

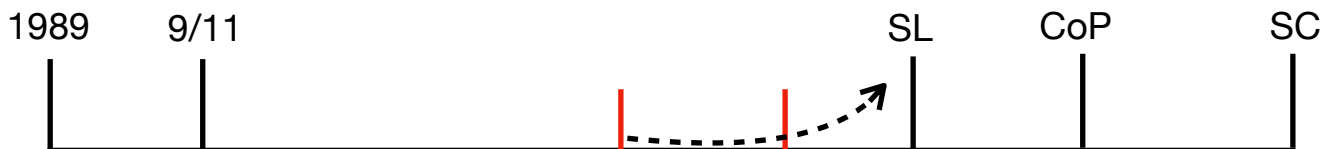
Watchmen of the New Jerusalem Summary

Introduction:

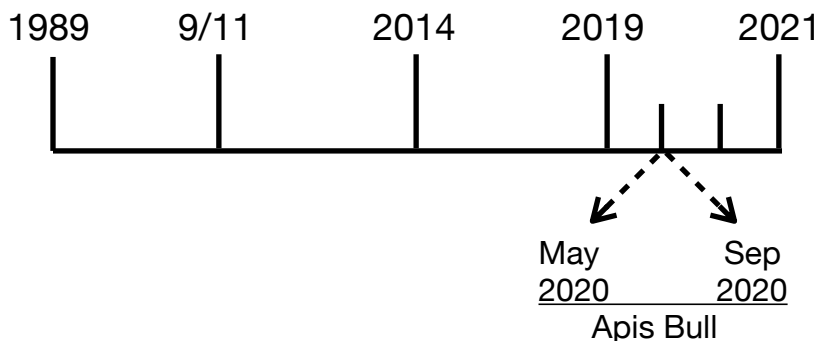
- *Watchmen of the New Jerusalem: Jedediah Morse, The Bavarian Illuminati, and the Refashioning of the Jeremiad* is a thesis document written by Rachel Snell to fulfill the requirements of a Masters of Arts degree at the University of Maine.
- It covers the introduction of the Illuminati conspiracy theory into New England's late 18th century religious and political discourse.
- It also discusses the social trends and factionalisms that formed the context for the introduction of this conspiracy theory.
- This history takes on special significance for those in the present truth movement because it marks the beginning of a thread of events which carries through to the present; and which must be understood in order to correctly understand events in the present and near future.

The Prophetic Context:

