



The Massachusetts Bay Company and New England Company (1640–1684): Exportation, Revaluation and the Demise of Corporate Theocratic Governance

Between 1640 and 1684, the theocratic governance that had successfully been established by the MBC paradoxically both advanced and weakened the company's governmental aims. By the end of almost a decade of providing an example of godly governance in New England, the leaders of the MBC faced a crisis of identity, as it seemed 'Old' England would follow its example. The company's leaders remaining in New England faced significant issues in maintaining the company's theocratic governance, with the conflict in England pushing Massachusetts into financial difficulty, as support from the godly in England declined.¹ In the wake of this crisis of identity, the MBC's supporters in England turned to the calls in the company's charter for evangelising Native America. To do this, they established a separate but intimately linked Evangelical Corporation to gain moral, political and financial support for this mission in England. First chartered by Parliament in 1649 and the Crown in 1662, the Native

¹ Bailyn, *New England Merchants*, pp. 44–46, 77–78.

American proselytising society, the New England Company (NEC), was born.²

A separate organisation, that helped to obtain financial help for the MBC, the NEC highlights the connection and friendship as ‘transatlantic siblings’ between the New and Old England legislature during the Interregnum.³ It also illustrates how, as for the New Jerusalem being built in Old England, New Englanders were forced to find new ways to legitimise their existence and did so by returning to their charter’s call to evangelise the Native Americans.⁴ Despite the MBC’s close affiliation to the parliamentary cause, the NEC continued to survive and gain support after the Restoration, promoting itself as a ‘missionary enterprise’.⁵ However, the evangelical actions of the MBC gradually became more and more aggressive, not only towards Native Americans, but also other English settlers in the surrounding areas as well. Already hostile to the religious others, and prone to acts of religious extremism, the evangelical awakening of the 1640s served to increase the religious belligerence of the leaders and members of the MBC. By using its theocracy to justify territorial acquisition from both English settlers and Native Americans, subsequently attempting to govern their behaviour in line with the godly.

² William Kellaway, *The New England Company, 1649–1776: Missionary Society to the American Indians* (London: Longmans, 1961); Gabriel Glickman, ‘Protestantism, Colonization, and the New England Company in Restoration Politics’, *Historical Journal*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (2016), pp. 365–391; Stern, ‘The Weld-Peter Mission to England’ (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1935), pp. 118–277; Moore, *Pilgrims*, pp. 108, 111.

³ Karen Bross, *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons: Praying Indians in Colonial America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–51; Elise M. Brenner, ‘To Pray or To Be Prey: That is the Question Strategies for Cultural Autonomy of Massachusetts Praying Town Indians’, *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1980), pp. 135–152; Kenneth M. Morrison, ‘That Art of Coyning Christians: John Eliot and the Praying Indians of Massachusetts’, *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1974), pp. 77–92; Robert James Naeher, ‘Dialogue in the Wilderness: John Eliot and the Indian Exploration of Puritanism as a Source of Meaning Comfort, and Ethical Survival’, *New England Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (1989), pp. 346–368; Constance Post, ‘Old World Order in the New: John Eliot and ‘Praying Indians’ in Cotton Mather’s *Magnalia Christi Americana*’, *New England Quarterly*, Vol. 66, No. 3 (1993), pp. 416–433; Linford D. Fisher, ‘Native Americans, Conversion, and Christian Practice in Colonial New England, 1640–1730’, *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 102, No. 1 (2009), pp. 101–124; Rex, ‘Indians and Images’, pp. 61–93.

⁵ Bross, *Dry Bones*, p. 3.

It also provided the moral justification for long-held attitudes and opinions towards forced conversion or banishment upon pain of death of those who did not adhere to the MBC's strict Congregational moral code.

From the mid-1660s onwards, news, petitions and letters returned from America to England reporting increasingly hostile acts of religious intolerance and political exclusion by the MBC. These were sent by not only Native Americans, but also English settlers from neighbouring colonies who were worried about the aggressive territorial pursuits being conducted from Boston.⁶ The Restoration of the monarchy in 1661 left the MBC politically isolated across the Atlantic, and the information being passed on to the returned royals was not well received. Furthermore, the MBC, and its members' association with Parliament, had left them politically vulnerable, and the MBC's unwillingness to accept the presence of Anglicans aggravated Charles even more. A further blow was dealt to the MBC's theocracy by the King's brother James, Duke of York, who during this period embarked on a public campaign for religious toleration, calling for a 'Magna Carta for liberty of Conscience'.⁷ Pressure from royal religious policies and the changing attitudes towards Protestant diversity within England was matched by an increasing religious and political intransigence in the government in Boston.

Growing divisions between the two leaderships and the internal religious and political issues that caused division amongst not only the New Englanders but also between themselves and the Native American population, eventually resulted in conflict between 1675 and 1676. King Philip's War brought to the surface the growing discontent many Native Americans felt towards the evangelical policies of the MBC members

⁶ Pulsipher, *Subjects*, pp. 40–66; Daniel R. Mandell, *King Philip's War: Colonial Expansion, Native Resistance, and the End of Indian Sovereignty* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), p. 37; Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 57, 311, 318.

⁷ For recent work on calls for 'liberty of conscience' following the Restoration, see Scott Sowerby, 'Of Different Complexions: Religious Diversity and National Identity in James II's Toleration Campaign', *English Historical Review*, Vol. 124 (2009), pp. 29–52; Sowerby, 'Forgetting the Repealers: Religious and Historical Amnesia in Later Stuart England', *Past & Present*, No. 215 (2012), pp. 85–123; Sowerby, *Making Toleration: The Repealers and the Glorious Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

and their government.⁸ Alongside Anglo-Native hostilities, the government of the MBC continued to pursue aggressive policies, seeking to annex and threaten the jurisdictions of other English colonies. The period between 1660 and mid-1684 in New England was marred by factionalism, growing authoritarianism and conflict that ‘warranted royal intervention’.⁹ From 1680 onwards, the leadership of the MBC confronted growing royal scrutiny with an increasingly ‘peculiar obduracy’, continually asserting the autonomy and authority of their religious government and forcing Charles II’s hand.¹⁰ In June 1684, a *quo warranto* was issued against the colony and by October that year, the Court of Chancery, by writ of *scire facias*, revoked the 65-year-old corporate charter of the MBC. The revocation of the charter abolished the theocratic government of the MBC and placed control of the government of Massachusetts in the Crown’s hands, ending the godly experiment of the MBC’s founders.

TERRITORY AND THE EXPANSION OF THEOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

In England, Parliament and the Privy Council began to receive petitions from disgruntled settlers in Massachusetts who wished for the authorities in England to force the MBC into adopting a more liberal approach. One of many incidents involved a man who had his ears cropped, following

⁸ Pestana, *Protestant Empire*, p. 210; for extensive discussion on King Philip’s War, see Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, pp. 140–300; James David Drake, *King Philip’s War: Civil War in New England, 1675–1676* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999); Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage, 1999), pp. 71–124; James Drake, ‘Symbol of a Failed Strategy: The Sassamon Trail, Political Culture, and the Outbreak of King Philip’s War’, *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1995), pp. 111–141; Philip Ranlet, ‘Another Look at the Causes of King Philip’s War’, *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (1988), pp. 79–100; Virginia DeJohn Anderson, ‘King Philip’s Herds: Indians, Colonists, and the Problem of Livestock in Early New England’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (1994), pp. 601–624.

⁹ Drake, *King Philip’s War*, p. 194.

¹⁰ Richard Johnson, *Adjustment to Empire: The New England Colonies, 1675–1715* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1981), p. 64.

which he was deported to England. His crime had been ‘uttering malicious and scandalous speeches against the government and church’.¹¹ Upon returning, the man signed an affidavit, that called for the end of self-sovereignty in the MBC. Similarly, the Presbyterian entrepreneur and scientist Robert Child tried unsuccessfully to obtain the support of Parliament in forcing the MBC to adopt a more liberal form of religious governance, allowing for ‘liberty of Conscience’ and the enfranchisement of all ‘truly English’ Protestants.¹² After gaining significant public support in the colony, Child’s petition was met with anger amongst the leadership of the MBC, who accused him of throwing ‘shame and dirt upon our church and government.’¹³ Child was tried and fined. Following this, he attempted to return to England to take up his grievance with Parliament; however, he would be unsuccessful. Arrested whilst trying to board his ship back to England, Child was charged with sedition and fined £250, the equivalent of the MBC’s entire tax revenue for the whole month, and imprisoned. Despite his best attempts, Child’s grievances were dismissed by Parliament. Child would eventually return to England, and although he would never return to New England, he did remain in contact with several prominent New Englanders, including the younger Winthrop. In 1648, he would write to Winthrop about the possibilities of a glassworks at Long Island.¹⁴ For many, the only way to get the authorities in the MBC to change their theocratic government was to seek support from authorities in England.

Despite reports of negative reaction and hostile publications, aimed towards the MBC’s theocratic governance across the Atlantic, the company did receive vocal support in ‘Old’ England. One anonymous writer declared that Baptists, Antinomians and Quakers were made up of people of an ‘unstayed spirit’, and as such were able to ‘abide to be so

¹¹ Charles Francis Adams, *Three Episodes of Massachusetts History*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1892), I: p. 259.

¹² Child’s fellow signatories were John Smith, Thomas Fowle, John Dand, Thomas Burton, Samuel Maverick and David Yale; see Hutchinson, *Collection of Original Papers*, pp. 188–196; *RCM*, III: pp. 90–91; *Winthrop Papers*, V: pp. 140–141; Francis J. Bremer, *John Winthrop: America’s Forgotten Founding Father* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 366–369; Margret E. Newell, ‘Robert Child and Entrepreneurial Vision: Economy and Ideology in Early New England’, *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (1995), pp. 246–252.

¹³ *RCM*, III: p. 91.

¹⁴ *Winthrop Papers*, V: pp. 140–141.

pinioned with the strict Government in the Commonwealth, or Discipline in the Church' like that of the MBC.¹⁵ Nathaniel Ward went so far as to proclaim that those who criticised the MBC's government and instead supported the models of religious governance being established in the Protectorate England were insincere in their own faiths. According to Ward, 'he that is willing to tolerate any Religion, or discrepant way of Religion besides his own, unless it be in matters merely indifferent, either doubts of his own, or is not sincere in it'.¹⁶ In the period between 1640 and 1660, many of those who returned to England not only did so to seek support against the MBC's theocratic government, but to encourage its adoption in England. In the years surrounding the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, large numbers of New England émigrés returned to England to take part in the growing conflict in England.¹⁷ As both moderates, as well as a substantial element of the homegrown, educated individuals and families, left Massachusetts for England in this period, individuals whose ideals fell at the extremes of the company's conservative base increasingly filled the MBC's governmental positions.

Consequently, the MBC became progressively more theocratic, adopting an aggressive approach to ensuring its predominance on the north-east coast of America. Increasingly focused on issues of behaviour, the government of the MBC became more and more paranoid that remigration of godly families and men had led to the debasement of their society. For example, Essex County showed an increase in issues of lawlessness in their godly society, citing what may be considered minor incidents involving 'false weights, illegal sale of liquor' and 'abuse of

¹⁵ Anonymous, *New England's First Fruit* (London, 1643), p. 26.

¹⁶ Nathaniel Ward, *The Simple Cobler of Aggawamm In America. Willing to help mend his Native Country lamentably tattered both in upper-Leather and sole, with all the honest stitches he can take. And as willing never to be paid for his work, by Old English wonted pay. It is his Trade to patch all the year long, gratis, Therefore I pray gentlemen keep your purses* (London: 1647), p. 8.

