

*Increase Mather's Friends:  
The Trans-Atlantic  
Congregational Network  
of the Seventeenth Century*

FRANCIS J. BREMER

IT HAS BECOME fashionable for colonial historians to emphasize the similarities between English and New England societies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Scholars such as Timothy H. Breen and David G. Allen have demonstrated the persistence of English communal institutions and values in New World settings.<sup>1</sup> Investigators of ideology have shown that much of the thought of America's eighteenth-century revolutionaries was inspired by the English Commonwealth tradition.<sup>2</sup> Studies have demonstrated that throughout

An earlier version of this paper was delivered to the Columbia University Seminar in Early American History. Research was assisted by grants from the American Philosophical Society, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Millersville University Academic Research Committee. This paper is part of a larger study of the trans-Atlantic Puritan network which will trace the Congregational connection from its origins in England in the early seventeenth century to the formation of the Dissenting Deputies. The author would like to thank Timothy Breen, John Murrin, Alden Vaughan, Michael McGiffert, Jeremy Bois-sevain, Patricia Bonomi, Alison Olson, and Daniel Richter for suggestions and encouragement.

<sup>1</sup> Timothy H. Breen, *Puritans and Adventurers: Changes and Persistence in Early America* (New York, 1980); David G. Allen, *In English Ways: The Movement of Societies and the Transferral of English Local Law and Custom to Massachusetts Bay in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1981).

<sup>2</sup> For a review of the literature establishing the importance of the Commonwealth tradition in eighteenth-century American thought see Robert E. Shalhope, 'Towards a Republican Synthesis: the Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser. 29(1972):49-80.

the colonial era the evolution of religious dissent on both sides of the Atlantic often progressed along parallel lines.<sup>3</sup>

The demonstration of these cultural similarities has served a useful function in placing the history of pre-Revolutionary New England within the general framework of British history. Few attempts have been made, however, to explain systematically the process whereby colonists fastened upon the particular English traditions that they made their own. While we can attribute John Cotton's agreement with the views of Thomas Goodwin to their common English experience in the years before they both left their native land, how can we explain the fact that their grandchildren shared a commitment to a somewhat different set of values? Was that similarity of outlook simply a case of parallel development from the premises of the earlier generation?

Although there were no formal institutional ties between the churches of Puritan England and New England, there is ample evidence that a web of informal relationships connected the leaders of trans-Atlantic Puritanism and was largely responsible for maintaining a sense of ideological conformity over the course of three generations. A critical time for trans-Atlantic Puritanism occurred in the decades between the Restoration and the Glorious Revolution, when hope of transforming England waned and New England's city on a hill was besieged as never before by a host of foes. One of the key figures working to keep the two wings of reform in touch during this time of trial was Increase Mather. An analysis of the nature and operation of his involvement in the network can not only provide new insight into the nature of Puritan ideas but also offer an explanation of the means whereby news, aid and

<sup>3</sup> Ralph Young, 'Good News from New England: The Influence of the New England Way of Church Polity on Old England, 1635-1660' (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 1971); Bartholomew Schiavo, 'The Dissenter Connection: English Dissenters and Massachusetts Political Culture, 1630-1774' (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1976); Michael Finlayson, 'Independency in Old and New England, 1630-1660' (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1968).

ideas were disseminated within the trans-Atlantic community.

A brief review of relevant social science findings can direct our attention to the importance of relationships which historians take for granted but seldom analyze. Anthropologists employing network analysis recognize that man is 'an interacting social being capable of manipulating others and being manipulated by them.' Identifying the range of a person's friends alerts the researcher to the sources of social influence on the person's behavior and beliefs. Friendship networks are formed as acquaintances discover similarities in each other and draw together in relationships which reinforce their shared ideals and preferences. Members of such a network will make personal sacrifices to aid their friends. They will prove more receptive to innovations proposed by friends rather than by strangers, and innovations will be diffused more rapidly through a network than among members of the general population. This is not to say that a network is totally homogeneous. Within most such groups there are clusters of individuals united by more intense familiarity and feelings. Individuals belonging to more than one such cluster serve the important function of brokers in holding the various clusters together, for they insure a flow of information and support between clusters. Clusters can, however, split from networks and networks can be shattered by disagreements. But the social pressures within such a system work strongly to maintain conformity. Bearing these concepts in mind, we can examine the relationships between Increase Mather and his friends in such a way as to shed new light on the actions taken and the beliefs adopted by English and American Puritans of the seventeenth century.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This paragraph and the conceptual model implicit in this paper are based on a variety of studies in social anthropology and psychology, including: Jeremy Boissevain, *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions* (New York, 1974); Jeremy Boissevain and J. Clyde Mitchell, eds., *Network Analysis: Studies in Human Interaction* (The Hague, 1973); J. C. Mitchell, 'Social Networks,' *American Review of Anthropology* 3(1974):279-99; J. Clyde Mitchell, ed., *Social Networks in Urban Situations* (Manchester, 1969); J. A. Barnes, *Social Networks* (Reading, Mass., 1972); Elizabeth Bott, *Family and Social Network*, 2d ed. (New York, 1971); Samuel Leinhardt, ed.,

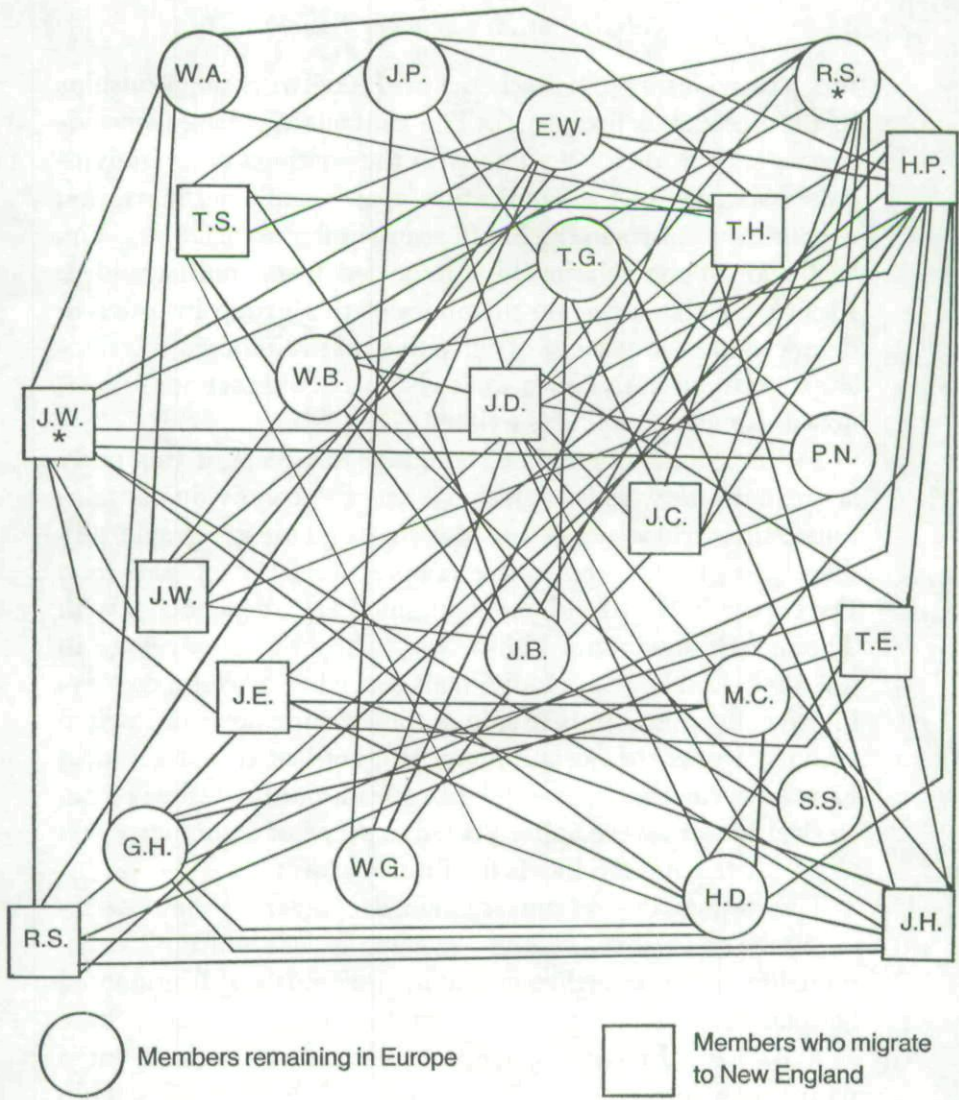
The specific network in which Increase Mather came to play a role had its origins in England in the first decades of the seventeenth century. Clergymen such as John Cotton, Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, and John Davenport were brought together in a variety of ways. In some cases, they formed friendships during their years at Oxford and Cambridge universities or through contacts in lectureships such as that in St. Antholin's parish. Other friendships resulted from cooperative efforts to advance reforms, such as raising funds for the Palatine refugees, the Feofees for Improvements, or the Massachusetts Bay Company's endeavors. Stimuli such as kinship and discipleship also led to friendship. Such ties not only contributed to the formation of friendships but strengthened such relationships once they had been formed. Moreover, for dissenting Puritans, increasingly subjected to episcopal harassment, friendship provided reinforcement for their values, as well as advice and material assistance.<sup>5</sup>

The clerical network in its early stages was a Puritan and not specifically a Congregational connection. Before the outbreak of the Civil Wars, distinctions within the ranks of the Puritan opposition were relatively unimportant and future Presbyterians and future Baptists joined with Congregationalists in mutual support and cooperative efforts aimed at reforming the English church. It could be said that such groups were clusters in the Puritan network whose differences were not yet of a magnitude to jeopardize the network's unity. Fig-

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*Social Networks: A Developing Paradigm* (New York, 1977); Steven Duck, *Theory and Practice in Interpersonal Attraction* (London, 1977); Steven Duck, *Personal Relationships and Personal Constructs* (New York, 1973); Donn Byrne, *The Attraction Paradigm* (New York, 1971); Zick Rubin, *Liking and Loving* (New York, 1973); Ted Hutson and George Levinger, 'Interpersonal Attraction and Relationships,' *Annual Review of Psychology* 29(1978):115-16. The quotation is from Boissevain and Mitchell, *Network Analysis*, p. viii.

