain William Fly, of whom Cotton Mather failed to convert in 1726. Not only did Fly refuse Mather's efforts, but he very publicly admonished Puritanism, offended ministers and their congregations, and approached his death without a single hint of remorse. According to Benjamin Colman, "Fly was the greatest Instance of obduracy that has yet been seen among all the Malefactors who have suffer'd in these parts."[54] He appeared as stoic and indifferent as he could in a final act of rebellion against both spiritual and state authority that would leave Boston and its Puritan ministers shaken. Due to his imprisonment and impending execution, Fly could do little to preserve his life. What he lacked in his ability to save himself from the gallows, he made up for by "concentrating on preserving his independence of mind by denying the significance of death and damnation."[55] Fly caused an uproar within the Puritan community, as he had defied the very institution that they had established through their decades of execution sermons. What was meant to be a moment where Fly would be an example to the crowd of the punishment for sin and the ultimate redeeming nature of Christ, was instead a moment of disruption that caused a curious glimpse into the legitimacy of Puritan authority by New Englanders.

---

[53] Mather, *Useful Remarks*, 27.

[54] Colman, *It is a Fearful Thing to Fall into the Hands of the Living God*, 37.

[55] Daniel Williams, "Puritans and Pirates: A Confrontation between Cotton Mather and William Fly in 1726," *Early American Literature* 22, *3*, 1987: 234.

The incident with William Fly, and other pirates that defied Puritanism until their last breath, highlighted the fundamental differences between pirates and Puritans. Puritans lived to please God through their actions and communal experiences, which meant that if they were not glorifying Him, then they were living in sin. Pirates were the opposite; they lived to reject the church, which was a piece of the larger social, economic, and political system which they despised. Thus, they relished in their separation from godly society and likened themselves to the devil, mocked ministers and church members, and partook in every sin that Puritans admonished.[56] According the Mather, they were users of "Horrid *Oathes*, & the Language of Fiends," engaged in "monstrous Swearing and Cursing," and had "Tongues set of Fire of Hell."[57] While their moral outlooks on life differed greatly, Puritans and pirates also had a very different understanding of freedom. Pirates were free to do wrong, or at least they thought they had a right to do wrong, which was profoundly opposed by Puritans who led their lives strictly according to Scripture. They tested each other's resilience; where one robbed and murdered, the other prayed and did good works. Puritans lived everyday fearful of not being good enough for eternity in God's eyes, while pirates disregarded spiritual morality and led their lives how they saw fit. The two could not have been more different, but as piratical crimes became increasingly common occurrences, their worlds intertwined in fascinating ways.

---

[56] Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 132-3.
[57] Ibid.

Conclusion: The Legacy of the Interactions Between Puritans and Pirates

It is evident that Puritans and pirates led two vastly different lives. Puritans surrounded themselves with Scripture and prayer, while pirates recoiled at formalities and thrived off of freedom and sinfulness. Yet, these two moral opposites intersected often as piracy increased in the Atlantic in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The careers of pirates frequented Puritan sermons and publications as they warned their congregations of the dangers of the sea and the temptations it offered sailors. Execution sermons emphasized human morality and sin, and not only served as a chance at spiritual redemption for pirates, but as personal re-awakenings within all in attendance. While they considered it a part of their duty to God through the covenant they had formed with Him, ministers reveled in the opportunity to increase their influence in colonial society through whatever way possible.[1] To them, repeated acts of piracy signified the triumph of evil over good, but they found that they could play the redemptive heroes within society by showing that they could persuade even the most damned soul to repent. Puritanism was a dying denomination in the colonies as the 18th century began, so the opportunity to possibly restore their influence in the surrounding communities was capitalized upon.

