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Project Proposal

The Rigors of Righteousness: Exploring the Puritan Prescription for Spiritual Formation

The Puritans of Colonial New England played a significant role in shaping the story of America, especially with regard to the practice and free expression of religion. Yet the religious zeal on which their communities were based has often been regarded as exceedingly rigorous and even oppressive. This project is an exploration of the spiritual formation disciplines of these pious Christians and its likely impact on any real or imagined declension they experienced. Given the rigorous prescriptions for daily religious practice placed upon the laity, it is not difficult to explain such a decline in spiritual vitality. For the common man or woman, the Puritanical pattern for personal spiritual formation likely proved more idealistic than realistic—at once both exhaustive and exhausting.