144,000

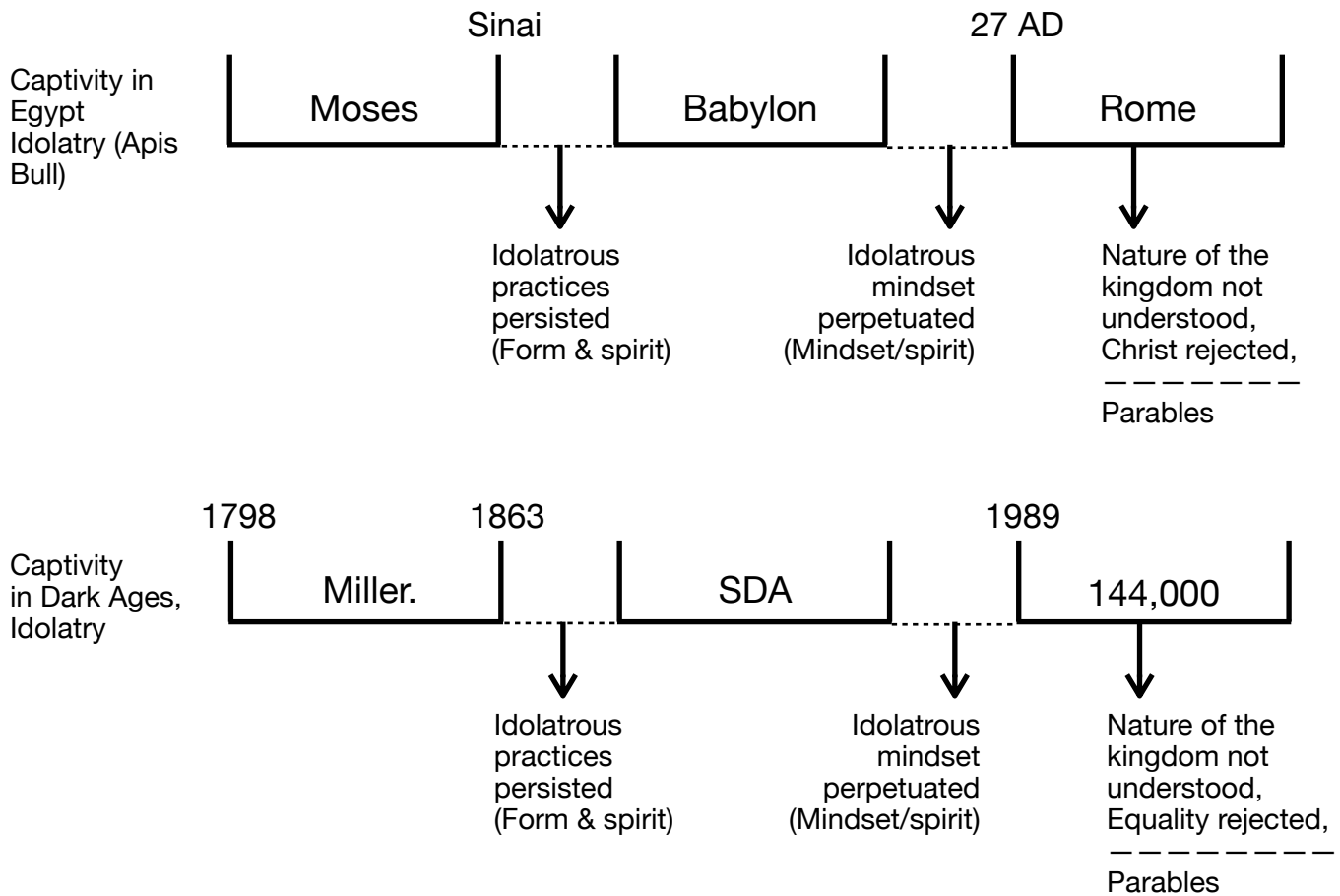


Priests



- The increase of knowledge for the 2019 - 2021 (Raphia - Panium) dispensation is marked from May - September 2020.
 - This light was the Apis Bull study.

- This increase of knowledge in the history of the priests is also part of the increase of knowledge on the Sunday Law way-mark in the line of the 144,000.



- The Apis Bull study showed that the idolatry of conservative Adventism can be traced back to the history preceding and surrounding the end of the dark ages.
- As the idolatry of ancient Israel was traced from Egypt through to the history of Christ, the idolatry of modern Israel can be identified in the history surrounding the Time of the End and can be traced through to the history of the final reformatory movement.

Introduction: A Political, Social, And Religious Genesis

The morning of **May 9, 1798**, the day of a national fast proclaimed by President John Adams, the Reverend Jedidiah Morse climbed the steps into the pulpit of Boston's New North Church. In the years since his 1789 ordination Morse often forcefully addressed what he believed to be the continued increase of irreligion in New England and throughout the nation. On this day, before the upturned faces of the congregation Morse

began the familiar refrain in what was later described as "a soft, but well modulated and effective pulpit voice" about the general lack of virtue apparent within the nation's citizenry, "Our situation is rendered 'hazardous and afflictive,' not only from the unfriendly disposition, conduct and demands of a foreign power . . . but also and peculiarly from the astonishing increase of irreligion."1 Morse provided his listeners with convincing proof of the irreligion he described as rampant, "The existence of God is boldly denied. Atheism and materialism are systematically professed. Reason and nature deified and adored."2 The listening congregation would have found these claims along with Morse's pleas to respect and follow their political and religious leaders unsurprising; they had heard these arguments many times before.

Buried at the end of Morse's sermon notes waited patiently his trump card, the threat of a group known as the Bavarian Illuminati and an incredible claim of a conspiracy aimed at spreading the misery of the Old World in the New, guaranteed to capture his audiences' attention and their imaginations. Morse wasted little time describing the insidious goals of the Bavarian Illuminati, a religious and political threat that so seamlessly incorporated the traditional fears of New England society it could have been engineered specifically for Morse's purposes by John Robison, the author of *Proofs of a Conspiracy against All the Religions and Governments of Europe*, carried on in the *Secret Meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies* the dubious source of Morse's allegations.

In Morse's capable hands, Robison's description of the Bavarian Illuminati became a threat to both government and religion: "The express aim of this society is declared to be, 'to root out and abolish Christianity, and overturn all civil government.'"4 A listing of the sinister characteristics of the Bavarian Illuminati followed this spectacular claim,

Their principles are avowedly atheistical. They abjure Christianity- justify suicide- declare death an eternal sleep- advocate sensual pleasures agreeable to the Epicurean philosophy- call patriotism and loyalty narrow minded prejudices, incompatible with universal benevolence- declaim against the baneful influence of accumulated property, and in favor of liberty and equality, as the unalienable rights of man- decry marriage, and advocate a promiscuous intercourse between the sexes- and hold it proper to employ for good purpose, the means which the wicked employ for bad purposes.5 Pg. 1-2