<sup>5</sup> Friendship as used in this study refers to relationships with 'persons with whom one has shared interests, experiences, and activities' and who are 'also seen as supportive, dependable, understanding and accepting; in short, . . . as people "one can count on."' (Hutson and Levinger, 'Interpersonal Attraction,' p. 135); the definition does not include mere acquaintances.



- |                            |                          |                            |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| W.A. – William Ames        | T.G. – Thomas Goodwin    | R.S. – Richard Saltonstall |
| W.B. – William Bridge      | W.G. – William Greenhill | R.S.* – Richard Sibbes     |
| J.B. – Jeremiah Burroughes | G.H. – George Harwood    | S.S. – Sidrach Simpson     |
| J.C. – John Cotton         | T.H. – Thomas Hooker     | T.S. – Thomas Shepard      |
| M.C. – Matthew Craddock    | J.H. – John Humphrey     | E.W. – Earl of Warwick     |
| H.D. – Henry Darley        | P.N. – Phillip Nye       | J.W. – John Wilson         |
| J.D. – John Davenport      | H.P. – Hugh Peter        | J.W.* – John Winthrop      |
| T.E. – Theophilus Eaton    | J.P. – John Preston      |                            |
| J.E. – John Endecott       |                          |                            |

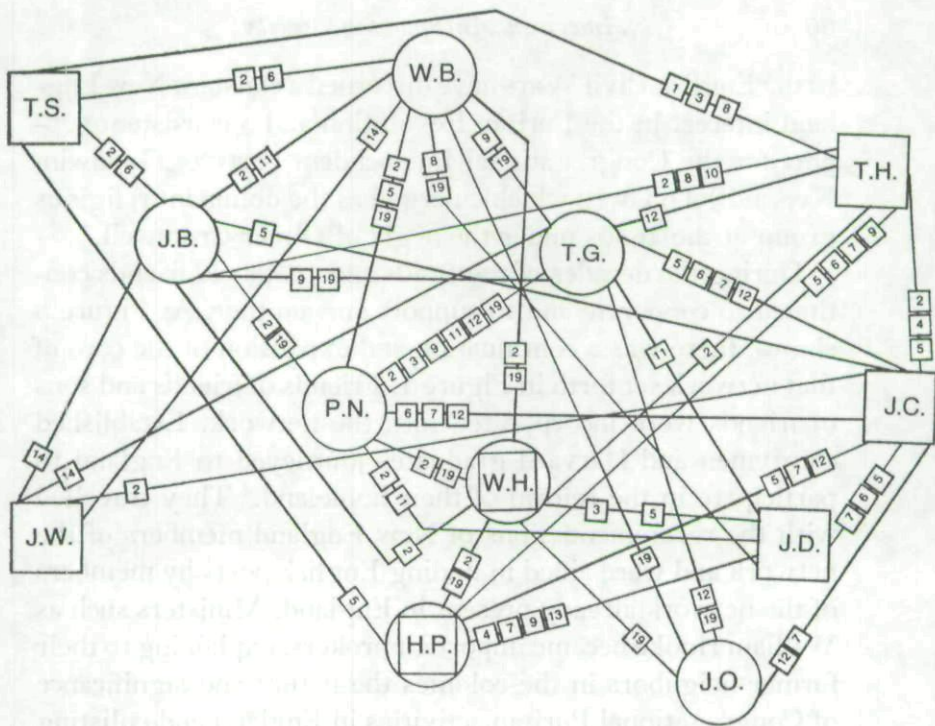
Fig. 1. Partial Connections Within the Puritan Network, 1600–1640

ure 1 provides a partial schema of the network relationships in the decades before 1640. The contacts are based on evidences such as direct testimony in the writings of an individual, assistance in the publication of a friend's sermons, and cooperative efforts in the Feoffees or similar associations. Virtually all of the relationships indicated were multistranded. Figure 2 isolates certain members of this group in order to demonstrate the variety of activities that reinforced relationships between individuals. It is also probable that additional, non-documented contacts existed.

An important point that should be made about this early stage in the network's evolution is that these individuals maintained their friendships even after they became geographically dispersed. To take but one example, John Cotton and John Davenport in New England maintained a correspondence with Thomas Goodwin and Philip Nye, who had taken refuge in the Netherlands.<sup>6</sup> Such individuals served as brokers, conveying to colleagues on their side of the Atlantic news of Puritan activity across the ocean. Thus, although scattered about in England, America, and on the European continent, the lay and clerical leaders were able to retain a sense of community and to preserve common ideals for future reform.

The significance of this sustained contact became apparent in the decades of the Interregnum. When the Anglican establishment was overthrown and the Puritan party fragmented because of its inability to agree on the nature of a new state church, New England Congregationalists were confronted with a bewildering and threatening proliferation of sects in their native land. Historians have often oversimplified the nature of these English divisions and as a result have claimed that the colonists were confused and alienated by the sectarian explosion in Britain. But recent studies of the colonial reaction

<sup>6</sup> 'Memoir of Thomas Goodwin,' in John Miller and Robert Halley, eds., *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, 11 vols. (Edinburgh, 1865), 1:xxv-xxvi.



Members in New England
  New Englanders in England
  Members in England

- |                              |                              |                        |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Kin                       | 8. Recommend                 | 13. Feoffees           |
| 2. University Ties           | 9. Associates in Netherlands | 14. Attend Preaching   |
| 3. Colleagues                | 10. Teacher/Pupil            | 15. Appoint to Living  |
| 4. Massachusetts Bay Company | 11. Cooperation              | 16. Remembered in Will |
| 5. Correspond                | 12. Co-edit/Publish          | 17. Give Aid           |
| 6. Give Shelter              |                              | 18. Chaplain           |
| 7. Convert/Influence         |                              | 19. See Figure 4       |

W.B. – William Bridge	T.H. – Thomas Hooker
J.B. – Jeremiah Burroughes	P.N. – Phillip Nye
J.C. – John Cotton	J.O. – John Owen
J.D. – John Davenport	H.P. – Hugh Peter
T.G. – Thomas Goodwin	T.S. – Thomas Shepard
W.H. – William Hooke	J.W. – John Wilson

Fig. 2. Selected Strands in Key Network Relationships, 1600–1660

to the English Civil Wars have discerned a constant New England interest in the Puritan Revolution and a consistent support for the Congregational Independent party of Goodwin, Nye and John Owen which emerged as the dominant religious group of the 1650s under the aegis of Oliver Cromwell.<sup>7</sup>