¹⁷ Moore, *Pilgrims*, pp. 64–72; William L. Sachse, 'The Migration of New Englanders to England, 1640–1660', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (1948), pp. 251–278; Andrew Delbanco, 'Looking. Homeward, Going Home: The Lure of England for the Founders of New England', *New England Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (1986), pp. 358–386; Harry S. Stout, 'The Morphology of Remigration: New England University. Men and their Return to England, 1640–1660', *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1976), pp. 151–172.

constables'.¹⁸ The growing paranoia led to arbitrary actions by the MBC's government, similar in many ways to those that had enraged many of the original company members in England, in the 1620s. This included the MBC's imposition of royal prerogative through the enforcement of trading monopolies, which the Puritans had rallied against in England. By the 1640s, New England magistrates imposed regional monopolies for Indian trade and iron making, whilst also granting monopolies on the receiving of ships at port to certain merchants who were loyal to the theocratic governance of the company.¹⁹

Mirroring the internal policy, the company's leadership also began to adopt progressively more authoritarian responses towards those outside the MBC's legal jurisdiction. Although the MBC's use of banishment had for a brief time 'limited the damage' of internal religious disputes, it fuelled the MBC's leadership's paranoia towards those religious groups that had been banished and settled elsewhere.²⁰ They began aggressively seeking to secure their own internal authority and identity by imposing their theocratic governance over neighbours. In 1643, the MBC joined the Plymouth, Connecticut and New Haven colonies, becoming the senior governmental authority in the New England Confederation. The confederation connected colonies with similar theocratic governments to ensure the regional dominance of their religious authoritarianism. Through the combined force of the confederation, the MBC, during the Interregnum, embarked on a series of annexations across New England, in an attempt to bring the less-populated fringe colonies of New Hampshire, Maine and Rhode Island under the legal authority of the company.²¹ Winthrop justified this action by highlighting the uniformity of the confederation as being in opposition to these colonies that had a 'different course from us both in their ministry and civil administration' and consequently were a risk to the security of the MBC's theocratic governance.²²

¹⁸ David T. Koning, *Law and Society in Puritan Massachusetts: Essex County, 1629–1692* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), pp. 27–30.

¹⁹ RCM: I: p. 142; II: pp. 62, 81, 125–128 Hosmer, *Winthrop's Journal*, I: p. 152: Bailyn, *New England Merchants*, pp. 24, 64.

²⁰ Moore, *Pilgrims*, p. 37.

²¹ Robert Bliss, *Revolution and Empire: English Politics and the American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 83–86.

²² *Winthrop's Journal*, II: p. 99.

Each of these colonies had been peopled predominantly by the religious exiles banished by the MBC's theocratic governance. They were made up of significant populations of Quakers, Baptists, Antinomians and, in Maine, Anglicans all of whom had been ostracised and persecuted by MBC authorities. Many of these small settlements were faced with problems of size, legitimacy and religious difference, as few possessed the legal titles to govern. Maine claimed governmental authority through Sir Fernando Gorges's loosely held proprietary grant, which was weakened by his death in 1647. Roger Williams secured Rhode Island through a charter from Parliament between 1643 and 1644, whilst others had tried to produce dubious patents, either through private purchase or communal compacts.²³ For many of these smaller settlements, the authority of the MBC's charter and government superseded their legitimacy: a fact that MBC leaders knew only too well, as they moved quickly to annex New Hampshire and Maine in 1652, under the pretext of protection. Following their assimilation, the MBC leaders extended their authority, seeing it as their chartered right to ensure that 'we [the MBC] could protect them'.²⁴ The MBC did have some local support, offering land titles, local rule, freedom of worship and protection from the French. However, this was disingenuous, as it became quickly apparent that freedom to worship and local rule fell into the very narrow confines of the MBC's theocratic governance.²⁵ Moreover, the MBC's annexation was an attempt to bring an outpost of Quakers and Anglicans under its watchful gaze, imposing its theocratic governance over these colonies. As the court records for Maine highlight, following its acquisitions, the number of cases for religious infringements, such as Sabbath breaking, neglect of public worship, drunkenness and swearing, became more frequent as Maine's government adopted the new order.²⁶

The MBC's attempts to annex Rhode Island proved more difficult. Formerly the Providence Plantation, Rhode Island, more so than any other New England colony, had been founded by, and welcomed, the

²³ Bliss, *Revolution and Empire*, p. 83.

²⁴ *RCM*, IV, pt. 2: pp. 265–270.

²⁵ For support from Maine, see William Willis, ed., *Collections of the Maine Historical Society*, 9 vols., 1st series (Portland, ME: Brown Thurston, 1865), I: pp. 385–389.

²⁶ Charles Thornton Libby and Robert E. Moody, ed., *Maine Province and Court Records*, 5 vols. (Portland: Maine Historical Society, 1928–1931), II: pp. 12–14 (hereafter *MPCR*).

religious and political exiles of the MBC, and so was perceived as a risk to the theocratic governance of the company. For the leadership of the MBC, this risk was most clearly illustrated by the religiously heterodox formation of government founded by Roger Williams in Rhode Island, which granted ‘soul liberty’ to all Christians.²⁷ Williams objected to any form of religious coercion, repeatedly associating it with rape, and sought to establish a society free of its practice.²⁸ As the MBC’s orthodoxy increased, Rhode Island became a ‘receptacle for people of Several Sorts and Opinions’ fleeing theocratic governance in Massachusetts.²⁹ As one Rhode Islander, Gregorie Dexter, would sarcastically proclaim to Henry Vane, they had not ‘been consumed with the over-zealous fire of the (so called) Godly and Christian magistrates’ of the MBC.³⁰ Although Rhode Island had escaped the magistrates of the MBC, it did not mean that they had escaped their gaze, and Rhode Islanders were keenly aware of this.

The MBC’s leaders justified their aggressive attempts to annex territories through its corporate charter, even as they faced growing opposition from English settlers and Native American communities. Since late 1643, Samuel Gorton had purchased land from the Narragansett sachem Miantonomi, triggering a minor conflict that brought Gorton, Rhode Island and the MBC into direct conflict. A local Shawomet sachem, Pomham, had petitioned that the land sold to Gorton was his and went to the MBC to help him get it back. The MBC were more than willing to take up arms against Gorton, whom they had banished some years earlier as a vocal opponent of the company’s theocratic governance. Unable to defend themselves against the attack, Gorton and his supporters, both English and Native American, were forced to flee. Gorton, along with Miantonomi’s uncle Canonicus and brother Pessacus, delivered a letter to Charles I in 1644, submitting themselves and their land to

²⁷ Roger Williams, *Queries of the Highest consideration* (London: 1644), p. 3.

²⁸ Williams, *The Bloody Tenant Yet More Bloody* (London: 1652), pt. 2, pp. 190–192; Pestana, *The English Atlantic*, p. 127.

²⁹ Quoted in Thomas Williams Bicknell, *The History of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*, 7 vols. (New York, NY: The American Historical Society, 1920), II: pp. 634–637.

³⁰ John Russell Bartlett, *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantation in New England, 1636–1663*, 2 vols. (Providence, RI: A.C. Greene and Brothers, 1856), I: pp. 228–289 (hereafter *RCHIP*).

‘His Majesties’ royal protection’.³¹ Consequently, upon their return they informed the MBC that, as ‘being subject now, (& that with joint & voluntary consent,) unto the same king’, disputes could no longer be resolved between English settlers and Native Americans by colonial officials, as this prerogative was the King’s alone.³² Horrified at this response, Winthrop argued that ‘Gorton’s company’ had written the letter themselves. MBC officials then sent a messenger to inquire whether Gorton had in fact written the letter.³³ Following the King’s defeat and the Interregnum, the MBC continued, once again, to try to advance the reach of its theocratic government into Rhode Island’s territory, as well as over local Native American communities. In response, Roger Williams and John Clarke returned to England to obtain a patent from Parliament securing the Islanders’ independence from the encroaching theocratic governance of the MBC. To combat the company’s expansionist aims, English and Native American neighbours of the MBC either embraced its theocratic model or adopted English methods of political opposition in order to secure their own forms of ‘corporate’ autonomy against the company.

The MBC’s aggression over this period was not only down to the rise of the conservative base, but also the angst that surrounded the downfall of the Crown in England. For many in the MBC, the establishment of godly government in England had marked the end of its role and so its leaders and thinkers sought to quickly find a new role for their godly corporate governance in this new English Atlantic world. During this period, however, the MBC’s leadership also sought another solution to its crisis of identity in the evangelism of Native Americans, turning the company and Massachusetts into a missionary enterprise.³⁴

Despite the obligation set out in its charter to evangelise, the MBC leadership had abandoned its charge in favour of establishing theocratic

³¹ *RCHIP*, I: p. 133; Jenny Hale Pulispher discusses this incident in detail, pointing out that the MBC government’s aggressiveness caused division amongst the New England colonies and as such caused conflicts across the century, which would ‘draw in Indians and the authority of the crown’: *Subjects*, pp. 4, 27–31.

³² David Pulsifer, ed., *Records of the Plymouth Colony*, 12 vols. (Boston, MA: W. White, 1855–1861), X: pp. 415–416 (hereafter *PCR*).

³³ *Winthrop’s Journal*, p. 509.

³⁴ Bross, *Dry Bones*, p. 4.

governance and it was wary of making the same mistakes as the religious government of the VC.³⁵ This partially had to do with the memory of evangelism and its role in the downfall of the VC, whilst also being connected to Congregationalist ideas of conversion. The followers of the MBC believed that true conversion had to involve both an outward and internal confession. As the great evangelist Roger Williams would warn of conversion, ‘God’s way is first to turn a soul from its Idols, both of heart, worship and conversation, before it is capable of worship, to the true and living God’.³⁶ To know the true living God, one had to be able to hear the voice of God, this being the Bible.³⁷ This highlighted the theological difficulty for Congregationalists in the early years of the MBC’s theocracy, of understanding how true conversion could take place, when the voice of God had not been translated into Algonquin. Even Williams highlighted the difficulty of translating ideas and ‘the mysteries of Christ Jesus’ into Native American languages. John Eliot had to overcome these reservations when he first preached in Algonquin in 1646.³⁸ Across the Atlantic, the lack of Native American evangelism in Massachusetts did not go unnoticed. William Castell, along with 76 other ministers, petitioned Parliament to encourage evangelism, as it was a ‘great and general neglect of this Kingdoms, in not propagating the Glorious Gospel’ in New England.³⁹ The same year, the MBC’s General Court sent Thomas Weld and Hugh Peter to England to meet with the colony creditors, an action that would influence the future of theocratic governance of the company and evangelism in New England.⁴⁰

Two years after Castell’s petition and the arrival of Peter and Weld in England, the MBC ordered its agents in London to publish the tract *New England First Fruits*, highlighting that, just as Parliament was succeeding

³⁵ *Winthrop Papers*, II: pp. 106–152.

³⁶ Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America, or An help to the Language of the Natives in that part of America called New-England* (London: 1643), p. 129.

³⁷ Cotton, *The Bloody Tenent, washed, and made white in the bloud of the Lambe: being discussed and discharged of bloud-guiltiness by just defence* (London: 1647).

³⁸ Williams, *Yet More Bloody*, p. 219; Glickman, ‘New England Company’, p. 372; Kellaway, *The New England Company*, pp. 5–7.

³⁹ William Castell, *A Petition of W.C. exhibited to the high court of Parliament now assembled, for propagating of Gospel in America, and the West Indies, and for the settling of our plantations there* (London: 1641), sig. A5v, p. 10.