History has judged Morse and his cohort as conspiratorial reactionaries, but this misrepresents the real significance of Morse's 1798 and 1799 fast day sermons. When viewed within the political, social and religious context of the late 1790s, these sermons represent a significant turning point in New England cultural history and a moment in time when the orthodox clergy refashioned the traditional jeremiad for a changing American society. Within the realm of religious history, historians traditionally have viewed Jedidiah Morse's 1798 and 1799 Bavarian Illuminati sermons as an anomaly within the canon of New England Congregationalist sermons, as an example of the conservatism and resistance to change that ultimately doomed the Congregational orthodoxy. Nathan O. Hatch noted, "Historians have easily dismissed the tale of a band whose political pilgrimage eventually led them to oppose what most Americans have

come to hold dear."15 Jon Butler described the Bavarian Illuminati sermons as "religious paranoia" produced by "the eagerness to uncover deism."16 Alan Heimert credited Morse's "reports of an 'Illuminist' plot" with helping to "give New England orthodoxy the mold of defensive ecclesiasticism in which it was to remain nearly frozen for a quarter century."17

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- Morse refashioned the traditional jeremiad sermon by infusing it through with conspiracy theories - the theory of the Illuminati threat in particular.
- Morse's Illuminati sermons were a turning point in New England's cultural history.
 - Their timing in 1798 is also significant in terms of the prophetic model this history is being viewed through.
- The following two chapters cover the context and impact of these sermons.

The jeremiad has long been synonymous with Puritan New England, however, it seems likely seventeenth-century New England ministers adapted a medieval tradition to their New World purposes. Sacvan Bercovitch considered the jeremiad "an ancient formulaic refrain" imported from the Old World, "Insofar as the Puritan clergy were castigating the evils of the time, they were drawing directly upon the sermons of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England, which in turn derived from the medieval pulpit."21 The classic definition of the jeremiad is **Perry Miller's, in his various analyses of New England Puritan thought Miller detected a society in constant tension, "they were foredoomed to the exciting but hopeless task of stabilizing it along with their inherited belief in unilateral authority and divine revelation.** The history of New England, from Winthrop to Otis, from Cotton to Emerson, is implicit in these latent antagonisms." **This tension and the need for stabilization necessitated the recreation of the jeremiad. Miller presented a basic formula for the seventeenth-century New England jeremiad. According to Miller, the preachers "would take some verse of Isaiah or Jeremiah, set up the doctrine that God avenges the iniquities of a chosen people, and then run down the twelve heads, merely bringing the list up to date by inserting the new and still more depraved practices a ingenious people kept on devising."** In contrast to Miller's classic doom and gloom analysis of the jeremiad, Bercovitch argued one of the defining characteristics of the New England jeremiad was "its unshakable optimism."24 However, **most historians agree the purpose of the jeremiad was largely social control, "the purpose of their jeremiads was to direct an imperiled people of God toward the fulfillment of their destiny, to guide them individually toward salvation, and collectively toward the American city of God."**25 **In this struggle to create the New Jerusalem in America, the clergy's moral guidance was deemed as vital to the successful achievement of this goal. The clergy were responsible for maintaining a virtuous population and the jeremiad was their primary tool.** Pg. 8-9

- The Jeremiad is described here as a preaching tool or structure that would:
 1. take verses that describe God's judgements upon His disobedient people,
 2. parallel the ancient people's disobedience with that of the people and society to whom the preacher is speaking,

3. warn that without moral reformation at a national level, similar judgements will fall upon them.
- The Jeremiad was employed as a means of social control.
 - It was also a tool that the orthodox (conservative) clergy used in their efforts to retain their influence in the face of a changing society.

CH. 1 Hebrews In The Wilderness: The Religious Climate of 1790s New England:

The starting point of the diverse religious revivals and general social tumult that historians call the Great Awakening is generally dated to a 1734 series of sermons delivered by Jonathan Edwards in Northampton, Connecticut. It later gained further momentum by the arrival of itinerant preacher George Whitefield in 1740. Although new to their listeners, the message espoused by Edwards, Whitefield and their many imitators bore a remarkable resemblance to the periodic, smaller scale revivals of the previous century. According to Francis Bremer, "many who had been discouraged by the staid and rational face of religion during the previous decades had hoped for a new season of grace and saw in Edward's description of the revival the beginning of a new millennium."³⁶ The fires of revival were quick burning, but nevertheless created a rift between the New Lights, who enthusiastically supported the revivals, and the Old Light opponents. In Massachusetts, the clergy managed to maintain a semblance of unity by portraying the New Light itinerants as outsiders, however, the cracks of factionalism would shortly appear over doctrine that led to the division of the colony's clergy into orthodox and liberal camps.