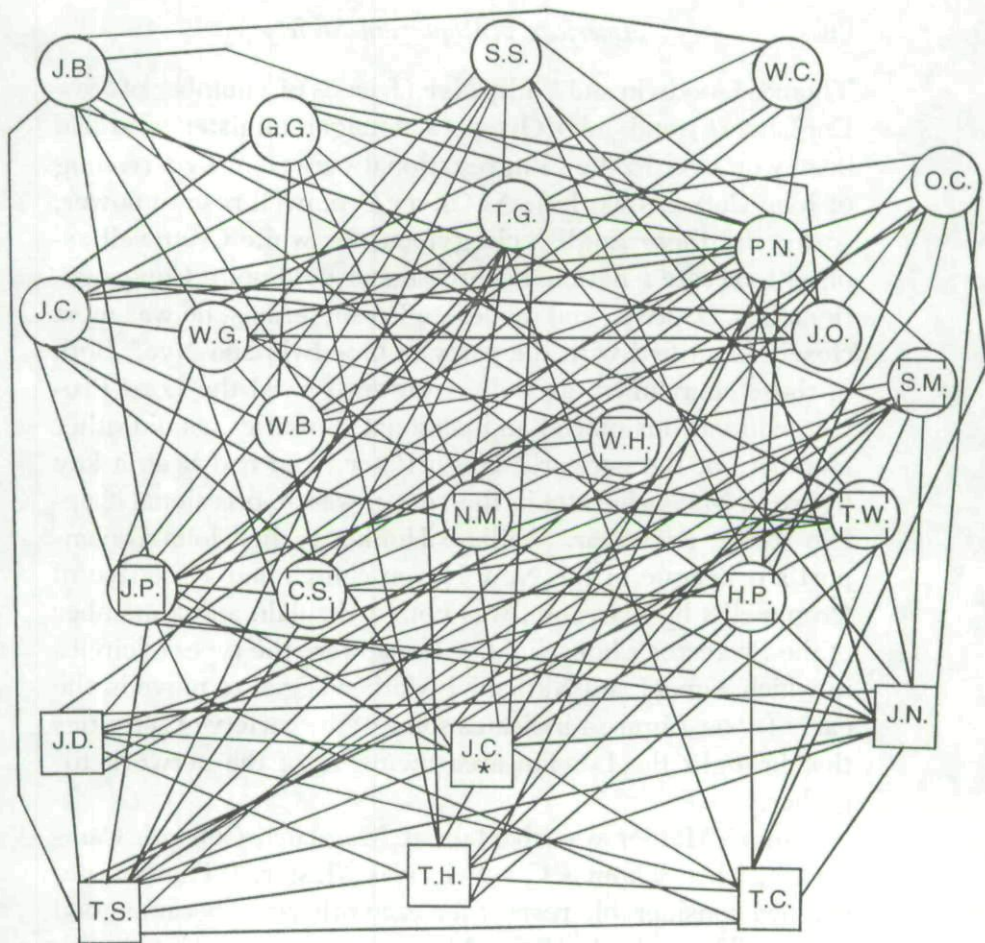
During the decades of the 1640s and 1650s old friends continued to cooperate and to support one another. As Figure 3 shows, there was a continuation and expansion of the core of that network set forth in Figure 1. Friends of friends and sons of friends were incorporated into the network. Established clergymen and Harvard graduates journeyed to England to participate in the reform of their homeland.<sup>8</sup> They travelled with the recommendations of New England members of the network and were aided in finding English posts by members of the network already present in England. Ministers such as William Hooke became important brokers, explaining to their former neighbors in the colonies the nature and significance of Congregational Puritan activities in England and enlisting colonial support for such ventures. The arrival of such emissaries in the mother country marked the beginning of Increase Mather's involvement in the network.

Increase was the third son of Richard Mather to graduate from Harvard and return to England. His two older brothers, Samuel and Nathaniel, were both established in the Congregational network in the mother country when Increase completed his studies at Cambridge, Massachusetts. The leaders of English Congregationalism in the 1640s and 1650s were

<sup>7</sup> See for example, Young, 'Good News'; Schiavo, 'Dissenter Connection'; Timothy Sehr, 'Colony and Commonwealth: Massachusetts Bay 1649-1660' (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1977); Francis J. Bremer, 'Puritan Crisis: New England and the English Civil Wars, 1630-1670' (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1972); and Francis J. Bremer, 'In Defense of Regicide: John Cotton on the Execution of Charles I,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser. 32(1980):103-24.

<sup>8</sup> William L. Sachse, 'The Migration of New Englanders to England, 1640-1660,' *American Historical Review* 53(1948):251-78.





Englishmen



New Englanders  
in England



New Englanders  
in New England

W.B. – William Bridge  
 J.B. – Jeremiah Burroughes  
 W.C. – William Carter  
 J.C. – Joseph Caryl  
 T.C. – Thomas Cobbet  
 J.C.\* – John Cotton  
 O.C. – Oliver Cromwell

J.D. – John Davenport  
 T.G. – Thomas Goodwin  
 W.G. – William Greenhill  
 G.G. – George Griffith  
 W.H. – William Hooke  
 T.H. – Thomas Hooker  
 N.M. – Nathaniel Mather  
 S.M. – Samuel Mather  
 J.N. – John Norton

P.N. – Phillip Nye  
 J.O. – John Owen  
 H.P. – Hugh Peter  
 J.P. – John Phillip  
 T.S. – Thomas Shepard  
 S.S. – Sidrach Simpson  
 C.S. – Comfort Starr  
 T.W. – Thomas Welde

Fig. 3. Partial Connections Between Key Network Members, 1640–1660

Thomas Goodwin and Philip Nye (friends of a number of New Englanders) and John Owen (a younger minister who had been won over to the Congregational viewpoint by a reading of John Cotton's works). As Oliver Cromwell rose to power, so too did these English clergymen; for while Cromwell aspired to create a national church that would unite Congregationalists, Baptists, and moderate Presbyterians, he was most closely identified with the party of Goodwin and Nye.<sup>9</sup> Both of those churchmen, as well as Owen, served the Lord Protector in various official and personal capacities, as did other members of the network. Hugh Peter, who had been a key figure in Massachusetts in the 1630s, was an occasional chaplain to the Protector. William Hooke, earlier John Davenport's colleague in the New Haven church and a relative of Cromwell's by marriage, was both a chaplain and a member of the Protector's household.<sup>10</sup> These were the types of circles in which Samuel and Nathaniel Mather began to move in the early 1650s. Figure 4 indicates some of the variety of activities that brought the London area members of the network together.

Samuel Mather was chaplain at Magdalen College, Cambridge, when Thomas Goodwin was Master.<sup>11</sup> The two developed considerable respect for each other and became good friends. Through Goodwin, Mather became acquainted with Philip Nye. Although no direct evidence exists (and thus it is not indicated on the tables), it is likely that Samuel also came to know and trust the group of Magdalen fellows whom Goodwin organized into an independent congregation—a group that included John Howe, Theophilus Gale, Thankful Owen, and

<sup>9</sup> Robert Paul, introduction to Thomas Goodwin et al., *An Apologetical Narration* (Philadelphia, 1963, facsimile edition) and Robert Paul, *The Lord Protector* (London, 1955).

<sup>10</sup> Robert E. Moody, ed., *The Saltonstall Papers*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1972), 1:25; Charles Ray Palmer, *Rev. William Hooke, 1601–1678* (New Haven, 1912), p. 61.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Halley, *Lancashire: Its Puritanism and Nonconformity*, 2 vols. (London, 1849), 2:182.

	Former New Englander	Dissenting Brethren in West. Asm. 1643-1645	Support of New England Missions, 1652	Proposals for Propagation of Gospel, 1652	Joined to Condemn Socinianism, 1652	Committee to Approve Preachers, 1654	Join to Condemn Fifth Monarchists, 1654	Join to Support John Dury, 1654	Savoy Conference, 1658	Harvard Trustees, 1659	Group Letters to General Monck, 1659	Renunciation and Declaration, 1660	Congregational Association in London	Members of Hackney Lecture	Joint Letter of Advice for Harvard, 1672	Common Fund	Letter Praising Increase Mather	
M. Barker			x							x	x			x	x	x	d. 1698	
W. Bridge		x	x	x	x			x		x		d. 1671						
T. Brooks										x	x	x	x	x			d. 1680	
J. Burroughes		x		d. 1646														
W. Carter		x	x			x	x	x	d. ?									
J. Caryl		x	x			x	x	x		x	x	x		x			d. 1673	
G. Cockayn											x			x	x		d. 1691	
J. Collins	x											x		x			d. 1687	
T. Goodwin		x	x	x		x	x	x			x	x		x			d. 1680	
W. Greenhill		x	x	x	x	x		x			x	x					d. 1671	
G. Griffiths			x		x			x			x	x	x	x	x	x	d. 1695	
W. Hooke	x									x	x			x			d. 1678	
J. Knowles	x							x	x					x			d. 1685	
J. Loder										x	x	x		x			d. 1673	
N. Mather	x											x				x	d. 1697	
M. Mead											x			x	x	x	d. 1699	
P. Nye		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x			d. 1672	
J. Owen			x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x			d. 1683	
S. Simpson		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	d. 1665									
W. Strong		x		d. 1654														

Fig. 4. Prominent London Area Congregational Clergy, 1640-1689

Stephen Charnock.<sup>12</sup> The friendship with Nye produced results when Nye recommended Samuel as a preacher to the Council of Ireland, which was presided over by Henry Cromwell, the Protector's son and his deputy there.<sup>13</sup> Associated with Mather in his ministerial work in Dublin were Samuel Winter and Timothy Taylor.<sup>14</sup> Winter was a former disciple of John Cotton, who not only converted Winter to Congregationalism but also found him a rich wife.<sup>15</sup> Taylor had served for a time as a colleague of New England's Samuel Eaton in establishing Congregationalism in Chesire.<sup>16</sup> Samuel Mather became a fellow of Dublin's Trinity College, which brought him into close contact with Winter, the college Provost, and exposed him to John Owen, one of Trinity's trustees.<sup>17</sup>

Nathaniel Mather found acceptance in the network as easily as did his brother. Shortly after his arrival in Britain, he gravitated to London, where he made the acquaintance of Alderman Henry Ashurst, whose home address Nathaniel used to receive his New England correspondence.<sup>18</sup> In 1656, Oliver Cromwell presented Nathaniel to a living in Barnstable.<sup>19</sup> There Nathaniel courted and married the daughter of William Benn, a clergyman who had been a disciple of John White, one of the originators of New England colonization.<sup>20</sup> Another of Benn's daughters had married the merchant Richard Lobb, whose son Stephen (Nathaniel's nephew) would become

<sup>12</sup> Walter Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches and Meeting-houses in London*, 4 vols. (London, 1808), 1:218; Peter Toon, *God's Stateman, John Owen* (London, 1970), p. 57.

