

In 1705 the Massachusetts clergy in part sought a means to prevent the local control from becoming more secularized and issued the much disputed Massachusetts proposals which would have bound the clergy together into protective associations and given them increased power over the churches. The plan was defeated and the Puritan forces continued to lose vitality.

In 1701 a platform was laid for a new college in Connecticut. This was Yale, formed by more conservative men as a corrective against certain tides and influences in Harvard. Can you see the pattern of history repeating itself around common goals? Harvard had been in existence for only 65 years at the time and already the platform of faith had been eroded to this degree.

We note also in the Massachusetts sphere the great revivals that occurred in the middle of the 18th century...we will note them later in a different heading. But in spite of the revivals, Christian influence in New England was in great difficulty due in part to the following: 1) the theocratic society attempt, 2) the great increase of persons not spiritually committed to the religious societies per se, 3) the distrust of other spiritual forces outside the immediate state control, and 4) the difficulty with having clerical standards that were meaningful and enforceable. New England quickly fell into a religious mold of semi-isolationism and defensiveness.

(b) New England divergencies

While there was a reasonable number of these, we will only note two at any length: the Connecticut move and the Rhode Island development.

In Connecticut the work of Thomas Hooker produced a new colonial religious center. Hooker was a strict Puritan in theology but had a wider view of community than the Massachusetts brethren held. He did not think all citizens should be bound to the church and made voting more than a matter of mere church membership. The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut were adopted in 1639 and while congregationalism was the form of most all of the churches, it was not a mandated affair. A group of Congregational ministers put together the "Saybrook" platform for fraternal relationships of ministers within the state in 1708. It was not binding but did offer the clergy a better platform for reform and redirection. Eventually it would lead to a lot of cooperative work with the presbyterians in New York and Pennsylvania.

Rhode Island was the second divergent group. It was the outgrowth of the theological concepts of Roger Williams and John Clark. Williams was a duly ordained Anglican who arrived in Boston in 1631. A man of considerable gift, he was offered pulpits in both Boston and Salem but declined for various reasons and soon began