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A Reforming People: Puritanism and the Transformation of Public Life in New England

By Hall, David D.

ALFRED A KNOFF, 2011. Hardcover. Book Condition: New. 16.71 x 24.03 cm. his work is an account of the aspirations and accomplishments of the people who founded the New England colonies, comparing the reforms they enacted with those attempted in England during the period of the English Revolution. The author, a historian looks afresh at how the colonists set up churches, civil governments, and methods for distributing land. Bringing with them a deep fear of arbitrary, unlimited authority grounded in either church or state, these settlers based their churches on the participation of laypeople and insisted on consent as a premise of all civil governance. Encouraging broad participation and relying on the vigorous use of petitioning, they also transformed civil and criminal law and the workings of courts. The outcome was a civil society far less authoritarian and hierarchical than was customary in their age, indeed, a society so advanced that a few dared to describe it as "democratical." They were well ahead of their time in doing so. As Puritans, the colonists also hoped to exemplify a social ethics of equity, peace, and the common good. In a case study of a single town, the author follows a minister...



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