The Puritans of New England were just one portion of the North American population that came into contact with pirates. Piracy also flourished in the waters of Charleston, South Carolina and the Chesapeake capes of Virginia, with pirates like Blackbeard and Stede Bonnet wreaking havoc and clashing with colonial governors.[2] Local newspapers, government documents, and personal diaries and letters detail the effect pirates had on the southern colonial

---

[1] Lincoln, *British Pirates and Society*, 17-8.
[2] Rankin, *The Golden Age of Piracy*, 42.

population. Beyond the colonies, pirates terrorized the coasts of Britain and the islands of the Caribbean, each locale providing similar descriptions of violence, yet their own unique perspectives on piracy. In an Atlantic society that held strong roots in Christianity and that was focused heavily on legality, piracy was the common enemy among religions, communities, and nations that bordered the Atlantic, and it was deemed both a religious and secular crime by many. There were numerous relations with pirates that extended beyond their interactions with Puritans, each speaking into the complex world that existed during the Golden Age of piracy.

In the colonies however, religion, morality, and justice were key components within the expanding North American territories during 17th and 18th centuries. More than ever before, Christianity had a prominent voice in the criminal proceedings that frequented colonial society and garnered the attention of its residents. The increased presence of Christianity within social and political conflicts, especially as Puritan ideals were challenged by the ethical freedom of pirates, set the stage for the principles and thoughts of the First Great Awakening in the mid 18th century. As the European Enlightenment influenced more people to turn to atheism and Deism, New England Puritanism helped to spark a revival of Christianity within the colonies. The public confessions and executions of pirates were highly attended, and their messages of redemption were subsequently recorded and published to spread the Puritan agenda of sin and salvation even further than the surrounding communities.

The evangelical nature of execution sermons popularized by the intersection of Puritans and pirates helped place a greater importance on "converted sinners experiencing God's love personally."[3] This trend of personal conviction and faith, rooted in Puritan tradition, was at the

---

[3] Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (Yale University Press, 2007), xiv.

forefront of the messages of the most infamous preachers of the Great Awakening, which included George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and Samuel Davies. As the 17th century drew to a close and the first generation of colonial Puritans passed on, ministers worried that their strict foundations would be lost upon the new generation that would assume civic and ecclesiastical power, which would create the loss of the original purpose of Puritan communities in the colonies.[4] This reality increased the significance of sermons as a means of conversion, net of salvation, and the grounds for social discourse and a call to action within both religious and non-religious communities.[5]

The content of an execution sermon was designed in a way that would captivate the audience it was directed towards, and messages of hope and redemption often revealed to those gathered that it was not too late to seek salvation. Many non-religious people attended these public events, and so the sermons began with an introduction to church doctrine and scripture, followed by the reasons of which salvation was significant, and then ended with a discourse of personal examples of sin and a practical application of the sermon's message.[6] There was an immediacy conveyed by Puritan ministers in execution sermons that urged onlookers to not wait to repent of their sins. This immediate act of committing one's life to God was the predominant focus of sermons and revivals during the Great Awakening. Thus, the relationship between Puritans and pirates not only influenced the morality of New Englanders in the 17th and 18th centuries, but it set a spiritual precedence that lived on in the great minds of the Great Awakening years later.

---

[4] Bosco, "Lectures at the Pillory," 161.
[5] Ibid., 161-2.
[6] Ibid., 163.

Pirates impacted the Puritan world in ways that changed how ministers shared the Gospel and conveyed the message of salvation with their audiences. The confessions and repentances of pirates brought about the ideals of individual piety and religious devotion. To those who witnessed these conversions, faith became urgent, passionate and deeply personal. If pirates could be saved after all they had done, in their last moments of life, then there was no reason that anyone could not do the same. Suddenly there was a need and a desire to seek after God more than ever, and the evangelical mindset that had been exemplified through piratical interactions became the model of Christianity as the 18th century carried on. While the Puritan faith faded away in the beginning of the 18th century, the values it emphasized remained prominent in the fervent messages during the Great Awakening.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

An Account of the Behavior and Last Dying Speeches of the Six Pirates. Boston: Boone, 1704.

An Account of The Tryals Of Captain J. Golden. Thomas Jones. John Gold. Lawrance Maliene. Patrick Whitley. John Slaughter. Const. D'Heaity. Richard Shewers. Darby Collins. John Ryon. Dennis Cockram. John Walsh. At the Court of Admiralty Held in The Marshalsea In Southwark, Before the Right Honourable The Judges: On Monday the 25th. Of Feb. 1693. Globe London-Bridge: J. Clare, 1693.