<sup>13</sup> A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised* (Oxford, 1934), p. 344.

<sup>14</sup> Young, 'Good News,' p. 114.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114 n. 94.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena: Or, A Catalogue and Discovery of Many of the Errors . . . of this Time* (London, 1646), Pt. 3:164.

<sup>17</sup> J. L. Sibley, *Biographical Sketches of Graduates of Harvard College* (Boston, 1873-), 1:78-85.

<sup>18</sup> Nathaniel Mather to John Rogers, Dec. 23, 1651, *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 4th ser. 8 (hereafter *CMHS*), p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Sibley, *Graduates of Harvard*, 1:157-60.

<sup>20</sup> Murdock, *Increase Mather*, p. 191.

a prominent dissenting clergyman later in the century.<sup>21</sup> Nathaniel was also involved in the meetings and deliberations of an informal association of Congregational ministers in and around London. That group included Goodwin and Nye, whom Nathaniel might have met through his brother Samuel, and also counted among its members Joseph Caryl, George Griffiths, William Greenhill, as well as former New Englanders Thomas Welde and William Stoughton.<sup>22</sup>

Upon his graduation from Harvard in 1656, Increase Mather decided to follow his brothers to Britain, thereby guaranteeing his entry into the network via Samuel and Nathaniel. Increase settled first in Dublin, where he received his M.A. from Trinity College.<sup>23</sup> During that course of studies, he became close to Samuel Winter.<sup>24</sup> Increase did not reside at the college, but rather with his brother Samuel, who introduced him to Henry Cromwell.<sup>25</sup> Cromwell was much taken by the young newcomer and promised to find him a ministerial position in Ireland, but Increase chose to travel to England where Nathaniel used his connections to procure his younger brother a clerical post in Exeter.<sup>26</sup> Journeying first to London, Increase met and befriended John Howe, then a Congregationalist but later a Presbyterian. Howe had been a domestic chaplain to Oliver Cromwell and was retained in that capacity by Richard Cromwell after Oliver's death in September of 1658. Increase's association with Howe could have come about through his brother Samuel, who probably knew Howe from Magdalen days, or else through Nathaniel or Nathaniel's London connections, or possibly by introductions from Henry Cromwell. The two men became friends and Howe prevailed

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Neal, *A History of the Puritans*, 2 vols. (New York, 1856), 1:221.

<sup>23</sup> William Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit* (New York, 1857), p. 152.

<sup>24</sup> Murdock, *Increase Mather*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>25</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), p. 500; Murdock, *Increase Mather*, p. 62.

<sup>26</sup> Murdock, *Increase Mather*, p. 62.

on Increase to turn down the Exeter position and to serve as Howe's replacement in a Devonshire parish while Howe was at Whitehall.<sup>27</sup>

The next few years were troubled ones in England. When Richard Cromwell abdicated in April 1659, Howe returned to Devonshire. Nathaniel's father-in-law, William Benn, secured a post for Increase on the island of Guernsey.<sup>28</sup> For the next year Increase preached on Guernsey and occasionally aided Benn in Dorchester.<sup>29</sup> But under the Restoration, the overwhelming majority of Congregationalists were deprived of their livings. Increase considered fleeing to the Netherlands, where Nathaniel sought temporary residence, but he finally decided to return to New England.<sup>30</sup>

The Restoration marked a significant point in the history of the Congregational network as a trans-Atlantic entity because it brought to the colonies, once again, men who had known and worked with the remaining leaders of English reform. Some, like James Allen—a close associate of Thomas Goodwin—had never before been in New England; others, like Increase Mather, Urian Oakes and William Stoughton were returning to the land of their youth after a decade or more of labor in English vineyards.

The friendships that Increase Mather made in England in the 1650s were in most cases retained by him in later years. These individuals, and others whom he presumably befriended in England or whom he came to trust through correspondence after 1660, became the special group of Increase Mather's 'friends.'

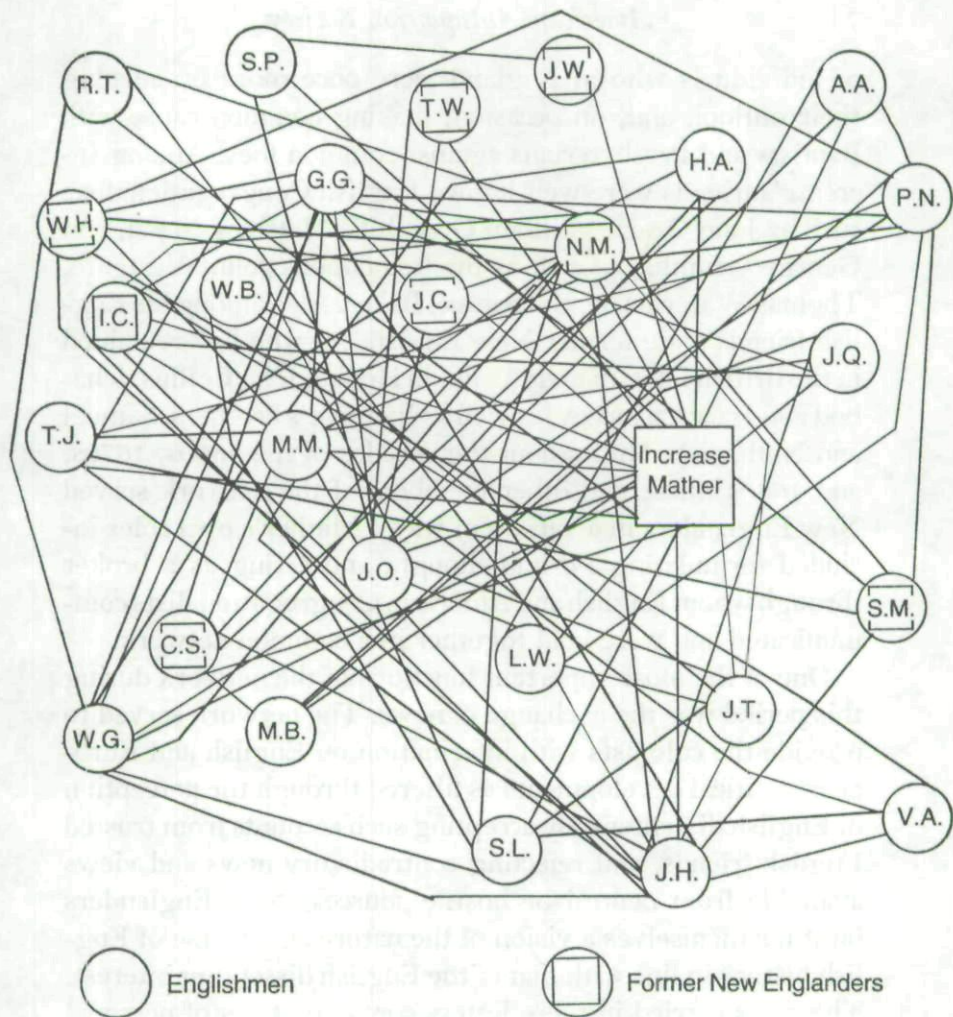
Figure 5 indicates some of Mather's relationships with the Congregational cluster within the Puritan network, a cluster

<sup>27</sup> Edmund Calamy, *The Works of the Reverend John Howe* (New York, 1838), p. vi; Michael G. Hall, ed., *The Autobiography of Increase Mather* (Worcester, Mass., 1962), p. 283.

<sup>28</sup> Murdock, *Increase Mather*, p. 64.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.



- |                          |                         |                          |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| V.A. – Vincent Alsop     | W.H. – William Hooke    | J.O. – John Owen         |
| A.A. – Arthur Annesly    | J.H. – John Howe        | S.P. – Samuel Petto      |
| H.A. – Henry Ashurst     | T.J. – Thomas Jollie    | J.Q. – John Quick        |
| M.B. – Matthew Barker    | S.L. – Stephen Lobb     | C.S. – Comfort Starr     |
| W.B. – William Benn      | N.M. – Nathaniel Mather | J.T. – John Thompson     |
| I.C. – Isaac Chauncey    | S.M. – Samuel Mather    | R.T. – Robert Thompson   |
| J.C. – John Collins      | M.M. – Matthew Mead     | T.W. – Thomas Waterhouse |
| W.G. – William Greenhill | P.N. – Phillip Nye      | J.W. – John Westgate     |
| G.G. – George Griffith   |                         | L.W. – Lord Wharton      |

Fig. 5. Selected Relationships Between "Increase Mather's Friends," 1660–1692

of individuals who in England were once more broadening their outlook and, on occasion, making common cause with Baptists and Presbyterians against common foes. Among Increase's friends were well-known English Congregationalists such as John Owen, William Greenhill, Matthew Mead, and George Griffiths, as well as the less famous John Westgate, Thomas Waterhouse, and Samuel Baker. Also among his English friends were former New Englanders who had remained in the British Isles, namely William Hooke, John Collins, Ichabod and Isaac Chauncey, as well as Increase's brothers, Samuel and Nathaniel. Throughout the decades of the 1660s, 1670s, and 1680s, these and other members of the network served New Englanders in a variety of ways. Mather's own roles included formulating Puritan thought and acting as a broker through whom English and American Congregationalists communicated and were held together in a common network.

