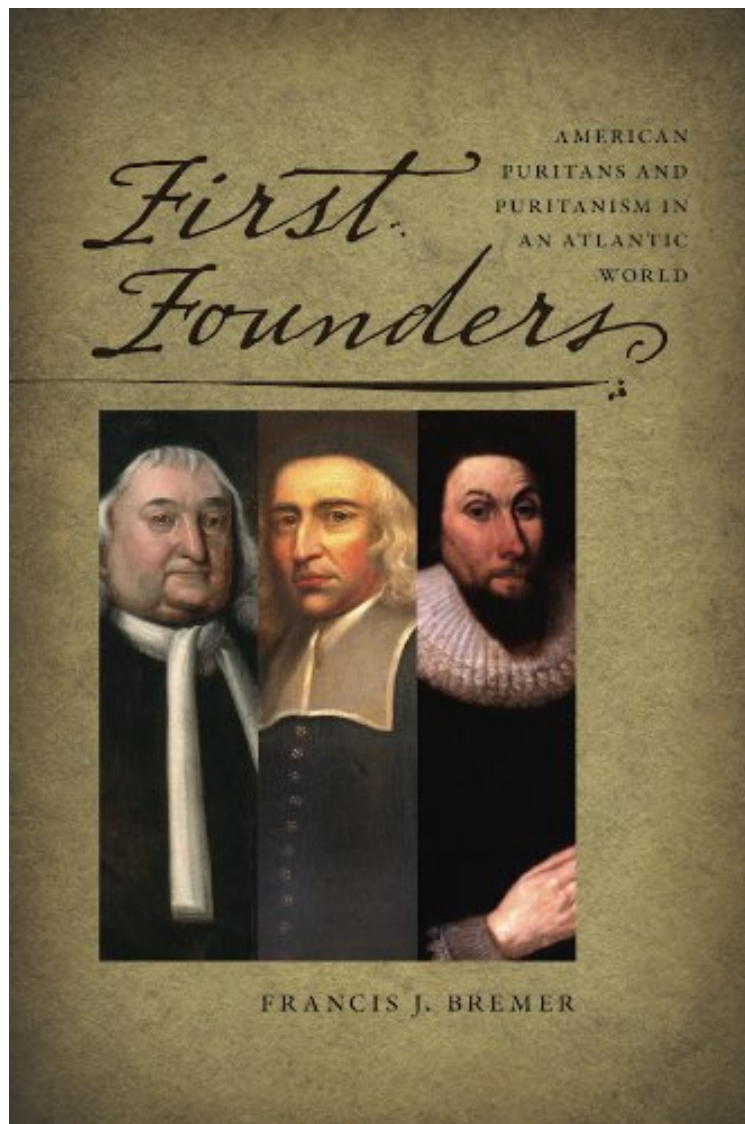


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## First Founders: American Puritans and Puritanism in an Atlantic World (New England in the World)

*Francis J. Bremer*

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**Francis J. Bremer : First Founders: American Puritans and Puritanism in an Atlantic World (New England in the World)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised First Founders: American Puritans and Puritanism in an Atlantic World (New England in the World):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy David KaplanVery well done6 of 8 people found the

following review helpful. I love this book. By J. Aronson Francis Bremer has done something important, he has re-introduced us to our English Puritan constitutional democratic republican roots; as Cromwell said "warts and all." After reading the tantalizingly short first chapter on John Winthrop, I resolved to buy Bremer's earlier book length treatment of this most interesting and truly godly man. "First Founders" is an easy read but it also reflects a good deal of original research and careful consideration of primary documents. Although the citations are very general they do seem to be accurate based upon my own readings of the same sources mentioned at the back of the book. I suspect Bremer is holding his cards close to his vest and that more from him along the same lines can be expected. Although this book has many of the quantities of an outline or heads of proposals rather than a formal history or a narrative, it substantially expanded my own understanding of how puritan New England was perhaps the most consequential expression of the English constitutional crisis precipitated by the Stuarts after 1607. Bremer's selection of the subjects of his biographical sketches is very sound, I might say impeccable. By introducing us to the most important figures in New England between 1630-90 and firmly connecting them to the English Civil Wars and the larger North Atlantic community of the second half of the 17th C., Bremer has laid the ground work for a more detailed and hopefully broader reinterpretation of US history from 1630-1775. Bremer states, his intent is to focus on the way in which his subjects expressed their religion in the secular world. Therefore, I think that this book would have benefited from a preface that reminds the reader that the Calvinistic expression of the Reformation originated in Zurich and Geneva about 1525. It was transmitted down the Rhine to the Dutch Republic and introduced into England after 1530. It was less than 100 years old when the Winthrop Fleet landed in Boston in 1630. The key points of the Reformation common to all puritans of the time were: A one to one relationship between God and every individual; a priesthood of all believers; and the idea that salvation was achieved "sola fide et sola scriptura" (only by faith and only through the Bible). Such a preface would also remind the reader that no puritan orthodoxy ever emerged and that Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, Quakers, Unitarians, Evangelicals, Fundamentalists and even Ranters are all on the same continuum of the English puritan or English reformed system of Christian belief. Along these lines it might also be observed that the chief aim of the Reformation was to re-derive Christianity from first principles. In England and New England reforming religion also entailed reforming secular government and that the congregational religious model immediately translated into the idea of a parallel secular constitutional democratic republic both in New England and a few years later in England (see: Massachusetts Body of Liberties of 1641; the several Agreements of the People 1647-49; The Heads or Proposals; The Case of the [New Model] Army Truly Stated (1647)). n.b. to Bremer: You missed a Rainsborowe. John Winthrop's fourth and last wife was Martha Rainsborowe, another sister of Thomas and William. The Rainsborowes and Bourns had been closely connected since at least 1600 in Wapping, England. Wapping is one of the Tower Hamlets just south of London. Both the Rainsborowes and Bourns were important sea-faring and merchant adventurer families in the time of Elizabeth I and James I/VI. William Rainsborowe was an original member of the Boston Artillery Company and one author states that Thomas was a deputy from Boston when the Massachusetts Liberties were adopted in 1641; but I have been unable to confirm that. Thomas Rainsborowe's famous exchange with Henry Ireton at Putney ("the lest he in England, etc. . .") is clearly asking that the congregational religious model be applied to the proposed new secular government of England. 0 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Do Hoon Kim Very good quality.

Francis J. Bremer has spent his entire career broadening our understanding of Americas colonial founders. Now, in this eminently readable collection of biographies, Bremer brings us a surprisingly varied and dynamic group of characters who continue to guide and influence America today. With its cast of magistrates, women, clergy, merchants, and Native Americans, *First Founders* underscores the breadth of early American experience and the profound transatlantic roots of our countrys forebears. Bremer succeeds in bringing little-known figures out of the shadows, while allowing us to appreciate better known figures in an entirely new light. This is a truly fascinating look at the Puritans with keenly drawn portraits and the insight that only a lifetime of scholarship can achieve. It should become the standard introduction to the field. Written in the mold of Joseph Elliss *Founding Brothers* and Gordon Woods *Revolutionary Characters*, the book will appeal to general readers, students, and scholars alike.

[Bremer] takes a biographical approach to detail how Puritans ideas and values ultimately contributed to the forming of our American government and institutions. . . . He effectively presents the distinct and evolving Puritan views and elaborates on how they influenced American life. . . . Bremers work will appeal to the thoughtful reader with an interest in exploring the roots of our countrys founding credos through these accessible biographies. *Library Journal*