Bayly, Lewis. *The Practice of Piety: Directing a Christian How to Walk, That He May Please God*. Boston in New England: Reprinted by B. Green, 1718.

Colman, Benjamin. *It is a Fearful Thing to Fall into the Hands of the Living God. A Sermon Preached to Some Miserable Pirates July 1, 1726. On the Lord's Day, Before Their Execution.* Sermon. 1726.

Defoe, Daniel. *A General History of the Pyrates, 1724*. Edited by Manuel Schonhorn. Rev. Ed. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1999.

Durant, John. *The Spiritual Seaman: or a Manual for Mariners.* London, 1655.

Edwards, John. *The Whole Concern of Man. Or, What He Ought to Know and Do, In Order To Eternal Salvation. Laid Down in A Plain and Familiar Way For The Use Of All, But Especially The Meanest Reader.* Boston: S. Kneeland, 1725.

England And Wales. Sovereign, King of England James II, Charles Bill, Henry Hills, Thomas Newcomb, and Jay I. Kislak Collection. *By the King, a Proclamation for the More Effectual Reducing and Suppressing of Pirates and Privateers in America*. London: Printed by Charles Bill, Henry Hills, and Thomas Newcomb, 1688.

Flavel, John. *Navigation Spiritualized, or A New Compass for Seamen*. London, 1664.

——. *The Seaman's Companion*. London, 1675.

——. *A Pathetical and Serious Disswasive from the Horrid and Detestable Sins of Drunkenness, Swearing, Uncleanness, Forgetfulness of Mercies, Violation of Promises, and Atheistical Contempt of Death.* London, 1698.

Great Britain. *Act for the More Effectual Suppression of Piracy*. London, 1700.

John Gow: Captain of a Notorious Gang of Pirates. Executed at Execution Dock, 11th of August, 1729 for Piracy. The Newgate Calendar.

Massachusetts. *Session Laws 1684 July, at a General Court Called by the Honourable Governour on his Receipt of His Majesties Letter, to Sit in Boston, July the 9th, 1684.* Boston: Printed by Samuel Green, 1684: 103-105.

Mather, Cotton. *American Tears upon the Ruines of the Greek Churches*. Boston: 1701.

——. *Decennium Luctuosum*. Boston, 1699.

——. *Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681-1724.* Boston: The Society.

——. *Instructions to The Living, From the Condition of The Dead. A Brief Relation of Remarkables In the Shipwreck of Above One Hundred Pirates, Who Were Cast Away in The Ship Whido, On the coast of New-England, April 26. 1717. And in The Death of Six, Who After A Fair Trial at Boston, Were Convicted & Condemned, Octob. 22. And Executed, Novemb. 15. 1717. With Some Account of The Discourse Had with Them on The Way to Their Execution. And A Sermon Preached on Their Occasion* (Boston: Printed by John Allen, 1717)

——. *Magnalia Christi Americana: Or the Ecclesiastical History of New England from its First Planting in the Year 1620. Unto the Year of our Lord, 1698.* London: Bible and Three Crowns, 1702.

——. *Faithful Warnings to Prevent Fearful Judgements.* Sermon. 1704.

——. *Pillars of Salt. An History of Some Criminals Executed in this Land; For Capital Crimes. With some of their Dying Speeches; Collected and Published, For the Warning of such as Live in Destructive Courses of Ungodliness. Whereto is added, For the better Improvement of this History, A Brief Discourse about the Dreadful Justice of God, in Punishing of Sin, with Sin.* Boston, 1699.

——. *The Converted Sinner. The Nature of a Conversion to Real and Vital Piety: And the Manner In Which It Is To Be Pray'd & Striv'n For. A Sermon Preached in Boston, May 31, 1724. In the Hearing and At the Desire of Certain Pirates, A Little Before Their Execution*. Boston: Nathaniel Belknap, 1724.

——. *The Diary of Cotton Mather, D.D., F.R.S. for the year 1712*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1964.

——. *The Glory of Goodness. The Goodness of God Celebrated; In Remarkable Instances And Improvements Thereof: And More Particularly In The Redemption Remarkably Obtained For The English Captives, Which Have Been Languishing Under The Tragical, And The Terrible And The Most Barbarous Cruelties Of Barbary*. Boston: T. Green, 1703.