⁴⁰ Stern, ‘The Weld-Peter Mission’, p. 219; Moore, *Pilgrims*, p. 108.

in England, the MBC was remembering its charter's evangelical charge. The commonwealth and the New England Mission became 'transatlantic siblings', emerging at the same time as solutions to issues of identity in religious politics.⁴¹ Following the publication of *First Fruits*, the MBC's proselytising aims obtained growing support on both sides of the Atlantic. Whilst ministers in Massachusetts began to evangelise, in England reports of these ministers' works were published in pamphlets. By the winter of 1645, the General Court in Boston had made formal requests to ministers to consider what could be done to embark on some form of evangelical agenda.⁴² Following a series of pamphlets initiated in 1648 by Thomas Shepard and the publication of his tract *The clear-sunshine of the gospel*, the necessity of evangelism was finally considered. However, it would not be till the publication of Edward Winslow's tract, dedicated to Parliament in the spring of 1649, that any legislative progress was made.⁴³ Winslow noted that although the '*English* were not wholly negligent' and that the MBC had 'begat a good opinion of our persons' amongst the local Native Americans population, encouraging them to 'affect our Laws and Government', there was still much more to be done.⁴⁴ By the summer of that year, the 'Act for promoting and propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in New England' was passed.⁴⁵ This act laid the foundations for the establishment of England's first overseas evangelical company thirteen years later, offering a financial life raft to the struggling MBC. Through the society, and later the NEC, the MBC was able to obtain funds in England to support the evangelical aims of its government. Moreover, it signified a slow but noticeable change in the way in which the English state saw the responsibility of religion overseas slowly move away from chartered commercial companies to specifically evangelical corporations.

The establishment of the first evangelical corporation marked the beginning of a gradual change in domestic ideas on the character of

⁴¹ Bross, *Dry Bones*, pp. 6–7.

⁴² RCM, II: pp. 84, 134, 166; III: pp. 85, 96, 97.

⁴³ Winslow, *The Glorious Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New England manifested by three letters under the hand of the famous instrument of the Lord, Mr. John Eliot, and another from Mr. Thomas Mayhew Jun., both preachers of the world, as well to the English as Indians in New England* (London: 1649).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴⁵ July 1649: An Act for the promoting and propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in New England', in Firth and Rait, *Acts and Ordinances*, II: pp. 197–200.

English overseas expansion of corporate authority, and the role of religion within it. The act was passed calling for so ‘glorious a propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ amongst those poor heathen’ as to successfully achieve this ‘one Body Politic and Corporate in Law’.⁴⁶ This corporation was to be called ‘The President and Society for propagation of the Gospel in New England’, and after the Restoration would be known as the New England Company. Structurally, it was much like any corporate body, including the MBC; it had a president, a treasurer and a court of assistants. However, unlike the MBC, its government, according to its charter, was to remain in England.

The Society quickly drew support from mostly wealthy Congregationalist and independent merchants in London, who immediately set about raising funds and publishing a series of tracts highlighting the evangelical aims of the corporation.⁴⁷ The tracts offered an insight into conversion of Native Americans, who had been enlightened by the ‘clear-sunshine of the gospel’.⁴⁸ These tracts not only illustrate the reformation of Native Americans, but also the wholesale reimagining of the purpose of the MBC,

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 197–98.

⁴⁷ Between 1651 and 1660 the company published five tracts: Henry Whitfield, *The light appearing more and more towards the perfect day. Or, a farther discovery of the present state of the Indians in New-England, concerning the progresse of the Gospel amongst them. Manifested by letters from such as preacht to them there* (London: 1651); Whitfield, *Strength out of Weakness. Or a Glorious Manifestation of the further Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New-England* (London: 1651); John Eliot, *Tears of repentance: Or, a further narrative of the progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians in New-England: setting forth, not only their present state and condition, but sundry confessions of sin by diverse of the said Indians, wrought upon by the saving power of the Gospel; together with the manifestation of their faith and hope in Jesus Christ, and the work of grace upon their hearts* (London: 1653); Eliot, *A late and further manifestation of the progress of the gospel amongst the Indians in New-England declaring their constant love and zeal to the truth: with a readiness to give account of their faith and hope, as of their desires in church communion to be partakers of the ordinances of Christ: being a narrative of the examinations of the Indians, about their knowledge in religion, by the elders of the churches* (London: 1655); Eliot, *A further account of the progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians in New England: being a relation of the confessions made by several Indians (in the presence of the elders and members of several churches) in order to their admission into church-fellowship. Sent over to the corporation for propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ amongst the Indians in New England at London* (London: 1660).

⁴⁸ Thomas Shepard, *The clear sun-shine of the gospel breaking forth upon the Indians in New-England. Or, An historicall narration of Gods wonderfull workings upon sundry of the Indians, both chief governors and common-people, in bringing them to a willing and desired submission to the ordinances of the gospel; and framing their hearts to an earnest*

along with other New England governments. They suggested that their mission was no longer to set a godly example for English brethren but to propagate godly governance within New England's Native American population. As Henry Whitfield wrote, 'the Lord hath now declared one great end he had of sending many of his people to those ends of the earth' and that was the conversion of the Native American people to God's governance.⁴⁹ Such a movement was perceived by John Eliot as an alternative conquest, which traded the violent conquest pursued by the Spanish—and replicated by the settlers of the MBC—for a benevolent occupation of the soul and mind. Writing in 1652, Eliot explained that many who had settled in America 'have only sought their own advantage to possess their Land, Transport their gold, and that with so much covetousness and cruelty'.⁵⁰ In doing so, they had 'made the name of Christianity and of Christ an abomination', both for their own and for Native Americans.⁵¹ Part of this abomination lay in the perceived ideas of the genuine conversion: a convert by violent conquest had not truly repented. Instead, Eliot's benevolent conquest, in line with Puritan theology, would be like the planting of the 'mustard seed' that would slowly grow and amount to true believers in Christ.⁵² Authors would then revel in informing their readers of the successes of evangelism, offering examples of true conversion and confession of Native Americans such as Monequassun and Toteswamp.⁵³ It was precisely this slow mission that the MBC leaders now embraced, rebranding their theocratic governance following the evangelical agenda taking hold in England.

This subtle but nonetheless noticeable shift in policy for the MBC's theocratic governance towards active evangelism was not only triggered by an identity crisis triggered by moral superiority, but also by economic incentive. This incentive was both spiritual and real, offering 'comfort to your own accounts in the day of the lord', whilst also providing those

inquirie after the knowledge of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world (London: 1648); Bross, *Dry Bones*, p. 9.

⁴⁹ Whitfield, *The Light Appearing*, pp. 44–45.

⁵⁰ Eliot's letter in Whitfield, *Strength out of Weakness*, Introduction.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² John Wilson, *The Day-Breaking, If Not the Sun-Rising of the Gospell with the Indians in New-England* (1647), frontispiece, pp. 16, 23.

⁵³ Eliot, *Tears of Repentance*, p. 16; Eliot, *A Late and Further Manifestation*, pp. 7–8.

in the MBC and the rest of New England with a financial lifeline.⁵⁴ The Wars of the Three Kingdoms, return migration and a downturn in trade had left the colony facing an economic crisis, and the knitting together of a religious agenda with financial speculation offered a possible reprieve. In 1648, John Eliot linked conversion to the growth of material wealth amongst both Native Americans and English settlers, as converted Native Americans sought to adopt the practices of English ‘civil’ society. The example one evangelist gave involved the natives adopting English clothing, suggesting that Native American conversion would lead to a rise in the sale of English textiles and clothing, describing how Praying Indians ‘have some more cloths’ than the ‘wicked Indians’ who practised their own faiths.⁵⁵ Shepard would go on to write that, at one public sermon, so many Native Americans arrived dressed in English clothing that ‘you would scarce know them from English people.’⁵⁶ The financial possibilities opened up through convert communities were not only limited to textiles, but also extended to technology, architecture and construction, and were key to the evangelical mission.⁵⁷ Conversion equated to the wholesale adoption of English Protestant civility over barbarous Native American practices, and as such it opened up new markets for colonists’ goods.

As well as emphasising the new markets for English goods opened by evangelism, the Society’s supporters also reminded people in England of the need for financial support to maintain its success. Just as the economy in Massachusetts was faltering, dependent on long-absent money and support from England, the wealthy came forth ordering merchants to ‘part with your Gold to promote the Gospel’.⁵⁸ Eliot went further, comparing ‘souls’ to ‘Merchandize’ to be invested in and exchanged in churches, in a ‘heavenly Trade’.⁵⁹ The collection of money was further

⁵⁴ Shepard, *Clear Sun-Shine*, p. 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 26–27.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11; for more on clothing, status and symbolism in the New England during the seventeenth century, see Ann M. Little, “‘Shoot That Rogue, for He Hath an Englishman’s Coat On!’: Cultural Cross-Dressing on the New England Frontier, 1630–1760”, *New England Quarterly*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (2001), pp. 240–242.

⁵⁷ Bross, *Dry Bones*, p. 24.

⁵⁸ Eliot, *A Further Account of the Progress*, pp. 4–6, 167; Winslow, *The Glorious Progress*, p. 27.

⁵⁹ Eliot, *A Late and Further Manifestation*, p. 4; Bross, *Dry Bones*, p. 33.

helped by the Society securing the interest of Cromwell, an achievement greatly lauded by the commissioners in Boston, who wrote, ‘we are glad to hear of the Religious care which the right honorable Lord General evidences in so promoting the service of Christ in publishing the Gospel amongst these poor heathens’.⁶⁰ Moreover, much to the commissioners’ delight, Cromwell’s support encouraged further investment from the army and the parishes.⁶¹ However, the corporation’s success and widespread popularity also brought with it unwanted scrutiny, and claims of fraud quickly followed. The Society was referred to the Council of State in 1655, which ordered the Society to collect its money efficiently.⁶² This was followed quickly by the Council of State ordering that the Society submit its records to each member of the council. However, the Society went on the defensive when, once again, they were asked to return in January and were ordered to find a new treasurer.⁶³ Much like the VC three decades previously, the NEC would at times face problems in securing financial support for its financial and spiritual mission. Like its corporate predecessor in Virginia, the NEC tried to secure financial support for its mission through the ecclesiastical establishment in England.

From an early stage, Society officials received complaints from donors who were unhappy that they received little information on how the money was being spent. In 1649, Edward Winslow wrote to a colleague that ministers who had previously met at Sion College were refusing to give and collect money ‘because they were unsatisfied in monies they had formerly collected for transporting children to New England and never knew how it was disposed’.⁶⁴ Receiving this information also proved difficult as, when the Society asked for the Commissioners in Massachusetts to account for the money spent, they unhelpfully replied ‘foundation work’.⁶⁵ Moreover, sometimes the Society’s requests for funds were

⁶⁰ Pulsifer, ed., *Acts of the Commissioner of the United Colonies*, 2 vols. (Boston, MA: W. White, 1859), II: p. 105 (hereafter *AC*).

⁶¹ The Ledger, 1650–1660 printed in George Winship, *New England Company of 1649 and John Eliot* (Boston, MA: The Prince Society, 1920), p. lxxviii.

⁶² *CSPC*, 1574–1660, p. 426; Kelleway, *New England Company*, pp. 33–35.

⁶³ London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) CLC/540/Ms. 07952, 18, Dec. 1655; CLC/540 Ms. 07943.

⁶⁴ Bod. Rawl C 934, 27.

⁶⁵ *AC*, I: pp. 193–95.

greeted with hostility; as one minister wrote, 'I am not able any way to promote so religious a work having but 30 shillings yearly settled on me for my cure'.⁶⁶ Despite this, prior to the Restoration, the company was successful at raising the extraordinary sum of £15,910. 15s. 6.5d.⁶⁷ Following the Restoration, the Society was dissolved by the Convention and Cavalier Parliaments and replaced by the NEC two years later. However, despite this, the Society reflected a key moment in ideas of English Protestant expansion abroad. Its creation marked the beginning of a slow change in the role of religion in the organisations of governance abroad, moving away from the authority of commercial companies to specifically establish evangelical corporation. Moreover, its establishment also undermined the authority of the MBC's religious government; a process that would continue well after the creation of the NEC.

