

# THE AMERICAN JEREMIAD BY SACVAN BERCOVITCH



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"American Jeremiad is truly a seminal book . . . the most illuminating study of the root paradigm of American culture yet written."—Victor Turner, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Virginia

"One of the most exciting interpretations of American culture in recent decades."—Gustaaf Van Cromphout, American Literature

"Simply the most profound and persuasive work since the great books of the late Perry Miller."—William A. Clebsch, Church History

". . . an original and moving study that is of significance not only to the literary historian but to anyone concerned with the future of American culture. . . The American Jeremiad is a splendid book."—Jesper Rosenmeier, Early American Literature

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This is a dazzling performance. It supplies conceptual links between phenomena where historians have often sensed a connection without being able to describe it adequately . . . [Bercovitch] has written intellectual history at the highest level. -Edmund S. Morgan, New York Review of Books

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By Richard Scott

I had not thought much about scholarly american civilization books since I finished myt degree in 1964. A

month or so ago I listened to a talk by James Fallows in which he mentioned the American Jeremiad. I borrowed it from interlibrary loan and have since purchased a copy. the essays are tight nd well reasoned and difficult to read quickly. remembering the hours reviewing the Perry Miller texts and following the arguments is fun.

A recent essay by Wen Stephenson in the NYTimes, March 28, 2010 puts the rhetoric of the jeremiad into modern speeches, sermons, raves. ([...])

I think this is serious and worthwhile for any interested in putting the modern American or current ideology into the context of the almost four centuries in which the Puritans and the Post puritans preach much as did Winthrop and Cotton.

21 of 28 people found the following review helpful.

consensus point

By Alvaro Lewis

Sacvan Bercovitch has written a thrilling book not only about early American history (e. g., the Puritain errand in the wilderness) but also about tendencies of American civil discourse. The analysis of history is rhetorical and there is little beyond the dating of the documents that suggests there is more to the writing of history than textual analysis. For some this emphasis will be a strength, for others a profound weakness of the work.

Whatever one's opinion of the approach, the outcome is spectacularly suggestive. The work provides something like a study of the form that the expression of the American dream has taken since the beginning. Most of the discussion concerns the iron exhortations of early American religious leaders. The jeremiad exists in America and seems inseparable from communication of the American people's greatest desire. The jeremiad, since it is a form or perhaps even a genre is not only durable but mutable, applicable to seemingly all realms of American discourse.

I heartily recommend this perceptive little book to those curious about American discourse and the shared form that religious, political and cultural concerns take.

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