One of the most important functions of the network during this period was the exchange of news. The network served to provide the colonists with information on English and European political developments as filtered through the perception of English dissenters. By accepting such accounts from trusted English friends, and rejecting contradictory news and views available from neutral or hostile sources, New Englanders built for themselves a vision of the nature and course of English history in line with that of the English dissenting interest. The news carried in these letters contained tales of personal as well as national misfortune. Members of the network exchanged news about who was ill, dead, relocated, or in jail.<sup>31</sup> Such communications reveal that network connections were not merely utilitarian; for in exchanging books, advice and

<sup>31</sup> Some examples are to be found in William Hooke to John Davenport, Mar. 2, 1663, *Congregational Historical Society Transactions*, 9(1924-26):283 (hereafter *CHST*); William Hooke to William Goffe, Apr. 4, 1674, *CMHS*, p. 150; Richard Blinman to Increase Mather, Apr. 8, 1678, *ibid.*, p. 331; Samuel Petto to Increase Mather, Feb. 21, 1679, *ibid.*, p. 345; and Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, Mar. 2, 1681, *ibid.*, p. 31.



prayers, the members showed that they also cared for each other's welfare. This maintenance of friendships, of course, was a major reason for the network's extended duration.

For English friends to send political information often involved risks. Charles II and his ministers, suspicious of Congregationalists and other dissenters, hired spies to keep an eye on such persons. Englishmen frequently hid letters and books being sent to New England correspondents in other parcels to avoid detection and seizure by the officials. They requested that return mail be sent to various sympathetic merchants and tavern owners in order to avoid having to reveal the actual address of the English dissenter. Some of the letters written to Increase Mather were in code.<sup>32</sup> A number of his correspondents used aliases. 'You may know me hereafter by D.G.' wrote William Hooke to another colonial friend, explaining that the 'Letters are so often broke up that many are loath to write their names.'<sup>33</sup> Hooke was a case in point: the authorities discovered a parcel of books and letters that he was sending to John Davenport and arrested their bearer.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, Hooke continued to send voluminous reports on English events to Davenport, John Winthrop, Jr., and Increase Mather. Conditions did improve as time went on, but Congregational reports on English news were usually critical of the government and always liable to land their authors in difficulties if intercepted. The letters received by Increase Mather contain frequent comments such as Samuel Craddock's observation in 1684 that 'Newes is here a prohibited commodity.'<sup>35</sup> Yet English friends took the risk and informed New Englanders of the ravages of the plague in London and the

<sup>32</sup> William Goffe to Increase Mather, Sept. 8, 1676, *ibid.*, p. 156. Mather served as an intermediary in correspondence between Goffe, one of the exiled regicides, and Goffe's English relatives.

<sup>33</sup> William Hooke to William Goffe, June 24, 1663, *ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>34</sup> Douglas Lacey, *Dissent and Parliamentary Politics in England, 1661-1689* (New Brunswick, 1969), p. 369; Palmer, *Hooke*, p. 67; A. G. Matthews, 'A Censored Letter,' *CHST*, p. 262.

<sup>35</sup> Samuel Craddock to Increase Mather, Sept. 23, 1684, *CMHS*, p. 642.

bravery of dissenting clergymen who helped the sick as well as other news about the persecution of English dissenters and French Huguenots.<sup>36</sup>

The 1670s saw a flurry of political developments and a renewed involvement in political affairs by English dissenters. After Charles II's abortive Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, dissenters such as John Owen and Thomas Goodwin began to work to influence parliamentary legislation through their writings and lobbying efforts. The years after 1678 were full of crises. Fear of French influence triggered Titus Oates's charges of a Popish Plot and then sparked a series of Parliamentary efforts to exclude the Catholic heir, James Stuart, from the succession. All of this was reported to the colonists. In April of 1678, Increase Mather heard from Richard Blinman of a book giving 'an account of about 200 Parliament men by name, that have been, as is said, bribed, with the sums & offices they have, or are to have.' Blinman added that such books 'are forbidden, & soe we must be ignorant.'<sup>37</sup> A few months later, Nathaniel Mather, back in the British Isles and serving a congregation in Ireland, wrote that 'The face of publique matters looks sad.'<sup>38</sup> Shortly thereafter, Titus Oates charged the existence of a major plot by Catholics to seize the country and massacre Protestants. Nathaniel wrote of 'a deep & generall design amongst the Papists to involve us in confusion and blood, & though it have been discovered by as wonderful a way as ever any was, . . . yet it is generally said & feared tis not all discovered, but still carryed on.' 'Pray for us,' he concluded, 'If wee live till spring I shall send by way of London, perhaps more largely.'<sup>39</sup> Samuel Petto sent similar news, as well as praise of Oates.<sup>40</sup> Thomas Waterhouse wrote

<sup>36</sup> Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, Mar. 12, 1677, *ibid.*, pp. 13-14; Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, Apr. 10, 1683, *ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>37</sup> Richard Blinman to Increase Mather, Apr. 18, 1678, *ibid.*, pp. 332-33.

<sup>38</sup> Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, July 7, 1678, *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, Dec. 19, 1678, *ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>40</sup> Samuel Petto to Increase Mather, Feb. 21, 1679, *ibid.*, pp. 345-47.

in February of 1679, asking for prayers and maintaining that it was a 'miracle of Mercy' that 'the first tidings you heard of England this year was not that England was drowned in a deluge of Protestant blood & wholly subjugated to the Power of Rome.'<sup>41</sup> News later in the year described the latest accusations, trials, and convictions of plotters, as well as continued rumours of invasion from France and Spain.<sup>42</sup>

The suspicions harbored by many Englishmen extended to the royal family itself, and Mather's friends reported the resulting attempts to exclude James from the succession. 'Our discontents are not allayed but rather grow,' Nathaniel wrote to his brother in August 1679, 'the Country distasted at the Court, apprehending ill designs & deep disaffection in them.'<sup>43</sup> Letters recorded James Stuart's quarrels with the Protestant Duke of Monmouth (Charles II's illegitimate son) and Monmouth's banishment to Holland.<sup>44</sup> Jonathan Tuckney wrote late in 1679 that 'publick affairs are bad.'<sup>45</sup> As Charles II fought back in defense of his brother, the hopes for exclusion dimmed, and that ill news was likewise forwarded to Boston.<sup>46</sup> Nathaniel Mather reported that Sir George Jeffries, whom the House of Commons wished the king to remove from all offices, was a judge.<sup>47</sup> Thomas Jollie wrote Mather that the Earl of Shaftesbury, leader of the exclusion effort, had been jailed and tried (though acquitted) for treason.<sup>48</sup>

In 1683, Increase learned of additional developments in the king's attacks on his opposition, including the forfeiture of London's charter and attacks on the privileges of other cor-

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Waterhouse to Increase Mather, Feb. 27, 1679, *ibid.*, p. 591.

<sup>42</sup> Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, Aug. 25, 1679, *ibid.*, pp. 19-21; Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, Mar. 18, 1679, *ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>43</sup> Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, Aug. 25, 1679, *ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>44</sup> Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, Dec. 31, 1679, *ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>45</sup> Jonathan Tuckney to Increase Mather, Dec. 31, 1679, *ibid.*, p. 353.

<sup>46</sup> Samuel Petto to Increase Mather, Jan. 16, 1682, *ibid.*, p. 348; Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, May 10, 1683, *ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>47</sup> Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, Mar. 2, 1681, *ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Jollie to Increase Mather, Dec. 5, 1681, *ibid.*, p. 327.

porations.<sup>49</sup> Ichabod Chauncey wrote of the jailing of opposition leaders implicated in the Rye House Plot, a reported Protestant plan to seize the king.<sup>50</sup> In 1684, Titus Oates, hero of the past decade, was imprisoned while Catholic peers were released from their jail cells. Samuel Petto wrote cynically of such affairs, concluding, 'I think it not expedient to write anything concerning it, but I suppose you hear enough to put you in New England upon crying mightily to God for those in Old England which are of the same principles.'<sup>51</sup>

The year 1685 brought the death of Charles II and the succession of the Catholic heir, James II. James ruthlessly suppressed a revolt on behalf of the Duke of Monmouth. Authorities persecuted nonconformists with renewed vigor. Ichabod Chauncey, who himself retreated to the Netherlands, was one of those who sent Mather the news.<sup>52</sup> Others were more careful. In 1687, Samuel Baker wrote to Increase that 'There is no fault in any person but myself that you have not received letters from mee of late years as before. The only reason was because I wrote not, and of that because I judged it prudence to keep silence.'<sup>53</sup>

The network not only provided Mather and his fellow New Englanders with a Congregational interpretation of English affairs but it also updated them on political terminology. The terms 'Whig' and 'Tory' were first used in England in the summer of 1681. Less than three years later, Nathaniel Mather wrote that loyal addresses to the king had been received from Plymouth and Connecticut, but not from the Bay, 'by which,' he continued, 'I suspect you of Massachusetts are more whiggish & your neighbors more toryish; to express it in the language of late in use.'<sup>54</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, June 25, 1683, *ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>50</sup> Ichabod Chauncey to Increase Mather, Aug. 12, 1683, *ibid.*, p. 620.