——. *The Religious Marriner.* Boston: B, Green and J. Allen, 1700.

——. *The Vial Poured Out Upon the Sea*. 1726.

——. *Useful Remarks. An Essay Upon Remarkables In the Way of Wicked Men. A Sermon on the Tragical End, Unto Which the Way of Twenty-Six Pirates Brought Them; At New Port on Rhode-Island, July 19, 1723. With an Account of Their Speeches, Letters, & Actions, Before Their Execution.* Connecticut: T. Green, 1723.

Sir Thomas Gates Knight, Lieutenant General. *Articles, Lawes and Orders Diuine, Politique, and Martiall for the Colony in Virginia*. 1610.

The Elders and Messengers of the Churches Assembled in Synod. *The Cambridge Platform of Church Discipline, 1648*. The Library of Congress. Boston: Perkins & Whipple, 1850.

Plutarch. *The Life of Julius Caesar* in *Parallel Lives: Julius Caesar.* Translated by B. Perrin. Loeb Classical Library, vol. VIII, 1919.

"The 'Great' Edward Low: The Most Merciless Pirate Known to Modern Times." *The New York Times*. August 14, 1892.

The Trials of Eight Persons Indited for Piracy, Of Whom Two Were Acquitted, and the Rest Found Guilty. At a Justiciary Court of Admiralty Assembled and Held in Boston within His Majesty's Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England, on the 18th of October 1717. Boston: B. Green, 1718.

The Tryals Of Sixteen Persons For Piracy, &C. Four Of Which Were Found Guilty, And The Rest Acquitted. At A Special Court Of Admiralty For The Tryal Of Pirates, Held At Boston Within The Province Of The Massachusetts-Bay In New-England. Boston: Joseph Edwards, 1726.

Tryals Of Thirty-Six Persons For Piracy, Twenty-Eight Of Them Upon Full Evidence Were Found Guilty, And The Rest Acquitted. At A Court Of Admiralty For Tryal Of Pirates, Held At Newport Within His Majesties Colony Of Rhode-Island And Providence-Plantations In America, On The Tenth, Eleventh And Twelfth Days Of July, Anno Dom. 1723. Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1723.

Virginia. Lieutenant-Governor, Alexander Spotswood, and R. A Brock. *The official letters of Alexander Spotswood, Lieutenant-Governor of the colony of Virginia, 1722, now first printed from the manuscript in the collections of the Virginia Historical Society*. Richmond, Va., Virginia Historical Society, 85, 1882.

Secondary Books

Bailey, Richard A. *Race and Redemption in Puritan New England*. Oxford University Press: 2011.

Donnelly, Mark and Daniel Diehl. *Pirates of Virginia: Plunder and High Adventure on the Old Dominion Coastline.* First edition. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2012.

Dow, George Francis and John Henry Edmonds. *The Pirates of the New England Coast 1630 – 1730*. New York: Dover Publications, 1996.

Dunning, Albert E. *Congregationalists in America: A Popular History of Their Origin, Belief, Polity, Growth and Work*. New York: J. A. Hill and Company, 1894.

Elliot, Emory. *The Power and the Pulpit in Puritan New England*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

Gildrie, Richard. *The Profane, the Civil, and the Godly: The Reformation of Manners in Orthodox New England, 1679–1749.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.

Green, Todd H. *The Fear of Islam: An Introduction to Islamophobia in the West*. Fortress Press, 2009.

Haines-Mofford, Juliet. *The Devil Made Me Do It!: Crime and Punishment in Early New England,* Guilford: GPP, 2012.

Hall, David. *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Belief in Early New England.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989.

Hanna, Mark G. *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire, 1570-1740*. UNC Press, 2015.

Kidd, Thomas S. *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

——. *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America*. Yale University Press, 2007.

Kritzler, Edward. *Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean: How a Generation of Swashbuckling Jews Carved Out an Empire in the New World in Their Quest for Treasure, Religious Freedom and Revenge*. New York: Anchor, 2009.

Lincoln, Margarette. *British Pirates and Society, 1680-1730*. Routledge, 2016.

