

vocated sexual marriage, after the model of the first parents, Adam and Eve. But Jesus' ideas of the kingdom of heaven, Brown points out, were linked to the renewal of the kingdom of Israel. Once these links were broken, once the kingdom of heaven became otherworldly, then the reproductive instincts could be—and were—devalued. Brown is too skillful a historian to account for Christian sexual renunciation by any one theory. St. Paul (d. 64? A.D.) abominated sex because spirit and flesh were enemies; Tertullian (c. 155–220 A.D.) advocated chastity for the opposite reason, because body and soul were the same. The case for celibacy was made even for aesthetic reasons: It permitted a contemplative life superior to the raging of the passions. Despite its title, Brown's book is really not about sexuality. He employs the now-alien practice of sexual renunciation to rebuild the mental world of late antiquity for the modern reader. The themes of continence and the virgin life, Brown says, "have come to carry with them icy overtones." Brown's ambition, and the charm of this history, lies in how he makes "the chill shades . . . speak to us again, and perhaps more gently than we had thought they might, in the strange tongue of a long-lost Christianity."

**THE PURITAN ORDEAL.** By Andrew Delbanco. Harvard. 306 pp. \$30

**WORLDS OF WONDER, DAYS OF JUDGMENT:** Popular Religious Belief in Early New England. By David D. Hall. Knopf. 316 pp. \$29.95

American historians—Perry Miller notable among them—have scanned the Puritan experience for sources of our modern self. Two recent studies open a new window on what could be termed "the other Puritans." The Puritan mentality and religious practices presented by both books hardly fit the traditional image: Here is no monolithic group of gray Calvinists fleeing Old-World persecutions to become devout fanatics in a Massachusetts wilderness. In *Worlds of Wonder*, Boston University historian David Hall shows how "religion was embedded in the fabric of daily life." Cotton Mather and other clergymen might roar their fierce admonitions, but a nearly universal

literacy enabled churchgoers to interpret Scripture individually. The result: Orthodoxy and heresy, high and low, canon and popular superstition got so jumbled that no one could sort out the threads. If the 17th-century Puritans attended church regularly, they also eagerly consumed plays, songs, novels, and "filthy Jests."

Hall leaves the Puritan mental world so fragmented that he raises a question which, inadvertently, *The Puritan Ordeal* helps answer. To find a unity in the Puritan experience, Andrew Delbanco, professor of literature at Columbia, concentrates on our understanding "not of ideas so much as of feelings." Migrating from England to America, the Puritans underwent a change, Delbanco argues, that was as much psychological as geographical. In England the Puritans had external enemies; sin was conceived of in *internal*, Augustinian terms. But in America, no outside oppressor existed, and the Puritans might have lost their sense of community by forfeiting "their long nurture as an outgroup." Instead, the Puritans satisfied their "appetite for enmity" by projecting sin outward. Satan took on a more prominent role in daily sermons. This shift, says Delbanco, shaped American literature (consider Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*) even as it created a new "etiology of morals" for this country. Together, these two volumes reveal afresh how New England during the 17th century was "a generative time for much that came later in our culture."

#### *Contemporary Affairs*

**THE RISE AND FALL OF THE NEW DEAL ORDER, 1930–1980.** Edited by Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle. Princeton. 311 pp. \$25

The tainting of the word "liberal" in the recent U.S. presidential campaign indicates that the political era inaugurated by the New Deal has ended. Or so argue the 10 essays which Steve Fraser, an editor, and Gary Gerstle, a Princeton historian, have gathered here: Collectively, they present the period from 1930 through 1980 as one long continuum in American political life. Even as late as the mid-1960s, the New Deal seemed irreversible, as though it would "go on forever." These essays show, however, that it always rested on shaky foundations. Historians