Although the financial lifeline across the Atlantic would continue after the Restoration, the company faced new issues, as the Society and its mission, which had connected the MBC to supporters in Cromwellian England, were re-chartered to fit more closely with post-Restoration English politics. Despite being caught up in the scandals of the previous Society, a royal charter was granted in 1662, effectively reorganising the Society into the Company for Propagation of the Gospel in New England, or the NEC.⁶⁸ Sanctioned by royalty, the chartering of the NEC marked a renewed effort by the recently restored monarchy to expand English subjecthood beyond its current boundaries, through evangelism. For the MBC, this was to be an alarming change in policy, overriding the autonomy of their theocratic governance in controlling subject identity in favour of the Crown and reminding many of the events surrounding the Narragansett and Miantonomi, two decades earlier. Furthermore, not only did it signify an attempt by the Crown to control the expansion of Protestantism and MBC theocracy in North East America, but also to centralise it.

⁶⁶ Bod. Rawl C. 934, 72.

⁶⁷ Kellaway, *New England Company*, pp. 31–36; Winship, *New England Company*, pp. lxxviii–lxxxiv.

⁶⁸ LMA CLC/540/Ms. 07908, Charter, 7 Feb, 1662; see also *CSPC*, 1661–1668, pp. 71–72; for discussion of property scandal tied up in the first and second charter, see Kellaway, *New England Company*, pp. 41–44; for more on the Restoration NEC, see Glickman, 'New England Company', pp. 365–391.

The Puritan ‘Apostle to the Indians’, John Eliot, noted that his evangelism had led to the Native Americans’ ‘submission to the King’s government’, extending the King’s authority in Massachusetts.⁶⁹ Under its new charter, the NEC embodied a reinvigorated policy by the Crown to involve itself subtly in the expansion of English Protestantism abroad, and just as the evangelical company’s members had submitted themselves to this authority, they called for the MBC to do so also.⁷⁰ However, in order for the MBC to truly submit to royal authority, the company’s leaders and members would have to remodel their theocratic governance in line with reemerging ‘irenacist’ ideas of Restoration religious governance, a prospect that many refused to consider.

For the leadership of the MBC, their theocratic model of governance faced further threats to autonomy from the newly reformed corporation. The new governor, Robert Boyle, whose policies would embrace the irenicist revival in England, would place the leadership’s aims of the NEC in opposition to the MBC’s theocratic governance. Although presumably only outwardly a Conformist to the established Church, his selection for the top position in the company highlighted an attempt to publicly reinvent the company’s image. Boyle’s leadership distanced the NEC from its Cromwellian predecessor, as well as those members who had been vocal supporters of the MBC’s theocratic governance.⁷¹ Following Boyle’s election, the broad membership of the new company, made up of several denominations, was still keen to advertise their disassociation from the leadership of the old Society. They quietly asked those members who had held office under Cromwell to step down from the government of the company.⁷² It was precisely this aim, to pull the NEC away from its uniform Cromwellian religious origins, that marked Boyle’s 27-year tenure as governor of the NEC. Boyle and the company sought to encourage a broad Protestant opinion, to advance its mission.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Glickman, ‘New England Company’, p. 376.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Sarah Irving, *Natural Science and the Origins of the British Empire* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2008), p. 83.

⁷² Glickman, ‘New England Company’, p. 375; For a list of members and company leaders such as Presbyterians Sir Thomas Abney, George Monck and Sir William Thompson, Huguenot Philip Papillon and Members of the Established Church Sir John Morden, Sir Robert Clayton and Michael Boyle Bishop of Dublin that highlights the broad church of Boyle’s company, see LMA CLC/540/MS. 07942.

As Boyle himself wrote, the company's mission would be secured 'not by making an Independent a Presbyter, or Presbyter an independent, but by converting those to Christianity that are either enemies or strangers to it'.⁷³ However, Boyle struggled in connecting Protestants with a unifying agenda of evangelism. Deep-rooted political and religious suspicion plagued the company's internal relationships, as well as their dealings with the MBC, whose Congregational theocratic governance was hostile to any interference from England, especially since the return of the established Episcopal Church. Despite this, Boyle continued to advocate a policy of Protestant inclusivity, namely that the mission of the NEC would succeed through unity and not uniformity bringing with it spiritual and financial wealth for all those involved, placing the corporation in opposition to the MBC.

Just as the advocates of evangelism during the Interregnum had highlighted the financial benefits of evangelism, so too did the leaders of the NEC, who blended the need for national commercial expansion with the spreading of the gospel. This can most clearly be seen in the mercantile support the company gained in the years after it was chartered. Boyle himself served on the board of the EIC and was a subscriber in the Hudson's Bay Company, whilst almost every other member of the company was also involved in one of the many London Livery Companies, or another overseas company.⁷⁴ For example, Sir John Banks alongside his membership in the NEC was at one time or another a freeman in the EIC, a member of the LC and an assistant and sub-governor in the Royal African Company. Other examples of members who were involved in two or more companies before 1700 include Sir Robert Clayton, Sir Thomas Cooke and Sir John Morden.⁷⁵ Moreover, membership was not the only aspect that connected these companies. Boyle, by using the knowledge acquired through company agents, sought to advance evangelism by employing men such as the former LC chaplain Edward Pococke to translate 'Grotius Book of the Truth of the Christian

⁷³ Robert Boyle to Samuel Hartlib, November 3, 1659, *BC*, I: p. 383.

⁷⁴ E. E. Rich, ed., *Minutes of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1679-1684, First Part 1679-1682* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1945), pp. 307-308.

⁷⁵ Robert Clayton in the Scriveners, Drapers, Hudson Bay Company, Royal African Company (RAC) and Irish Society, Thomas Cooke in the Goldsmiths, EIC and RAC and John Morden in the LC and EIC.

religion'.⁷⁶ Furthermore, by meeting at East India House, the company embedded the corporation in the heart of the mercantile community of London.

The position of the NEC among the merchant community in London was a geographic fusing of the long-established belief that Boyle and the company's members held dear: that English overseas expansion could only be achieved when trade and evangelism were fused. Commercial and territorial expansion in the East had highlighted the reciprocity in trade beyond the exchange of goods. English merchants relied upon local peoples; they also brought to light the needs of non-European communities.⁷⁷ In a letter to EIC member and later governor of the NEC Robert Thompson, Boyle argued the important relationship between evangelism and commerce. According to Boyle, 'Christians as well as Merchants' had the responsibility to 'attempt to bring those countries some spiritual good things, whence we so frequently brought back temporal ones'.⁷⁸ These spiritual goods, according to Boyle and the NEC, were equally as valuable as the temporal ones, and if traded would increase the value and success of England's commercial enterprise. As one of Boyle's fellow Royal Society members wrote, Stuart expansion would only succeed when trading ventures were linked to evangelism. Trading companies offered the English state an opportunity to 'take some lustre for our English church' and export and establish dominion abroad through the reformed religion.⁷⁹ Such calls alarmed leaders in the MBC, who feared any form of encroachment upon their theocratic governance by corporate bodies associated with members of an Episcopal Church.

These aims were clearly emphasised in the royal charter, which connected their success with the betterment of the welfare of settlers in Massachusetts. The company's responsibility was to ensure that 'the pains and industry of certain English Ministers of the Gospel' in converting Native Americans in their own language continued to succeed.⁸⁰ To do this it had to provide financial, spiritual and material help to ministers,

⁷⁶ Boyle to Hartlib, November 3, 1659, *BC*, I: p. 383. The English in this reference has been modernised for clarity.

⁷⁷ Irving, *Natural Science*, p. 84.

⁷⁸ Robert Boyle to Robert Thompson, March 5, 1677, *BC*, IV: p. 436.

⁷⁹ John Beale to Robert Boyle, February 16, 1681, *BC*, V: pp. 240–241, 243.

⁸⁰ LMA CLC/540/Ms. 07908, Charter, February 7, 1662.

Native Americans and, pointedly, ‘those planters who began it being unable to bear the whole charge’ of the project.⁸¹ The company then not only became an agent of spiritual salvation, but also one that would ensure the ‘outward prosperity of those colonies’ in New England.⁸² This was a point that did not escape the leadership of the MBC’s attention, melding as it did evangelism with a particular form of civilising mission that ensured the MBC leadership’s own social and spiritual superiority and benefited both the MBC and NEC financially. John Winthrop the Younger ultimately saw the success of the mission as financial rather than spiritual gain, arguing that a key responsibility of an evangelical programme was to bring Native Americans towards civility. His solution was to put them to work in ‘English Employment’, that ‘thereby the bringing them to hearken to the Gospel may be easier effected’.⁸³ More than the encouraging spiritual success, this was to be a lucrative financial opportunity for the MBC and ‘the English people here’, providing possibilities of ‘vending store of their commodities especially drapery... for there be many thousands which would willingly wear English apparel... besides many other manufactures would be vended’.⁸⁴ Winthrop’s letter illustrates not only the hopes of financial success that many believed would follow evangelism, but also how the MBC leaders perceived the position of Native American converts in their theocratic governance. The MBC would tenuously construct their own governmental identity and authority as a response to the perception that the Native Americans were ungoverned savages awaiting the theocratic government of the company’s members. Winthrop’s letter also illustrated the fragility of this concept, as the leaders of the MBC feared that the Crown, through the NEC, would usurp their religious authority over converted Native Americans.

In line with traditional ideas of ‘civilising’ the NEC and the MBC sought to bring into the English protestant world Native Americans however, this did not necessarily mean equals as the leadership of the later company sought to secure the authority of its own theological governance of converts, or ‘Praying Indians’. Although Eliot had been working on establishing Praying Towns for converted Native Americans since the

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ John Winthrop Jr. to Robert Boyle [1662], *BC*, II: p. 57.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

middle 1640s the establishment of the NEC alongside local conflicts between Native groups compounded by the MBC's desire for land for convert settlements, helped to bolster the number of praying towns to 14.⁸⁵ By 1675, some estimated that between 2000 and 2500 Native Americans had converted to Christianity, which was 20% of the local native population falling under the competed authority of the MBC and the crown.⁸⁶ The communities in these towns straddled a line between cultures, accepted by neither Native Americans nor English, but championed as examples of the success of the evangelical mission of both the MBC and the NEC. For the MBC these 'Praying Towns' became the centres of their authority as the residents submitted themselves to the authority of Massachusetts's theocratic governance. In turn the MBC established schools, and native run courts, which were supervised by the company's magistrates. The aim was to both spiritually and governmentally anglicise these communities, thereby distancing themselves from local Indians who had not converted. For both companies the establishment of these towns was considered a success of the missions, for the NEC they were flourishing communities of Christian converts, whilst for the MBC leaders they firmly illustrated to possible onlookers the extent of governing authority. Despite being perceived as Christian, 'Praying Indians' were treated with suspicion by MBC communities. Burdened with a Calvinist conception of conversion and entrenched racial prejudices MBC members found it difficult to adjust to a group that broke from traditional examples of natives.⁸⁷ As Cathy Rex has pointed out Englishness was a cultural and mental state and although many Native Americans would adopt and emulate English religious, cultural and social practices they would not be wholly accepted by the MBC.⁸⁸ For the MBC 'Praying Indians' symbolised the complexities and fragility of their own governing

⁸⁵ For list on praying towns see Daniel Gookin, 'An Historical Account of the Doings and Sufferings of the Christian Indians in New England, in the years 1675, 1676, 1677', *Archaeologia Americana: Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1836), II; p. 195. Glickman, 'New England Company', p. 377; Pulsipher, *Subjects*, pp. 77–80.

⁸⁶ This is a far lower number in Gookin who estimated that the number was closer to 1100, Gookin, *An Historical Account*, p. 195; Pulsipher, *Subjects*, p. 74; Glickman, *New England Company*, p. 377.

⁸⁷ Pulsipher, *Subjects*, pp. 137–140.

⁸⁸ Rex, 'Indian and Images', pp. 61–93.

identity as the company's leadership with increasing aggression sought to stabilise its own position in reaction to their existence in order to ensure they were the absolute governing authority in New England.