<sup>51</sup> Samuel Petto to Increase Mather, Oct. 8, 1684, *ibid.*, p. 349.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1978), p. 255; see also Peter Earle, *Monmouth's Rebels* (New York, 1977).

<sup>53</sup> Samuel Baker to Increase Mather, 1687, *CMHS*, p. 513.

<sup>54</sup> Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, Mar. 26, 1684, *ibid.*, p. 55.

However, of all the news that crossed the Atlantic in these decades, the items of greatest interests to New Englanders such as Mather were reports on the status of English Puritanism and on the home government's colonial policy. Corresponding with Mather in 1663, William Hooke wrote of 'how Mr. Caryll & his Fellowship were taken upon a Lord's day . . . and how they were forthwith carried before the Magistrate,' while Samuel Petto reported in the 1670s that nonconformists 'were threatened . . . with a storm of judgement.'<sup>55</sup> More poignantly, in 1684 Joshua Churchill wrote, 'I cannot say such & such give you their service; they would have done it, had they known of my writing, or could I walk abroad (which I doe not, warrants being in severall hands for my apprehending).'<sup>56</sup>

For their part, the English Congregationalists were alert to threats to the Bay government because they saw New England as being a sanctuary for the 'true faith.' As early as 1677, friends such as Richard Blinman warned Mather of impending royal action against the colonies. In 1683, Blinman wrote a new warning that 'a *quo warranto* is gone out against your Patent in New England.'<sup>57</sup> In 1684, with the days of the Bay's autonomy numbered, Nathaniel Mather wrote, 'I cannot hear of any place in England where the Nonconformists are suffered to meet unmolested . . . Nor is their case better, but rather much more difficult in Scotland . . . At present I see no place that is like to bee quiet, unless you in New England bee. But if your charter be gone, & other Governors appoynted, I expect not any other but that your ministers must conform or bee packing.'<sup>58</sup>

Correspondence was, of course, a two-way street, and Increase Mather provided his English friends with news of co-

<sup>55</sup> William Hooke to John Davenport, Mar. 2, 1663, *CHST*, p. 269. Samuel Petto to Increase Mather, Feb. 21, 1679, *CMHS*, p. 347.

<sup>56</sup> Joshua Churchill to Increase Mather, Aug. 25, 1684, *ibid.*, p. 641.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Blinman to Increase Mather, Aug. 14, 1684, *ibid.*, p. 329; Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, Aug. 18, 1683, *ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>58</sup> Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, May 19, 1684, *ibid.*, p. 57.

lonial events. He described his concern for the decline of morality in the Bay. He also informed correspondents of material losses resulting from the ravages of King Philip's War and the Boston fire. In addition, more tangible forms of assistance from New England found their way across the Atlantic. An important function of the New England network was assisting in trans-oceanic migration. This meant introducing or recommending a member of one's congregation to another member of the network.<sup>59</sup> In some cases, this meant a formal dismissal of a layman to a church across the ocean.<sup>60</sup> Still other cases involved invitations to prominent English Congregationalists to settle in the colonies. New Englanders offered both John Owen and Thomas Goodwin prestigious Boston pulpits, but the Englishmen were unable to relocate.<sup>61</sup> Others were able to make the journey and begin new preaching careers in New England.

In another example of trans-Atlantic cooperation, the English members of the network were formally consulted in 1672 when the Bay's leaders were seeking a new president for Harvard.<sup>62</sup> Owen and his fellow Congregationalists in England joined in recommending Leonard Hoar, who travelled to New England and assumed the post.<sup>63</sup> This was not the only form of assistance that the network provided to Harvard. Some of

<sup>59</sup> Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, May 9, 1682, *ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>60</sup> *The Records of the First Church in Boston*, 5 vols., vol. 1 of the Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts 39(1961):44; Thomas Jollie to Increase Mather, Dec. 5, 1681, *CMHS*, p. 326.

<sup>61</sup> Eleazer Mather to John Davenport, July 4, 1662, *ibid.*, p. 193; John Hull, 'Memoirs and Diaries of John Hull,' *Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society* 3(1857):210; John Endecott in the name of the General Court to John Owen, Oct. 20, 1663, in Peter Toon, ed., *The Correspondence of John Owen* (London, 1970), pp. 135-36; *Records of the First Church in Boston*, *ibid.*, p. 59; Stanley Fienberg, 'Thomas Goodwin, Puritan Pastor and Independent Divine' (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1974), p. 341.

<sup>62</sup> The magistrates and ministers of Massachusetts to Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, Philip Nye and others, August 1671, in Toon, *Correspondence of John Owen*, pp. 149-51.

<sup>63</sup> John Owen and twelve others to the magistrates and ministers of Massachusetts, February 1672, *ibid.*, pp. 151-53.

Increase Mather's friends served as agents of the college in soliciting English contributions, and others sent books to the Harvard library.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, English friends eagerly received information on Harvard commencements.<sup>65</sup>

English members of the network frequently solicited the prayers of colonial Puritans. The plea of Samuel Petto—'We need your earnest prayers in New England for Old England. The dangers seem to be very great'—was often echoed in the letters of Mather's friends.<sup>66</sup> Such requests were invariably honoured, whether by individual congregations or by the colonial government, as when Massachusetts announced a day of humiliation to beseech God's favor for England during the height of the crisis engendered by Protestant efforts to exclude James Stuart from the succession.<sup>67</sup>

Prayer wasn't the only help in times of trial. In 1665, the plague struck down over 70,000 Londoners. Dissenting clergymen risked their lives staying in the city to minister to their congregations. The sufferings resulting from the epidemic worsened the already difficult circumstances that the persecuted dissenters had to cope with. In November of that year, Increase Mather preached a sermon to raise contributions for 'poor saints in England.' Later in the month he 'wrote letters to ministers in London about [the] Collection, etc.'<sup>68</sup>

Two crises of the 1670s in New England brought an outpouring of material assistance from England. The first crisis was King's Philip's War. Englishmen received news of the uprising from various colonial correspondents and welcomed Increase Mather's 1676 *Brief History of the War*. 'There were,' Thomas Bailey informed Mather, 'frequent & fervent remem-

<sup>64</sup> Morison, *Harvard in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 382–83.

<sup>65</sup> Samuel Baker to Increase Mather, Jan. 30, 1683, *CMHS*, p. 510.

<sup>66</sup> Samuel Petto to Increase Mather, Jan. 16, 1682, *ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>67</sup> *The Records of the General Court and Company of Massachusetts Bay*, ed. Nathaniel Shurtleff, 5 vols. (1853–54), 5:294.

<sup>68</sup> Increase Mather, *Diaries*, Nov. 6, 8, and 29, 1665, in *Mather Family Papers*, American Antiquarian Society.

branches of you, I suppose the kingdom throughout, in country places as well as others, & many solemn particular occasions & opportunities set apart to seek God for you, . . . New England being especially dear to all his; & a great measure of sympathy & spirit of prayer I well remember was seen . . . amongst his people here.<sup>69</sup> The same news came from John Westgate, who wrote in 1677 that 'the sad condition of New England . . . has been much upon our hearts; we have had many solemn days of humiliation, & the 25 of January last we had a solemn day of thanksgiving for the great deliverance the Lord had given you. This was very general among all the congregationall churches in City & country round about, we sending one to another, & agreeing of the day before hand, which was also kept by many of the Baptist congregations.'<sup>70</sup> Tangible support followed the prayers. John Owen's church and John Collins's church, both in London, were among those that raised funds for relief of the war's victims, and Nathaniel Mather organized a donation of provisions from the dissenting churches in Dublin.<sup>71</sup>

A major fire that destroyed much of Boston, including Increase Mather's home and the meetinghouse of his congregation followed hard on the ravages of the Indian war. Once again, the English members of the network organized prayers and other aid, many making contributions intended for victims of both the war and the fire.<sup>72</sup> Jane Hooke, wife of Wil-

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Bailey to Increase Mather, June 6, 1683, *CMHS*, pp. 488-89; Murdock, *Increase Mather*, p. 112; Richard S. Dunn, 'Imperial Pressures on Massachusetts and Jamaica, 1675-1700,' in Alison Gilbert Olson and Richard Maxwell Brown, eds., *Anglo-American Political Relations, 1675-1775* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1970), p. 58.

<sup>70</sup> John Westgate to Increase Mather, May 8, 1677, *CMHS*, p. 578.