Little, Benerson. *How History's Greatest Pirates Pillaged, Plundered, and Got Away with It: The Stories, Techniques, and Tactics of the Most Feared Sea Rovers from 1500-1800*. Fair Winds Press, 2011.

Panzac, Daniel. *Barbary Corsairs: The End of a Legend, 1800–1820*. Translated by Victoria Hobson, completed by John E. Hawkes. Leiden: Brill, 2005.

Rankin, Hugh. *The Golden Age of Piracy*. Virginia: Colonial Williamsburg, 1969.

Rediker, Marcus. *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

——. *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2005.

Seay, Scott D. *Hanging Between Heaven and Earth : Capital Crime, Execution Preaching, and Theology in Early New England.* DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010.

Silverman, Kenneth. *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather*. New York: Harper and Row, 1984.

Walker, Samuel. *Popular Justice: A History of American Criminal Justice*. Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1980.

Secondary Articles

Anderson, J. L. "Piracy and World History: An Economic Perspective on Maritime Predation." *Journal of World History* 6:2, 1995.

Bosco, Ronald A. "Lectures at the Pillory: The Early American Execution Sermon." *American Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1978): 156-76.

Burg, B.R. "Legitimacy and Authority: A Case Study of Pirate Commanders in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries." *American Neptune* 37, 1977: 40-49.

Childs, M.L. "Blackbeard and his Infamous Pirate Ship, Queen Anne's Revenge". *Ancient Origins*, 2019.

Cohen, Daniel A. "In Defense of the Gallows: Justifications of Capital Punishment in New England Execution Sermons, 1674-1825." *American Quarterly* 40, no. 2, 1988: 147-64.

Cressy, David. "The Vast and Furious Ocean: The Passage to Puritan New England." *New England Quarterly* 57 (December 1984): 511-532.

Daniels, Bruce C. "Sober Mirth and Pleasant Poisons: Purltan Ambivalence Toward Leisure and Recreation in Colonial New England." *American Studies* 34, no. 1 (1993): 121-37.

Fowler, Randall. "Puritanism, Islam, and Race in Cotton Mather's The Glory of Goodness: An Exercise in Exceptionalism." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 21 (4), 2018: 571–605.

Hill, Christopher. "Radical Pirates?" *The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism*. Eds. Margaret and James Jacob. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984.

Hyland, William P. "'American Tears': Cotton Mather and the Plight of Eastern Orthodox Christians." *The New England quarterly* 77, 2 (2004).

Lazenby, Walter. "Exhortation as Exorcism: Cotton Mather's Sermons to Murderers." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 57 (1971): 49-56.

Lorton, Kimberly. "The City Upon a Hill: Boston as God's Bulwark against Piracy, 1630-1720." *Student Honors Theses*. Eastern Illinois University, 2012.

McElroy, John William. "Seafaring in Seventeenth-Century New England." *New England Quarterly* 8 (September 1935): 331-364.

Minnick, Wayne C. "The New England Execution Sermon." *Speech Monographs* 35 (1968): 77-89.

Murphy, Martin N. "The Barbary Pirates." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (2013): 19-42.

Pitt, Steven J. J. "Cotton Mather and Boston's 'Seafaring Tribe.'" *New England Quarterly* 85 (2), 2012: 222–52.

Rediker, Marcus. "'Under the Banner of King Death': The Social World of Anglo-American Pirates, 1716-1726." *William and Mary Quarterly* 38 (1981): 203-27.

Simon, Rebecca A. "The Social Construction of Crime in the Atlantic World: Piracy as a Case Study." *Early America Review* 16.

Valeri, Mark. "Religious Discipline and the Market: Puritans and the Issue of Usury." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (1997): 747-68.

Williams, Daniel E. "'Behold a Tragic Scene Strangely Changed into A Theater of Mercy': The Structure and Significance of Criminal Conversion Narratives in Early New England." *American Quarterly* 38 (1986): 827-47.

——. "Puritans and Pirates: A Confrontation between Cotton Mather and William Fly in 1726." *Early American Literature* 22, *3*, 1987: 233–51.

Wilson, Gary E. "American Hostages in Moslem Nations, 1784-1796: The Public Response." *Journal of the Early Republic* 2 (2), 1982: 123–41.