The years that followed the Restoration and the establishment of the NEC were the most challenging for, and ultimately detrimental to, the MBC. The loss of its parliamentary ally and the return of the Stuarts rightly panicked the MBC's leadership, who feared for the security of their charter and independent theocratic governance. As ideas of 'liberty of conscience' began to develop on both sides of the Atlantic, spear-headed by James II in England, the MBC's theocratic governance and its aggressive attempts to achieve uniformity began to gain notoriety. The Restoration signalled a fresh wave of interference from England as the Crown sought to centralise colonial authority and force the company to engage in a more tolerant form of religious government. However, despite repeated calls for the company to offer 'liberty of conscience' and open franchise, the leadership of the MBC continued to fiercely guard their theocratic governance, an action that would seal their fate.

Alongside the chartering of the NEC, the granting of a charter to Rhode Island and Providence in 1663 illustrated Charles II's willingness to accept religious diversity and his desire to continue to extend his authority across the Atlantic. Moreover, it emphasises how the returning monarch was willing to combine both to ensure his control. Almost immediately after regaining the Crown, Charles encouraged religiously liberal plans for overseas expansion in Bombay, Tangier, Pennsylvania and even South America, where there were plans to establish an English Jewish settlement.⁸⁹ Radically different from the theocratic governance of the MBC, these plans would offer 'liberty of conscience in the exercise of their laws, writes and ceremonies, according to the doctrine of their Ancients', so long as various religious communities accepted the sovereignty of the English monarch.⁹⁰ Charles's plan in action can most clearly be seen by the granting of the Rhode Island charter, which sanctioned and formally protected the religiously tolerant government of Rhode Island. The charter ensured 'that no person within the said colony shall hereafter be any wise molested or called in question for any difference in opinion in

⁸⁹ BL Egerton Ms/2385, f. 456.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

matters of religion that does not disturb the civil peace of the colony'.⁹¹ Pointedly aimed at the MBC's theocratic government, the charter also ensured the inhabitants of Rhode Island, both English and Native Americans, were protected from interference of the territorial encroachment of other New England governments. Granted special protection by the King, the charter reminded those in New England who were unfriendly to Rhode Island that it was illegal for 'colonies to invade the natives or other inhabitants within the bounds hereafter mentioned', considering their 'being taken into his Majesty's special protection'.⁹² Alongside the chartering of the NEC, the Charter of Rhode Island illustrated yet another moment following the Restoration where Charles, extending his royal authority into America, very publicly 'incorporated' colonial enterprise. This placed mounting pressure on the autonomy of the MBC's theocratic governance and its leaders who, after years of unchecked expansion, were facing growing criticism for their actions.

RESTORATION AND REACTION TO THEOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN MASSACHUSETTS

The Restoration and the return of Charles II to the throne in 1660 brought with it more problems for the MBC's theocratic governance, as the returning monarch offered a new outlet for the MBC's detractors to express their grievances. For many groups in Old and New England, the reestablishment of the monarchy signalled an opportunity to seek redress for the two decades of aggressive territorial and governmental acquisition by the MBC. English Quaker, Baptist and Anglican settlers, as well as Native Americans, formed a united group that had been subjected to the heavy hand of the MBC's theocratic authority. In response, these groups formed mutually assistive relationships, working together to elevate their own position by exposing and critiquing the actions of the MBC's theocracy.⁹³ When securing the Rhode Island charter, the colony's agents, keen to assert and protect its fragile autonomy within New England, obtained a number of rights ensuring their protection. Most distinct was the right

⁹¹ 'Charter of Rhode Island and Providence Plantation', July 8, 1663, *CSPC*, 1661–8, p. 148.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Pulsipher, *Subjects*, pp. 10–12.

to appeal to the King over any disputes with their neighbours.⁹⁴ The inclusion of this clause was a direct reaction to the actions of the MBC, securing Rhode Island's borders and government against the company. Moreover, it also weakened the security of the charters of other colonies, which through the clause could be amended. Any action against the colony would force an individual or governing body, such as the MBC, to stand before the King, whatever the terms of its own charter.⁹⁵ Although Charles was always quick to assure the MBC that his actions were done out of good will, the chartering of the NEC and Rhode Island subtly eroded the authority of the MBC's theocratic governance, a fact that did not escape notice by the company's authorities. Despite this, the company's leadership did little to alter the course of their theocratic governance. In fact, the more strongly the Crown's presence began to be felt, the greater was the hostility of the MBC's actions towards its English and Native American neighbours.

The return of the King, and his seeming willingness to listen to colonial authorities, sparked an outpouring of grievances from English colonists and Native Americans against the actions of the MBC and its theocratic governance over the previous two decades. For the residents of Maine, who had slowly been absorbed under the government of the MBC and treated with contempt by its leadership, which perceived them as having lived 'like the Heathen' due to their scattered settlements and government, the Restoration provided an opportunity to assert their independence.⁹⁶ Following Richard Cromwell's downfall, the inhabitants of Maine immediately petitioned the authorities in England, declaring that the 'Government of Massachusetts by strong hand and menaces' had brought them under its government.⁹⁷ By 1662, supporters of Fernando Gorges's heir were so confident that Charles would grant their independence that they publicly declared the King was sending authorities to

⁹⁴ Joseph Henry Smith, *Appeals to the Privy Council from the American Colonies* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1950), pp. 52–53.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁹⁶ Increase Mather, 'A Brief History of the War with the Indians in New England' [1676], in Richard Slotkin and James K. Folsom, eds., *So Dreadfull a Judgment: Puritan Response to King Philip's War, 1676–1677* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), p. 99.

⁹⁷ *CSPC*, 1574–1660, p. 479.

‘countermand the authority’ of the MBC in Maine.⁹⁸ However, such rumours were not well received by the leadership of the MBC, who quickly reprimanded anybody linked to such claims, or who supported Maine’s plight and was in a position of authority.⁹⁹ This would lead the Conformist minister and supporter of Gorges, Robert Jordan to claim that ‘the Governor of Boston was a Rogue & all the rest thereof were Traitors & Rebels against the King.’¹⁰⁰ Maine was not alone in reaching out to the Crown in an attempt to assert its autonomy from the theocratic governance of the MBC. Following an outpouring of letters in response to the MBC’s attempts to police the religious behaviour of other colonies throughout the previous decade, Charles authorised the formation of a Royal Commission to be sent to New England to settle grievances.

Charles’s attempts to mediate the growing conflicts between the company and its neighbours by sending royal commissioners were seen by MBC leaders as an attempt to extend his authority into New England.¹⁰¹ The arrival of the King’s representatives in 1664 ignited disputes in the area against Massachusetts’s expansionist behaviour, as many had believed that it had exceeded its authority. In a letter addressed to the governor and council of the MBC, Charles summarised the intentions of the commissioners in a manner that, although phrased diplomatically, was at times pointed, declaring that he had ‘received much information and several complaints’ from other colonies.¹⁰² Alluding to the actions of the MBC against settlers in Maine, New Hampshire and Rhode Island, as well as Native Americans, Charles asserted that it was the intention of the commissioner to investigate and provide ‘full information of the true state & condition of that of our plantation & of their neighbours on all sides’.¹⁰³ Immediately, the commissioners’ presence unleashed a further wave of complaints against the MBC.

⁹⁸ *MPCR*, I: pp. 181–210.

⁹⁹ Pulsipher, *Subjects*, pp. 53–55.

¹⁰⁰ *MPCR*, II: p.141; Pulsipher, *Subjects*, p. 54.

¹⁰¹ For more on the royal commissioners and Restoration debates on the monarchy in Massachusetts, see Paul R. Lucas, ‘Colony or Commonwealth: Massachusetts Bay, 1661–1666’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No.1 (1967), pp. 88–107; for a discussion on toleration of the established Church, see pp. 99–100.

¹⁰² *MCR*, IV, pt. 2: p. 158.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

Amongst these complaints were several from Narragansett Indians; these reflected the fact that the Native communities had developed a complex understanding of English power structures, embracing English petitioning practices and sending them to a distant English authority. In this way the Narragansett in New England was able to secure their autonomy from the MBC's theocratic governance, although this came at a cost. To the MBC's dismay, when Rhode Island was granted its charter, the Narragansett leaders established a cordial relationship with Charles II. Commanding the commissioners to leave for New England, Charles ordered that they were to promise the Narragansett that 'the King will do them justice'.¹⁰⁴ The King also physically illustrated the friendly relationship, by providing a gift of 'two rich scarlet cloaks' to be given to the Narragansett leaders who had 'expressed so much affection to his Majesty'.¹⁰⁵ These cordial, (but highly functional) exchanges illustrate how Native Americans believed that the relationship between themselves and the English Crown was based on an alliance rather than inferiority. Although for the most part a one-sided concept, for Native Americans it can be seen to have persisted across groups, having been established a generation ago through Canonicus and Pessacus in New England and Powhatan in Virginia.¹⁰⁶ Through this concept, Native Americans in New England were, just like the English settlers, provided with a separate means to express objections to a higher authority for the actions of other English settlers or authorities, such as the theocratic governance of the MBC.

For the Narragansett, as for many English settlers, the Crown and the royal commissioners became the only outlet through which they had a hope of receiving recompense for the actions of the MBC. In the first petition given to Crown commissioners, the Narragansett intimated that MBC settlers, pretending to 'belong to the [Rhode Island] colony', had destroyed their homes.¹⁰⁷ During the period that the commissioners were resident in New England, this claim was followed by a series of accusations from the Narragansett leadership, who suggested that the MBC, in the previous decades, had unlawfully taken their land from

¹⁰⁴ *CSPC*, 1661–8, p. 201.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Pulsipher, *Subject*, pp. 29–32; Kupperman, *Facing Off*, p. 175.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

them. The loss of land suffered by the Narragansett had been triggered by a series of conflicts between themselves and the Mohegans in the 1640s and would involve the MBC through the latter having acquired the support of the United Colonies. After several violations of peace agreements between both parties, the United Colonies formed an expedition against the Narragansett. Having suffered substantial financial losses through this interference, the MBC members hiding behind the United Colonies fined the local Narragansett people.¹⁰⁸ Unable to pay the fine, the Native Americans were forced to give up their land to pay the debt. Explaining these events in brief to the Crown, the Narragansett succinctly described how, through ‘violence and injustice’, the MBC had taken ‘their whole country in mortgage’.¹⁰⁹ After receiving information from both parties, the royal commissioners drafted a solution to settle the dispute once and for all. By voiding any former English patents to Narragansett land, the commissioners placed it under the protection of the King. It was therefore removed totally from the jurisdiction of any colonial authority apart from Rhode Island, from which they would assign justices of the peace.¹¹⁰ Named the ‘King’s Province’, the Narragansett leaders fully submitted themselves and their people to the authority and protection of Charles, handing over the patent, given to them in 1644 by the King’s father, which had ‘been carefully kept by Mr. Gorton’.¹¹¹ The commissioners, in their report, also alluded to the unity between the Rhode Islanders and their Narragansett counterparts, writing that the former were ‘generally hated by the other colonies’ and that, to weaken Rhode Island, the MBC supported ‘other Indians against the Narragansetts’.¹¹² The Narragansett were not the only Native Americans that the commissioners would visit, settling a dispute between the Metacom and Pessacus.¹¹³ The agreement between the Wampanoag and Narragansett leaders, mediated by commissioners, was designed to maintain

¹⁰⁸ *PCR*, IX: pp. 34–35.

¹⁰⁹ *CSPC*, 1661–8, p. 342.

¹¹⁰ *RCHIP*, II: pp. 59–60.

¹¹¹ *CSPC*, 1661–8, pp. 341–350; Pulsipher, *Subjects*, pp. 55–57.

¹¹² *CSPC*, 1661–8, pp. 341–350.

¹¹³ Glenn W. LaFantasie, ed., *The Correspondence of Roger Williams*, 2 vols. (Hanover, NH: University of New England Press, 1988), II: pp. 577–579; John Russell Bartlett, *Letters of Roger Williams 1632–1682* (Providence, RI: Narragansett Club, 1874), p. 323; Pulsipher, *Subjects*, p. 57.

a balance of power between rival Native American groups.¹¹⁴ Unwittingly, though, the commissioners, in drafting their agreement, had laid the foundations for an alliance that later threatened the very foundations of the MBC's company's theocratic governance. By appealing to the King, the Narragansett had effectively weakened the authority of the MBC and its theocratic governance, proving that protests to England and the Crown could be successful.