<sup>71</sup> William Sachse, 'Harvard Men in England, 1642-1714,' *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 35(1951):142; Jane Hooke to Increase Mather, 1681, *CMHS*, p. 264, 267; John Eliot, James Allen, Increase Mather, and Thomas Thatcher to the Churches of Dublin, Feb. 11, 1677, *ibid.*, pp. 690-92; Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, Feb. 26, 1676, *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>72</sup> Jane Hooke to Increase Mather, Aug. 8, 1677, *ibid.*, p. 261; John Westgate to Increase Mather, May 8, 1677, *ibid.*, pp. 577-78.



liam Hooke, was especially active, collecting clothing and other supplies for poor ministers and others in need. She herself was a frequent correspondent of Mather's and undertook the additional task of distributing to the English donors tokens of colonial gratitude in the form of cranberries gathered by John Wilson of Medfield. Hooke later reported that the gifts were well received by the English benefactors.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to being used as a conduit for news and aid, the network served as a means by which English and American Congregationalists could cooperate in dealing with common problems of church polity. Such informal means of achieving unanimity were especially important for Congregationalists because of the lack of hierarchical authority over their churches. English and American leaders consistently showed respect for the views of their trans-Atlantic colleagues, even when they were unable to reach full agreement with them. Clergymen in the mother country held New England in special regard. Indeed, this is a frequent theme in the letters to Increase Mather. 'If I could tread upon New England ground,' wrote Joshua Churchill, 'I have often thought that I should fall down and kiss it.'<sup>74</sup> Samuel Craddock wrote that 'New England is a special place, nowhere else do the general population live so soberly and piously.'<sup>75</sup>

Nevertheless, the ravages of the Indian war and the Boston fire could be seen as punishments from God for colonial backsliding, and this view of New England's affairs worried some of Mather's friends. In 1677, John Westgate wrote that 'one sad judgement I hear already you have met with in your town of Boston by fire, burning down you meeting house, & a matter of 50 dwelling houses: In which rod of the Lord he speaks in particular to Boston . . . & calls you to a thorough reformation

<sup>73</sup> Jane Hooke to Increase Mather, Mar. 5, 1679, *ibid.*, p. 263; Jane Hooke to Increase Mather, June 4, 1678, *ibid.*, pp. 261-62; Jane Hooke to Increase Mather, Apr. 14, 1681, *ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>74</sup> Joshua Churchill to Increase Mather, Aug. 25, 1684, *ibid.*, p. 640.

<sup>75</sup> Samuel Craddock to Increase Mather, Sept. 23, 1684, *ibid.*, p. 642.

in your Town, you being set up as a Beacon upon the top of a mountain.'<sup>76</sup> The following year, Thomas Jollie also urged reform, declaring: 'The advice I humbly offer for your awakening to duty in the reforming of your manifest evils and for preventing of threatening ruin is, that a Synod be gathered for that purpose.'<sup>77</sup> Jollie went on to explain the scriptural precedents for such a synod and the practical advantages to be gained from such a course. These arguments enabled Increase to prevail upon his clerical brethren within the next year to petition the magistrates for the Reforming Synod of 1679.<sup>78</sup> The members of the synod appointed Increase Mather and Urian Oakes, both of whom had been in England in the 1650s, to head the committee assigned the task of drafting the synod's conclusions. On their recommendation, the synod adopted as part of its platform the Savoy Confession of Faith drawn up by English Congregationalists in 1658.<sup>79</sup> Thomas Jollie, Nathaniel Mather, and other members of the network in England wrote to congratulate Increase on the synod's results.<sup>80</sup>

The published writings of the leaders of English Congregationalism were also valued by Increase Mather. A perusal of Mather's surviving manuscript diaries from two decades after his return to New England reveals over forty notations indicating parts of days spent reading works by John Owen, more than twenty sessions with treatises by Thomas Goodwin, and additional time devoted to books by William Greenhill, Jeremiah Burroughes, William Bridge and Joseph Caryl. No other authors, English or American, are as well represented in the record Mather kept of what he read. A compari-

<sup>76</sup> John Westgate to Increase Mather, May 8, 1677, *ibid.*, p. 578.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas Jollie to Increase Mather, Feb. 18, 1678, *ibid.*, p. 320.

<sup>78</sup> Harold Watkins, 'The Ecclesiastical Contribution of Increase Mather' (Ph.D. diss., Pacific School of Religion, 1964), p. 206.

<sup>79</sup> Murdock, *Increase Mather*, p. 151.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas Jollie to Increase Mather, Dec. 5, 1681, *CMHS*, p. 327; Samuel Baker to Increase Mather, Jan. 30, 1683, *ibid.*, pp. 510-11; Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, Dec. 31, 1679, *ibid.*, p. 22.

son between the dates when he read works of the English Dissenters and the publication dates of books in Mather's actual library (held at the American Antiquarian Society) shows that he was able to obtain new works by these authors shortly after they were published in England.<sup>81</sup>

Jollie and other English clergy wrote to request as well as to offer advice. Among the various ecclesiastical questions troubling English divines was the problem of admission to the Lord's Supper.<sup>82</sup> Other friends sought guidance on the value of deacons and on millennial themes.<sup>83</sup> In 1682, Thomas Jollie travelled to London to discuss policies regarding clerical ordination with a group of ministers that included John Owen. As he told the story in his notebook, 'It was a special providence that I met with a letter from N.E. Mr. Mather about the case of ordination, which gave me advantage in my debate with some who did something oppose, but soon yielded.'<sup>84</sup> New England's debate over the Half-Way Covenant excited considerable interest in the network. In 1679, Thomas Waterhouse reported that years earlier he had discussed the issue with many fellow Nonconformists.<sup>85</sup>

One issue that posed a threat to the unity of the network was the matter of toleration. English Congregationalists had developed a more flexible attitude towards sectarians in response to the politics of the early 1640s. Faced with the prospect of a Presbyterian establishment, Congregationalists had

<sup>81</sup> The manuscript diaries of Increase Mather are in the Mather Family Papers at the American Antiquarian Society.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas Jollie to Increase Mather, Feb. 18, 1678, *CMHS*, p. 319.

<sup>83</sup> Daniel Hemingway to Increase Mather, June 4, 1686, *ibid.*, pp. 657-59; Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, Feb. 13, 1677, *ibid.*, p. 11; Samuel Craddock was one of many English clergymen with whom Mather exchanged views on millennial themes and various interpretations of the Book of Revelation; these exchanges deserve study in their own right. See, for example, Samuel Craddock to Increase Mather, *CMHS*, pp. 643-44.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas Jollie, notebook, pp. 49-50 in Jollie Papers, Dr. Williams's Library, London.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Jollie to Increase Mather, Aug. 23, 1679, *CMHS*, p. 324; Thomas Waterhouse to Increase Mather, Feb. 24, 1679, *ibid.*, p. 589.

banded together with Puritan sects to thwart the Presbyterians. Cotton, Davenport, and other New Englanders understood the compromise, although they disliked it, and were reassured in the 1650s when Congregationalists spoke out against theological extremes and advanced Calvinist orthodoxy. Even in the 1640s, leading English Congregationalists did not tolerate Arminians, Quakers, or other extreme groups.<sup>86</sup> Thomas Goodwin, John Owen and their brethren did, however, believe in cooperation with moderate Presbyterians and with the Particular Baptists of the Calvinist persuasion. Accepting Presbyterians caused no problems for New Englanders, who reluctantly tolerated Thomas Parker and John Noyes of Newbury and Peter Hobart of Hingham, but New England Puritans readily identified all Baptists with the horrors of Muenster or the heterodoxy of Rhode Island.

One of the persistent efforts of the English members of the network, then, was to persuade colonials to tolerate Baptists. Increase Mather, recipient of many of those pleas, tried to explain the colonial position. He first argued: 'I have been a poor laborer in the Lord's Vineyard in this place upwards of twenty years; and it is more than I know, if in all that time, any of those that scruple Infant-Baptism, have met with molestation from the Magistrate merely on account of their Opinion.'<sup>87</sup> Moreover, he maintained that New England Baptists were different: 'They say those of the Congregational way in England plead for Anabaptists' liberty as for their own . . . . When I was in England, I did so myself; and if I were there now, I would do so again; but that they should plead for liberty unto such practices as our Anabaptists have been guilty of is not easie to believe.'<sup>88</sup> To some extent, these protestations worked.

<sup>86</sup> Bremer, 'Puritan Crisis,' p. 160; Young, 'Good News,' p. 81; Finlayson, 'Independency,' pp. 309-10; on the limits of English Congregationalists' views on toleration see Tai Liu, *Discord in Zion: The Puritan Divines and the Puritan Revolution* (The Hague, 1973), p. 127.

<sup>87</sup> quoted in Murdock, *Increase Mather*, pp. 141-42.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

Jane Hooke, for one, wrote that she had been persuaded 'how New England was wronged about their cruelty about the anabaptists.'<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, under the cumulative pressures exerted by all their English friends, and reinforced by the generosity of English Baptists in aiding victims of King Philip's War and the Boston fire, New England leaders eased their restrictions on Baptists. Significantly, those most responsible for the change were leaders, such as Governor John Leverett, who had spent time in England during the Puritan regime of the mid-century and who were still in contact with friends in the mother country.<sup>90</sup> As in any such network, the system of friendships itself exerted pressure on the various parties to move towards a conformity that would ease the tensions caused by a difference in viewpoint. The result was eventually evident. In Increase Mather's case, the report that he prepared for the Reforming Synod saw the beginning of a thaw that climaxed in 1718 when he accepted an invitation to participate in the ordination of a Boston Baptist minister. His son, Cotton Mather, preached on the occasion.<sup>91</sup>

One of the factors in Mather's grudging toleration of the Baptists was his support for movements to restore the unity of the old Puritan faction. Here again his English friends influenced his views. Increase discussed the issue with his brothers, with Thomas Jollie, and with John Westgate.<sup>92</sup> Samuel Mather's *Irenicum*, written shortly before his death, tried to 'show wherein Presbyterians and . . . Congregational Men, and Antipedobaptists differ from each other, and that they ought to give the Right Hand of Fellowship to each other considering the greatness of their Agreements, and the smallness

<sup>89</sup> Jane Hooke to Increase Mather, April 14, 1681, *CMHS*, p. 265.