Similarly, English settlers across New England, spurred by the presence of the royal commissioners, sought to further assure the security of their independence from encroachments by the MBC's theocratic governance. For many, their presence provided the opportunity to once again draw attention to the religious persecution that many had faced under the MBC. This was explicitly said in a petition from the colony of Rhode Island, which had become a haven for 'all religions, even Quakers and Generalists' who wished to be 'defended from oppressing one another in civil or religious matter in which most of the members of this colony have suffered very much under strange pretenses from the neighbouring colonies particularly from Massachusetts'.¹¹⁵ For religious groups inside and outside Rhode Island, the royal commissioners offered the opportunity to ask for protection against the 'strange pretenses' of the MBC's theocratic governance. Since 1663, Charles had asked the MBC to stop its persecution of religious groups and to open the company's secular and ecclesiastical franchise.¹¹⁶ However, despite passing the Half-Way Covenant in 1662, which in reality only extended a half franchise to younger members of families of people who were already members, the MBC did nothing to act on these requests. Instead, it openly criticised the possibility of any such action as absurd, proclaiming at a General Court that this would be an impossibility as 'there are many who are inhabitants of this jurisdiction which are enemies to all government'.¹¹⁷

Yet the company was suggesting that anyone who was not a part of its established Church was an enemy of its government. Upon this conclusion, the MBC court ordered, against the direct wishes of the Crown, anyone who 'refuse to attend upon public worship of God established

¹¹⁴ Bartlett, *Letters*, p. 323.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 342–350, 275.

¹¹⁶ *MCR*, IV, pt. 2: p. 74.

¹¹⁷ *MCR*, IV pt. 2: p. 88.

here... are made incapable of voting in all civil assemblies'.¹¹⁸ By 1665, following little success previously, Charles would once again order the MBC to adopt more liberal policies. Invoking the image of the MBC's much protected charter, the King argued that its principal aim 'was & is the freedom & liberty of conscience' and as such he demanded 'that that freedom & liberty be duly admitted & allowed' to those whom the MBC currently excluded.¹¹⁹ This was followed by a very specific request by the Crown for the MBC to make room in their theocratic government for followers of the established Church, or those who desired 'to use the Book of Common Prayer & perform their devotion in that manner as is established here'.¹²⁰ Although the King's attempt was to nudge the MBC's leadership in the direction of toleration by appealing to their sentimental ideas concerning their charter, his request, however, raised concerns that he was trying to lay the foundations to establish an Episcopal Church in New England. Such an action, according to MBC leaders, would have opened the door to the freemanship of the company, eroding their theocratic governance, bolstering in its place the royal and Church authority from which they had tried to flee some 30 years previously.

Just as it tried to encourage the MBC to open out the franchise of its theocratic governance, the Crown also began to interfere with the company's theocratic justice system. The 'enemies' of government that the MBC had alluded to, following the Crown's initial requests for the company to widen its franchise, were the Quakers, playing upon the prevailing misconception that those who belonged to the faith were unwilling to obey authority.¹²¹ The MBC's General Court believed the Quakers to be a threat to their society. According to the court they wished to 'undermine the authority of civil government, as also to destroy the order of

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ *MCR*, IV pt. 2: p. 165.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ For more on Quakers and governmental perceptions of them, see Paul Finkelman, 'The Root of Religious Freedom in Early America: Religious Toleration and Religious Diversity in New Netherland and Colonial New York', *Nanzan Review of American Studies*, Vol. 34 (2012), pp. 1–26; Esther Sahle, *Quakers in the British Atlantic World c.1660–1800* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2021), pp. 25–29.

the churches', the two pillars on which the company's theocratic government was built.¹²² Even Charles did not hide his disdain for Quakers, and ordered that in both America and England 'sharp laws' be established against them.¹²³ Starting in 1656, the MBC's courts began to introduce a number of draconian laws against Quakers, which either consisted of a fine of £100, whipping or imprisonment, as well as fining people who sold Quaker literature.¹²⁴ However, between 1659 and 1660, the company's theocratic leadership shocked people on both sides of the Atlantic by sentencing to death three Quakers: William Robinson, Marmaduke Stephenson and Mary Dyer.¹²⁵ In response to petitions, the King ordered that any Quaker awaiting a death sentence was to be sent to England for trial, and the execution of Quakers was banned. Quick to assure the Crown that all 'imprisoned [Quakers] have been released and sent away', the MBC leadership also informed the English authorities that they respected the command for 'corporal punishment or death, be suspended until further order'.¹²⁶ In addition to the continued support for aggressive theocratic governance, the MBC's leaders faced criticism and civil unrest, following the execution of the Boston martyrs, thereby forcing the company leaders to try and obtain some form of support back in England, although this would not be forthcoming.

Amid the MBC leadership's growing paranoia about the security of its charter and the autonomy it granted them to maintain their theocratic governance, they sought to enlist the help of allies in England. Although the company had some friends, such as the merchant and NEC member Henry Ashurst, who had seen evangelism as a way to hinder the advancement of royal authority upon the MBC, there were few, even among those with whom the MBC had repeated dealings, who were disposed to help the company. The MBC's leadership nevertheless continued to persecute religious groups and would brazenly disregard the Crown's wishes for them to reassess their theocracy, insisting the sovereignty of their charter

¹²² *MCR*, IV pt. 1: p. 345.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

¹²⁴ *MCR*, III: pp. 415–416.

¹²⁵ For more on the punishment of Quakers in Massachusetts, see Pulsipher, *Subjects*, pp. 39–40, 43–44.

¹²⁶ *CSPC*, 1661–8, p. 62.

and government be maintained from any ‘injustice of encroachment’.¹²⁷ Amongst their correspondents in England, these actions would progressively lead to further criticism. For example, the Nonconformist Earl of Anglesey, although at times critical of Charles’s actions at home, would ‘chide you [MBC leaders] and the whole people of New England’ for their behaviour, declaring that they wrongly acted as if they ‘needed not his [Charles’s] protection’.¹²⁸ Similarly, the Secretary of State, Sir William Morice, chastised the MBC leaders for making ‘unreasonable and groundless complaint’ in their petitions to the Crown.¹²⁹ Morice also stepped in to advise the company of their choice of leadership, complaining that their governor, ‘hath during all the late revolutions continued the government there’.¹³⁰ Morice concluded that the choice in leader was not satisfactory and that the King would ‘take it very well if at the next election any other person of good reputation be chosen in the place’.¹³¹ The MBC leaders were, equally, unable to find support outside the political arena, as Boyle and the NEC were at times unable, or unwilling, to act on the company’s behalf.¹³²

Indeed, as more reports flooded across the Atlantic of the company’s continued persecution of religious groups under its theocratic governance, Boyle was to become less and less diplomatic. Perplexed and angered by the MBC’s actions, Boyle wrote to John Eliot about how he believed it to be the most ‘strange and less defensible’ action for those who once fled persecution in England to enjoy religious liberty abroad to now themselves persecute others.¹³³ Later on, Boyle would also warn the New England evangelists that, if the MBC continued to impose their theocratic governance, there would be ‘very bad consequences’

¹²⁷ ‘The Humble Supplication of the General Court of the Massachusetts Colony in New England to the King’ October 19, 1664, *CSPC*, 1661–8, p. 247.

¹²⁸ Anglesey to John Leveret, 16 May, 1676, Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of Massachusetts*, I: p. 279.

¹²⁹ *CSPC*, 1661–8, p. 283.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Although interrupted, John Endecott had served 15 years as the company’s governor since 1644 and was perceived by Charles and his government as a supporter of Parliament during the Interregnum and so unfriendly to the monarch, *ibid.*

¹³² *MHSC*, 2nd ser., VIII: pp. 49–51; Boyle to Commissioners, March 17, 1665, *BC*, II: p. 460.

¹³³ Boyle to Eliot, 1680, *BC*, V: p. 225; Glickman, ‘New England Company’, p. 383.

for Nonconformists in England.¹³⁴ Although referring to outcomes in England, Boyle's warning could also be seen as a foreshadowing of eventual consequences for the MBC's own Congregationalists, following the results of their refusal to effectively reduce the harshness of their theocratic governance.

KING PHILIP'S WAR AND THE END TO THEOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Upon the departure of the Royal Commission, the MBC continued its theocratic governance with renewed vigour. Once again encroaching on local Native American land in the name of its evangelical mission, old tensions re-emerged between the two groups, spilling into open conflict. Although the arbitration of the royal commissioners and the reaction of people in England should have served as a warning to the leaders of the MBC, in reality it was nothing more than a slap on the wrist, as the company's General Court and the company's theocratic governance held its ground, and as such, old habits re-emerged. The MBC sought to advance its mission with continued zeal, converting Native Americans, whilst at the same time eroding Native American sovereignty and annexing land, often through dubious transactions, for Christian Indians to settle. With continued zeal the MBC sought to advance its evangelical mission, converting Native Americans whilst at the same time annexing land, often by dubious transaction, for Christian Indians to settle alongside slowly eroding Native American sovereignty by ignoring their laws.¹³⁵ In 1673 the Wampanoag sachem Metacom, or King Philip as the English knew him, was facing increasing encroachment on his lands by English settlers and Christian Indians, who had been bought land of another rival Native American leader, Totomomocke.¹³⁶ Unable to seek redress in the MBC courts, the relationship between MBC and Native American was increasingly strained, as Local leaders, such a Metacom, were left powerless to the company buying lands. As relationships soured,

¹³⁴ Boyle to Eliot, 1680, *BC*, V: p. 225.

¹³⁵ For more information of the transactions of land and its affects on Anglo-Native American relations in New England see Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs, *Indian Deeds: Land Transactions in the Plymouth Colony, 1620–1691* (Boston, MA: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2002).

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 96, 164; Pulsipher, *Subjects*, p. 103; Mandell, *King Philip's War*, p. 38.

New England was pushed closer to the brink of conflict and was finally pushed into war by the reaction of New England officials to the death of the Native American missionary John Sassamon.

A native convert to Christianity Sassamon acted as a cultural mediator and evangelist between the Native American and English groups. It was Sassamon who reported to the Plymouth Colony the possibility that Metacom was preparing for conflict against the English, following which he was found dead in a 'ice broken pond'.¹³⁷ New England authorities were quick to accuse Metacom and his followers of murdering Sassamon claiming that his Christianity and position as a preacher amongst the Indians offended them, as Metacom was firmly opposed to the spreading of Christianity amongst Indians.¹³⁸ According to Increase Mather it was very Christianity that led to his death writing the Native Americans harboured 'hatred against him for his religion'.¹³⁹ Facing accusations of murder from leaders of the Plymouth colony Metacom and other leaders of the Wampanoag peoples denied any such claim suggesting accident or suicide however, they did suggest that Sassamon deserved to die. According to Metacom, the deceased had tried to steal land from him. This being so Metacom claimed that even if he had ordered Sassamon executed it would have been a matter of his law and as such he and the Wampanoags 'had no Cause to hide it'.¹⁴⁰ However, despite their claims to innocence, and legal sovereignty to take action New England leadership convicted and executed three Wampanoag men for the murder of Sassamon, ignoring both Metacom authority, and any claims he had of sovereignty over his people. Events surrounding Sassamon's death highlighted how repeated encroachment of Native American land and sovereignty by New Englanders theocratic governance lead to New England being plunged to a conflict.¹⁴¹

As King Philip's War quickly spread across New England, the MBC members increasingly believed that the actions of Metacom and his

¹³⁷ Mather, *A Brief History*, p. 87; John Easton, *A Relation of the Indian War* (1675), p. 3.

¹³⁸ Drake, *King Philip's War*, p. 58.

¹³⁹ Mather, *A Brief History*, p. 87.

¹⁴⁰ Easton, *A Relation*, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ James Drake, 'Symbol of a Failed Strategy: The Sassamon Trail, Political Culture, and the Outbreak of King Philip's War,' *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1995), pp.111-41.

supporters were attacks against their Christian religion and theocratic governance. Throughout the conflict, reports of Native American atrocities towards symbols of Christianity were plentiful as ever more New Englanders saw the focus of the wars as being the Native Americans' 'Damnable antipathy' towards 'Religion and Piety'.¹⁴² When news of each attack reached Boston, it contained reports of some form of action against the MBC's theocratic governance. Much like in Virginia five decades earlier, religious centres and symbols seemed to be the focus of Native Americans attacks. News quickly began to reach Boston of attacks on 'friend Indians' residing in centres of Christianity at Chabanakongkomun, Hassanemesit and Magunkaquoq.¹⁴³ Besides physical aggression, disgruntled individuals also resorted to vandalism to vent their unhappiness, targeting Sunday worship, with reports of bibles being torn 'and the leaves scattered about by the enemy, in hatred of our religion'.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, these accounts also suggested that Metacom's forces were focusing on people associated with the MBC's theocracy, arguing that they 'enraged Spleen chiefly on the promoters of it [Christianity]'.¹⁴⁵ News of these events prompted a series of often-horrific anti-Native American responses from New Englanders, specifically the MBC members. Of these, the most heinous were often committed by the former Jamaican privateer Samuel Mosely, who unlawfully hanged several Native Americans at Malbury and, on one occasion, ordered a captive to be 'torn to pieces by Dogs'.¹⁴⁶ Although willing to apportion

¹⁴² Anonymous, *News from New-England being a true and last account of the present bloody wars carried on betwixt the infidels, natives, and the English Christians and converted Indians of New-England, declaring the many dreadful battles fought betwixt them, as also the many towns and villages burnt by the merciless heathens and also the true number of all the Christians slain since the beginning of that war, as it was sent over by a factor of New-England to a merchant in London* (London: 1676), p. 3.

¹⁴³ Gookin, *An Historical Account*, pp. 475–477.

Increase Mather, *An Earnest Exhortation to the Inhabitants of New-England, To Harken to the voice of God in his late and present Dispensations* (Boston, MA: 1676).

¹⁴⁴ William Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Indian Wars in New England, Form the first Planting thereof in the Year 1607 to the Year 1677* (Stockbridge, MA: Heman Willard, 1801), p. 88; Anonymous, *News*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁵ Anonymous, *News*, p. 3.

¹⁴⁶ George M. Bodge, *Soldiers in King Philip's War: Containing Lists of the Soldiers of Massachusetts Colony, Who Served in the Indian War of 1675–1677* (Boston, MA; Bodge, 1891), pp. 26, 27; Drake, *King Philip's War*, pp. 128–130; For the incident in which

partial blame to the influence of merchants having ‘debauched and scandalised’ Native Americans against the Christian faith, Mather also argued that these actions had been perpetrated by ‘such vile enemies... yea the worst of the Heathen’.¹⁴⁷ Settlers also responded to the ongoing crisis by rallying behind the MBC’s theocratic government, as colonists across Massachusetts publicly renewed covenants, reinforcing the company’s religious authority.¹⁴⁸

The evangelical mission of the previous three decades established the foundations for paranoia, as the leadership of the MBC became increasingly suspicious of ‘Praying Indians’ being a fifth column. In response to their presence, the MBC would pass several harsh laws aimed at ‘Praying Indians’ that would erode the sovereignty of Native American communities in New England and lead to further external criticism of the company. Early into the conflict, leaders of the local Natick ‘Praying Indian’ community approached the MBC leaders, fearful that Metacom and ‘his confederates, intended some mischief shortly to the English and Christian Indians’.¹⁴⁹ Upon hearing their plea, the MBC leaders promised to protect them and also ordered that some join their forces to allow the leaders to gain expertise in the ‘Indian manner of fighting’ and ‘to try their fidelity’ to the company.¹⁵⁰ However, the MBC authorities quickly reneged on their promise, as rumours surrounding the loyalty of Indian converts swept through Massachusetts, fuelling already deep-set social and religious paranoia. The MBC Council dismissed any autonomy that the ‘Praying Indians’ had carved out under the company’s theocratic governance, and any of those who advocated their rights, such as Eliot and the first superintendent of the Praying Indians, Daniel Gookin, were publicly scorned. Consequently, the latter would be unable to publish and would lose a re-election on his support for Native Americans.¹⁵¹ Following the attacks on settlements along the Connecticut

Mosely arrested several innocent ‘Praying Indians’ following an attack on Lancaster and tried to have them hanged, see Gookin, *An Historical Account*, p. 459.

¹⁴⁷ Mather, *An Earnest Exhortation*, p. 3; *A Brief History*, p. 105.

¹⁴⁸ Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 116.

¹⁴⁹ Gookin, *An Historical Account*, p. 411; Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, p. 225.

¹⁵⁰ Gookin, *An Historical Account*, p. 411.

¹⁵¹ See Drake, *King Philip’s War*, p. 102, footnote 44.

River, reprisals against Praying Indians increased significantly, culminating in their imprisonment on Deer Island.

At first, the MBC ordered that just the Christian residents of Natick be sent to the rocky outcrop in Boston harbour. The council noted this was not only for 'their' safety but also 'our protection', and they were soon followed by several other 'Praying Indian' communities as the MBC became progressively more suspicious and paranoid.¹⁵² Forced onto the island in the middle of winter, the 'Praying Indians' were effectively left to fend for themselves.¹⁵³ Visitors to the island described it as 'bleak and cold' and highlighted how those '350 souls' imprisoned there 'suffer hunger & cold', with 'neither food nor competent fuel', subsisting only on a diet of 'clams and shell-fish'.¹⁵⁴ Many were also unclothed after having their belongings stolen upon being sent to the island, with little accommodation, and what was there was described as 'poor and mean'.¹⁵⁵ Despite these conditions, the 'Praying Indians' sent to Deer Island were forced to remain there under 'pain of death', and for many Native Americans its mere mention was enough for them to flee north or join Metacom's forces.¹⁵⁶ Following attacks on praying towns, 'Praying Indians', much to the horror of MBC authorities, were offered the opportunity to fight with Metacom, an option that many such as the Nipmuck convert and assistant to Eliot, James Printer exercised rather than be sent to Deer Island.¹⁵⁷ By the end of the conflict, the autonomy of both Christian and non-Christian Native Americans had been severally eroded, and the MBC had, although barely, succeeded in asserting its authority by force. Although some did still advocate 'a covenant' between the MBC

¹⁵² MCR, V: p. 64: Nashoba Indians joined those of Natick in the May of 1676: see Bodge, *Soldiers*, p. 35; Pulsipher, *Subjects*, pp. 143–147.

¹⁵³ Brook, *Our Beloved Kin*, pp. 225–226, 246–248; Carla Gardina Pestana, *Protestant Empire*, p. 134.

¹⁵⁴ Gookin, *An Historical Account*, p. 485; John Eliot to Robert Boyle, October 17, 1675, in John Ford, ed., *Some Correspondence Between the Governors and treasurers of the New England Company in London and the Commissioners of the United Colonies in America* (London: Spottiswoode & Co., 1896), p. 53.

¹⁵⁵ Mosely before sending the Nashoba to the island ordered his troops to loot their belongings: Bodge, *Soldiers*, p. 35; Gookin, *An Historical Account*, p. 485.

¹⁵⁶ MCR, V: p. 64.

¹⁵⁷ Drake, *King Philip's War*; for in-depth analysis of John Printer and his relationship with the MBC, see Rex, 'Indians and Images', pp. 81–83; Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, pp. 86–89.

and ‘Praying Indians’, general opinion amongst company leaders and members was for continued harsh punishment. However, externally, both in America and England, the expensive conflict had irreparably damaged the MBC’s reputation, and in the name of peace, royalist authorities in America now sought to firmly plant the King’s influence in the peace process.

By the May of 1677 MBC leaders begrudgingly were forced to request the help of the royal governor of New York, Edmund Andros in settling a peace agreement. In doing so the company’s leadership had effectively acknowledged the position of the crown as the sovereign arbitrator of affairs in Massachusetts, a position it had always claimed for itself. Following the surrender of Black Point in Maine in October of 1676 to the Native Americans under Mogg Heigon, the war was effectively over.¹⁵⁸ However, this bloodless victory brought with it panic across Maine and Massachusetts, as English settlers sought to fled rumours of murdering Indians and French troops.¹⁵⁹ Following Black Point Andros began to negotiate for peace with the Native Americans. As an agent of the King, Native American leaders were willing to negotiate with Andros, highlighting the growing reach of royal authority in New England. Further illustrating a shift in authority and allegiance, local Native American leaders openly refused to settle peace with the MBC, arguing that they would negotiate with the other English governments in New England but asked Andros that he ‘not to include the Massachusetts’.¹⁶⁰ Although Andros refused this request insisting that the MBC be included in the terms of peace with Native American his report back to the Committee for Trade and Plantations, highlighted how Massachusetts’s leaders unwillingness to cooperate with English colonies ruled by the King. Andros particularly noted the ‘violent proceedings of the Magistrates of Boston’ who both during and since the conflict had refused any offer of help or assistance from the governor, and at one point detained the men sent to offer the MBC assistance.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ John Romeyn Brodhead ed., *Document Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (DCNY) vol. III (New York, 1853), pp. 255, 265; Pulsipher, *Subjects*, pp. 219–223.

¹⁵⁹ *DCNY*, p. 220.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

¹⁶¹ Andros offered help at several points in the conflict, in Winter 1675 he offered to send both English and Mohawk troops to assist the MBC, this was followed in the

On top of this, Andros also reported that MBC leaders had through several publications tried to undermine his authority in both New York and in Massachusetts. In these tracts, MBC authorities claimed that towns under the royal supervision of Andros had sold Metacom arms during the conflict and that anyone from Albany found in the Massachusetts would be arrested and face trial in relation to these accusations.¹⁶² Although these claims were dismissed by Andros and the King, who write to the MBC authorities that he could ‘find no cause’ that Andros or anyone in New York did sell arms to Metacom, they illustrate the lengths the company’s leaders would go in to in order to maintain their independence of their theocratic governance from any form of royal authority. Indeed, the appointment of Andros, as the chief negotiator between the two parties highlighted the growing influence and power of the monarchy in America, and the waning influence of MBC authority and theocracy in New England. By agreeing to his appointment, MBC leadership effectively acknowledged the position of the Crown as the sovereign arbitrator of affairs in Massachusetts, a position the company had always claimed for itself. Wary of the MBC’s governmental behaviour, many in England were fearful that its theocratic leaders were on the ‘very brink of renouncing any dependence on the crown’.¹⁶³ However, despite outward signs that its leaders were still vigorously asserting the autonomy of their government, the conflict had left the MBC financially ruined. Its theocratic governance was weak and vulnerable to both internal and external attack.¹⁶⁴ Having lost much of the territory in Maine and New Hampshire that it had gained over the previous decades, the MBC found its government surrounded by Native American and English neighbours who

summer to act as a intermediary to help obtain peace and was ignored. Following this Andros sent relief to the people of Boston and Piscataway and offered them safety in New York, but his agents were detained by the MBC authorities, *ibid.*, pp. 264–265, 257.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 257–260, 266, 67.

¹⁶³ William Bray, ed., *The Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn*, Vols. 4 (London: Henry G Bohn, 1862), II: p. 65: for in-depth analysis of Andros’s role in the peace negotiations, see Pulsipher, *Subjects*, pp. 234–237.