<sup>90</sup> Watkins, 'Ecclesiastical Contribution,' pp. 383-84.

<sup>91</sup> William McLoughlin, *New England Dissent, 1630-1833*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), 1, chs. 3-5; Isaac Backus, *History of New England*, 2 vols. ed. David Weston (Newton, Mass., 1871), 1:312.

<sup>92</sup> John Westgate to Increase Mather, May 8, 1677, *CMHS*, pp. 578-80; Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather, Mar. 28, 1682, *ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

of their Differences.<sup>93</sup> Nathaniel, after moving from Dublin to London, became one of the managers of the Common Fund, a board that supplied both Congregational and Presbyterian lecturers with needed financial support. Among his fellow board members were John Owen, Matthew Mead, and Isaac Chauncey, all network men. Among those funded was Comfort Starr, a Harvard classmate of Nathaniel's.<sup>94</sup> Increase found it hard to resist his relatives and trans-Atlantic colleagues.

The network had an additional role to play in the career of Increase Mather. In 1688, Mather travelled to England to represent the Bay colonists in seeking from James II a redress of their grievances against the unpopular governor of the Dominion of New England, Sir Edmund Andros. Before Mather's mission could produce results, King James was toppled from his throne by the Glorious Revolution. News of that event sparked a popular uprising in New England that resulted in the overthrow of the Dominion. Mather's new task became that of justifying the colonial rebellion to King William and gaining from the new monarch a restoration of the Bay's old autonomy.<sup>95</sup>

From the time when he arrived in London to seek relief for his colony from the tyranny of Edmund Andros, Increase Mather's network friends did all in their power to help. English Dissenters, part of the same ideological and social network to which Mather belonged, were eager to assist the New Eng-

<sup>93</sup> quoted in Sibley, *Graduates of Harvard*, 1:85.

<sup>94</sup> Albert Peel, 'Cooperation of Presbyterians and Congregationalists,' *CHST*, 12(1933-36), p. 155.

<sup>95</sup> Richard R. Johnson's *Adjustment to Empire: The New England Colonies, 1675-1715* (New Brunswick, 1981) provides the best available account of Mather's negotiations which demonstrates the negotiator's skill and success. Yet Johnson does not believe that religion provides the right key to understanding the events of the period and does not place Mather's supporters in the context of a stable support group. J. M. Sosin, *English America and the Revolution of 1688: Royal Administration and the Structure of Provincial Government* (Lincoln, Neb., 1982) discounts ideological motivation—rather than religious bigotry—in the revolt against Andros and in Mather's activities. He makes reference to the Dissenter assistance given Mather but fails to recognize either its roots or its scope.

lander for both personal and political reasons. Having arrived in London on May 25, 1688, Increase found lodgings in the home of Major Robert Thompson at Newington Green, an area containing the residences of numerous Congregational divines. Over the course of the next two years, he visited, dined, and conversed with many old friends he had corresponded with over the past decades, including his brother Nathaniel, Samuel Petto, Daniel Hemingway, Josual Churchill, Stephen Lobb, George Griffiths, and John Loder.<sup>96</sup> While he found a warm welcome among all his English friends, his most useful contact in the early days of his mission was with Stephen Lobb, Nathaniel's nephew, who led those clergymen who had been willing to deal with King James.<sup>97</sup> On May 28, Increase visited a group of Congregational ministers and sought their advice and aid. Although clergymen such as his brother Nathaniel, Matthew Mead, Thomas Jollie, and John Howe did not all have direct access to the court, they helped put Increase in touch with friends who did. With the assistance of these friends of friends, Mather was in a better position to make his mission a success. On May 29, he saw Stephen Lobb, and on the following day Lobb introduced him to James II. In the following months, Lobb continued to provide key aid, as did George Griffiths, Vincent Alsop, Lord Philip Wharton, Sir Henry Ashurst, and Sir John Thompson. Increase Mather met with James for the last time in October.<sup>98</sup> Four months later, William III was king.

With the change in monarch there was a change in those who had influence at the Court. As Mather explained in his autobiography, 'Providence ordered my acquaintance with such persons as did exceedingly advantage me for a most successful management of my negotiations. In King James time,

<sup>96</sup> Increase Mather, diaries, 1688-91 contain references to the numerous friends Mather encountered and enlisted in the New England cause.

<sup>97</sup> Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, 3:436.

<sup>98</sup> Simmons, 'Massachusetts Charter, p. 70; Richard R. Johnson, *Adjustments to Empire: The New England Colonies 1675-1715* (New Brunswick, 1981), pp. 137-44.

my acquaintance with . . . mr. Lob proved a mercy to New England . . . . After the Revolution my intimate acquaintance with Sr. Henry Ashurst proved a singular mercy.<sup>99</sup> Ashurst exerted himself to the utmost to aid Mather. So too did Lord Wharton, one of the few with influence both before and after the revolt, and other old friends such as John Howe and Matthew Mead, both of whom had come to know William while they were exiled in the Netherlands.<sup>100</sup> On one occasion, Mather recorded that 'Mr. Mead being with me, sayd to the King that Hee could not do anything more gratefull to his dissenting subjects in England than to be kind to New England in restoring to them their former privileges.'<sup>101</sup> While in London, Mather frequently assisted his clerical friends in their Sunday services, asking in return, as he put it, that 'they spare time to go unto such or such a great person of their acquaintance, & improve their interest in him for New England.'<sup>102</sup> Their help was one factor in producing the results Mather sought: the abolition of the Dominion of New England, the granting of the 1691 charter, and the establishment of Increase Mather's reputation as a skillful diplomat. He returned to New England with a public letter from numerous English Congregationalists praising his work on behalf of Massachusetts.<sup>103</sup>

Mather's stay in England was not only a political success. Working with Mead and Howe, he drew up the Heads of Agreement, a statement of essentials which formed the basis for a union of English Congregationalists and Presbyterians. His diary for 1691 contains a number of references to meetings with friends prominent in both denominations in order to per-

<sup>99</sup> Mather, *Autobiography*, pp. 326-27.

<sup>100</sup> Calamy, *Works of Reverend John Howe*, p. xxviii; Dunn, 'Imperial Pressures,' p. 70.

<sup>101</sup> Mather, *Autobiography*, p. 333.

<sup>102</sup> Murdock, *Increase Mather*, p. 198.

<sup>103</sup> 'An Extract of a Letter Written By Some of the Most Eminent Nonconformist Divines in London,' in Increase Mather, *A Brief Account Concerning Several of the Agents of New England, Their Negotiation at the Court* (London, 1691).



suade them of the merits of union; the diary also contains a copy of an expression of thanks sent him by 'the United Ministers of the County of Devon and the County of Exon' for his contribution to the Agreement.<sup>104</sup> Mather brought that back to New England as well, and in subsequent years he worked to gain colonial acceptance for the principles of the 'Happy Union.'<sup>105</sup>

Eventually the web of personal contacts, which had served Puritan leaders from John Cotton to Increase Mather, began to lose some of its vitality. The network had been built by friends who had worked shoulder to shoulder during times of trial. The Puritan Revolution had brought New Englanders to England for a renewal of face-to-face contact and a reinforcement of personal friendships. Increase Mather's charter mission provided him with a similar opportunity. But Mather was one of the last colonial leaders to have spent considerable time in England working with that nation's Puritan clergy, and he was the last New England clergyman to carry that kind of public trust across the Atlantic. Although in his remaining years Mather often longed to be dispatched again to England, the world had changed when Massachusetts became a royal colony. The relationship between the colony and the mother country became more structured and informal systems of influence such as the Congregational connection were less able to shape events. Formal lobbying groups with carefully defined concerns became the order of the day. In the 1720s, English Nonconformists organized the Dissenting Deputies as their lobby, and New Englanders increasingly relied on that group to represent their religious interests before court and Parliament. Colonial requests were received and considered as petitions from coreligionists, but not as missives from friends. Though some eighteenth-century clergymen, such as Benjamin Coleman, traveled to England and were known

<sup>104</sup> Mather, diary of 1691, addenda dated June 23, 1691.

<sup>105</sup> Watkins, 'Ecclesiastical Contribution,' p. 387.

there, most (including Increase Mather's son Cotton) were familiar only by reputations based on their written work. They corresponded and cooperated with leaders of English dissent, but the sense of brotherhood evident in the seventeenth-century records is missing in the eighteenth century. The nature of the trans-Atlantic connection had changed.

Some ideas and principles have an intrinsic appeal that leads some men to adopt them regardless of the consequences for their social, economic or political standing. But that argument should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the decision to accept or reject an idea or to pursue a new course of action does have implications for one's personal relationships. The Puritan clergy of old and New England formed a community in part because they were attracted to one another by a sense of shared experience and shared ideals. But they also maintained a community because their friendships provided channels for information and aid, as well as social pressures for conformity. The trans-Atlantic connection endured in the decades after the Restoration principally through the efforts of Increase Mather and his friends. For it was the news, advice, and tangible forms of aid, moving both ways across the ocean, that strengthened bonds of support and helped to insure that Puritans in both countries marched in cadence into the eighteenth century.

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