¹⁶⁴ Around half of New England’s towns had been damaged and trade had been totally disrupted, costing approximately £100,000, whilst the estimated number of English and Native American casualties is somewhere around 3,600. See Douglas E. Leach, *Flintlock & Tomahawk: New England in King Philip’s War* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), pp. 243–244; Glickman, ‘New England Company’, p. 378; Drake, *King Philip’s War*, p. 169.

harboured nothing but ill will towards the company's theocratic governance. Moreover, internally it faced mounting pressure from emerging royalist groups who gave increasing political voice to those who for five decades had been ignored or persecuted by the MBC. Although the war with Metacom had concluded, the company's battle against royal intervention continued. In the years after King Philip's War, the company tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to secure the authority and independence of its theocratic governance.

Following King Philip's War, the MBC's theocratic governance continued to be the centre of conflict, as company and Crown battled to secure the authority and right to govern over the godly in New England. This set in motion events that would lead to the revocation of the company's charter in 1684 and the downfall of the MBC's theocratic governance. Despite previous attempts by the Crown to prevent the company from infringing upon the rights of Native Americans, MBC authorities, keen to blame the latter for the conflict, continued to trample upon their autonomy. Increasingly, it was 'Praying Indians' who bore the brunt of the company's legislative attempts to segregate and subordinate Indians under its theocratic governance. Furthermore, non-Christian and 'Praying Indians' were forced to live in praying towns, whilst the MBC leaders imposed draconian laws on the financial exchanges between English settlers and Native Americans.¹⁶⁵ These would make it harder for Native Americans, in particular 'Praying Indians', to buy and sell land, as well as engage in simple financial transactions.¹⁶⁶ In an atmosphere of paranoia and governmental restriction, the praying towns in post-war Massachusetts became ever more potent symbols of racial and spiritual segregation.¹⁶⁷ The great evangelical mission that had reinvigorated the company's theocratic governance and godly identity in the 1640s had, in its waning years, fuelled paranoia and fault-finding. Edward Randolph blamed praying towns for educating Native Americans in military ways, whilst Mary Rowlandson, a Native American captive during the

¹⁶⁵ Pulsipher, 'Our Sages are Sageles': A Letter on Massachusetts Indian Policy after King Philip's War', *William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 58, No. 2 (2001), pp. 431–448; Yasuhide Kawashima, *Puritan Justice and the Indian: White Man's Law in Massachusetts 1630–1763* (Middletown, CO: Wesleyan University Press, 1986), p. 280.

¹⁶⁶ *MCR*, V: pp. 463, 486–487.

¹⁶⁷ Pulsipher, *Subjects*, pp. 242–243; Pulsipher, 'Our Sages are Sageles', p. 440.

war, scolded her captors, focusing much of her vitriol on ‘Praying Indians’, describing them as ‘wicked and cruel’.¹⁶⁸ However, for some, the evangelical movement came to be the focus of paranoia against the King, seeing in it an attempt by the monarch to assert his authority and the established Church over the godly in America.

By early 1680 the MBC leaders found their government increasingly encroached upon by royal authorities, not only had a royal authority mediated the peace agreement of the previous decade, but it also now shared its northern border with America’s second royal colony, New Hampshire. Moreover, the company’s leadership was horrified that the crown was also seeking to influence the policing of trade in the colony through granting Edward Randolph the position of comptroller of the Plantation duty.¹⁶⁹ In this position Randolph, much to the irritation of company leaders, was to enforce the crown’s laws concerning trade in particular the Navigation Act. Randolph’s imposition angered many in the company’s leadership as they believed that their charter had given them the right to govern trade in and out of the colony. In response MBC Magistrate and officials openly sought to act against him, passing laws establishing their own Naval officers to police trade whilst also aggressively throwing any case Randolph presented to them of trading infractions out of the courts.¹⁷⁰ Replying to these actions Randolph would suggest that the MBC leaders were passing ‘verdicts against his Majestie’ and the laws of England, and as such the company leaders had gone beyond the bounds of their chartered authority.¹⁷¹ The appointment of Randolph sparked division in Massachusetts government as moderates argued that the crown was within its right to appoint officers in the colony, whilst the ‘Church party’ believed such appointments were attacks of the sovereignty on the company’s theocratic governance. The

¹⁶⁸ Glickman, ‘New England Company’, p. 384; Mary Rowlandson, *The sovereignty & goodness of God, together, with the faithfulness of his promises displayed; being a narrative of the captivity and restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (Boston, MA: 1682), p. 50.

¹⁶⁹ Michael Garibaldi Hall, *Edward Randolph and the American Colonies, 1676–1703* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), pp. 54–57.

¹⁷⁰ *MCR*, V: pp. 337–338.

¹⁷¹ Mr Randolph’s Queries to the General Court, 7 June 1682, Robert Noxon Toppan ed., *Edward Randolph; Including His Letters and Official Papers from New England, Middle and Southern Colonies in America, With Other Documents Relating Chiefly to the Vacating of the Royal Charter of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, 1676–1703* (ERL) 5 vols. (Boston 1899), III, p. 149.

appointment of Randolph and the subsequent debate that surrounded royal appointed officials, as well as continued reports of religious persecution of English and Indian peoples would lead to a crown and authorities in England taking action.

In 1680, the King requested that the MBC send agents to England, an order that many rightly assumed was a sign that the company's charter was under attack. Prior to leaving for England, the MBC's agents were reminded by the religious ministers and magistrates of the company that their role was to secure the independence of their theocratic governance. The MBC's leaders believed that the 'government of the Massachusetts ought not to yield blind obedience to the pleasure of the Court', as they, through their charter rights, had established a government ordained by God and not the King.¹⁷² Rumours of procedures against the MBC sparked responses from its spiritual leadership to resist and revive the company's religious traditions, with some openly applauding its theocratic tradition. The Boston minister Samuel Willard was a vocal supporter of the company's theocratic government.¹⁷³ He openly described it as a theocracy and argued against any royal intervention by suggesting that the only King that had sovereignty in Massachusetts was Christ, as their government was 'a glorious specimen of Kingly government of Christ'.¹⁷⁴ Accordingly, Willard argued that the MBC's members would not tolerate any interference in its religious government 'from the invasion of perverse men' who wished to 'disseminate their erroneous principles, make breaches in Churches' and 'undermine and seduce silly souls'.¹⁷⁵ However, what worried Willard most were the Crown's attempts to have 'free and public liberty to carry on their own ways' in church worship in Massachusetts, an act he described as a 'dishonor to Christ'.¹⁷⁶ In true Congregationalist form, Willard offered a solution or a remedy to the current predicament the MBC leaders found themselves

¹⁷² 'Arguments against Relinquishing the Charter', *MHSC*, I, 3rd series: pp. 73–81.

¹⁷³ For an in-depth analysis of Samuel Willard's ministerial career, see Seymour Van Dyken, *Samuel Willard: Preacher of Orthodoxy in an Era of Change* (Grand Rapid, MI: Eerdmans, 1972).

¹⁷⁴ Samuel Willard, *The child's portion: or The unseen glory of the children of God, asserted, and proved: together with several other sermons occasionally preached* (Boston, MA: 1682), p. 192.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

in: covenant renewal. By renewing the covenants that had established and bonded together the members of the MBC in theocratic government, Willard argued that they would be able to illustrate their strength and unity, placing them ‘out of reach of foreign mischief’.¹⁷⁷ Although his very religious solution may have offered comfort to some in the MBC, any attempt to suggest that there was collective unity or strength in the theocratic governance of the company was too late.

Amongst the many commercial and financial reasons given for taking legal action against the MBC by its detractors was the opportunity to bring an end to the company’s theocratic governance. By 1682, the MBC’s agents had arrived in England to find the company’s reputation in ruins and that the rumours of formal actions against the company’s charter and its theocratic governance were, indeed, very real. Having received petitions to start *quo warranto* procedures in 1680, Crown authorities had slowly begun the process of investigation against the company.¹⁷⁸ According to many in England, the MBC’s leaders, by enforcing the company’s theocratic government over English settlers and Native Americans, had reneged on the company’s charter, imposing ‘Lawes Ecclesiastical being repugnant to the Lawes of England’.¹⁷⁹ This not only warranted action against the MBC’s charter, but also provided the perfect opportunity for the Crown to impose ‘liberty of Conscience in matter of Religion’ in Massachusetts.¹⁸⁰ MBC leaders desperately tried to continue to remind their agents of their mission to protect the company’s theocratic governance, worried that the persecution Nonconformists faced in England would seep into Massachusetts, if the Crown took control.¹⁸¹ It then became imperative that their agents understood ‘our liberties & privileges in matters of religion and worship of God, which you are therefore in nowise to consent to any infringement’.¹⁸² However,

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 195.

¹⁷⁸ Robert Toppan Noxon, ed., *Edward Randolph; Including His Letters and Official Papers from New England, Middle and Southern Colonies in America, With Other Documents Relating Chiefly to the Vacating of the Royal Charter of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay*, 5 vols. (Boston, MA: John Wilson & Son, 1899), III: pp. 89–94.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 229–230.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁸¹ John Cotton to Thomas Hinckley December 27, 1683, *MHSC*, I, 3rd series: p. 75; V, 4th series: pp. 103–104.

¹⁸² *MCR*, V: p. 390.

despite repeated reminders regarding their mission, the agents of the company were powerless to prevent the charter from being revoked.

In June of 1684, the MBC as an overseas company ceased to exist. Following the revocation of its charter, its theocratic governance collapsed. For the MBC, the key to its success as well as the cause of its failure was the combination of its corporate charter and its theocratic governance. Despite often being isolated from many histories of England's other companies during the seventeenth century, the MBC and its members were an influential part in a connected history of overseas trading corporations and the development of English religious governance abroad. The MBC, unlike the EIC and LC, illustrates another aspect of the governmental flexibility of corporation, which allowed members to establish rigid authoritarian structures. The purpose of the theocratic government that the members of the MBC formed was like any of England's seventeenth-century overseas companies. Its priority was to police the behaviour of its members to ensure they represented the model of society that the company wished to represent. Unlike its eastern counterparts, for the MBC this meant the strict formation of a unified religious society, with no room for doctrinal difference, and extinguishing any signs of contrary belief at the first opportunity. Following the Restoration, this behaviour was increasingly at odds with the Crown's plans for English expansion in the Atlantic. Yet, the very corporate flexibility that had provided the MBC with the framework to establish theocratic governance in New England would end up being its undoing. Its government had become progressively more rigid; its attempts to police the behaviour of those in its jurisdiction had become increasingly arbitrary. On top of this, company leaders were unwilling to compromise in the face of growing criticism of its government, justifying their government as a right granted to them by their corporate charter. By 1686, they had left English authorities with no option but to end their experiment, revoking their corporate charter and thereby abolishing their theocratic governance.

CONCLUSION

From its origins as a joint-stock overseas company, the MBC evolved into a corporate body that governed in its overseas territory like a state. It legislated, elected and governed a body of people that embraced the narrow theology of its members. Its leaders declared war and annexed land from their English and Native American neighbours. Proselytising

expansion became a tool of the MBC's theocratic government that connected its senior figures' interests in advancing religion alongside their own political and trading interests over English and Native American peoples. For the MBC's leaders and members, it was not enough for their corporate theocratic government to be an example of godly rule; they actively sought to export it through both example and expansion.

The MBC's theocratic governance illustrated the extremities of inclusivity and exclusivity of England's seventeenth-century companies. Unlike the ecumenical governance that developed in the EIC over this period, the MBC manifested a corporate zeal to incorporate and exclude people from its unitary theocratic governance. Alongside this zeal, it was the MBC's obsession with policing the behaviour of all people that would lead to the company's downfall. The establishment of the NEC marked a shift in corporate attitudes to the role of religion in English corporate government abroad that would gradually take place across the remainder of the century, removing its responsibility from overseas trading companies and placing it into the hands of specifically designed evangelical corporations. In the next chapter highlights how the EIC, unlike the MBC, developed a model of religious governance that was based not on religious exclusivity but, to a certain extent, inclusivity in the religious and political regulation of behaviour of multiple peoples of varying faiths.

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