These divisions originated in a series of internal schisms that had weakened the Congregational clergy during the eighteenth century, beginning with the split between orthodox and liberal Congregationalists. The split between orthodox Congregationalists and liberal Congregationalists occurred in the aftermath of the disorder and enthusiasm of the Great Awakening revivals and was largely based on theological disagreement. The rational spirit of the Age of Enlightenment greatly influenced the liberal Congregationalists; it "convinced them that true religion was a matter of sound understanding and upright morals, not of self-abasement and claims of spiritual union with God."

The emphasis upon rational thought and logic pushed many liberals to reject the doctrine of predestination, one of the primary tenets of Calvinism. By the early national period, the liberal Congregationalists had become "firm Arminians and were drifting even further from Calvinism." Furthermore, and perhaps most damaging, the liberal Congregational clergy embraced the covenant of works; suggesting that men and women could gain God's favor through good deeds. They also "narrowed the difference between believer and God by endowing Him with benevolent human attributes."

Their disdain for the raucous evangelical revivals led the liberal clergy to avoid proselytizing altogether, and they were largely content to minister to those already within the fold. Whereas the orthodox clergy were active, if not always successful, proselytizers, the liberal clergy were decided anti-evangelical. The liberal clergy, however, were very active in educational endeavors and often received the support of their congregations. For example, Jeremy Belknap, who would spend the last decade of his ministry at Boston's

Federal Street Church, published *The History of New Hampshire*, Vol. 1 in 1784. In the preface he recognized the support the community provided to his historical endeavors: "the work, crude as it was, being communicated to some gentlemen, to whose judgment he paid much deference, he was persuaded and encouraged to go on with his collection."⁴⁰

Conversely, the orthodox branch clung to the traditional tenets of Calvinism and their interpretation of Congregational theology had changed little since the Puritan arrival in Massachusetts. They maintained the doctrine of predestination and the necessity of conversion experience to determine membership in a body of "Saints." The orthodox clergy also emphasized the omnipotence of God, a literal interpretation of the scriptures, and "the necessity for maintenance of purity of doctrinal and congregational integrity in the face of the rise of religious and political heterodoxy outside the congregation's bounds."⁴¹ To this end, they believed a minister's most important function was to serve as a spiritual guide interpreting scripture and theology for his flock. In this interpretation, the social role of the church was paramount; therefore, the social role of the minister was equally important.

- The religious context of Jedediah Morse's sermons was the division between conservative and liberal camps brought on by the First Great Awakening.
 - The liberal faction emphasized individual autonomy in religious matters and embraced a more democratic understanding of authority within the church.
 - The conservative faction placed emphasis on hierarchies of authority and the central role they believed ministers were to play as authorities in religious matters and as social commentators.
 - These and other differences in doctrine led to separation and open conflict between the two factions.

Understandably, many in American society found the 1790s marked by a great deal of turmoil. At this point, American republican government was little more than an experiment and no one was sure whether the experiment would be successful. While the instability of the political and economic systems created a large amount of societal stress, the changing cultural climate had the most severe repercussions in the relationship between the clergy and their congregations.

The ideals of the Revolution influenced both the clergy and the members of their churches; however, they interpreted the impact of these ideals very differently. For the masses, republicanism and liberalism completely redefined their conception and their place in American society. They developed a new sense of their self worth, and "Above all, the Revolution dramatically expanded the circle of people who considered themselves capable of thinking for themselves about issues of freedom, equality, sovereignty, and representation." The ideals of popular sovereignty and the voice of the people codified in the Constitution expounded these ideas, "The correct solution to any important problem, political, legal, or religious, would have to appear to be the people's choice." It seems a reasonable interpretation that, if the people were the deciding authority in legal and political matters, why could they not reach independent conclusions about religion?

The orthodox clergy faced a crisis with this effective repudiation of their traditional societal role. Through their support of the Revolution and Constitution, most ministers had anticipated an important role in shaping the new society forming around them. **The Congregational clergy "were most deeply committed to the project of the new United States" and had envisioned a continued, if not expanded, role as societal watchmen. However, this expectation did not fit into the role republican citizens envisioned for their ministers. After the Revolution, New England's established ministry found themselves suddenly thrust into a new religious arena, and "Congregationalists accustomed to state recognition . . . were forced willy-nilly, to adjust. More than simply adjusting, they now had to compete for souls, for public allegiance, and for intellectual commitment." Despite this new set of challenges, the conservative New England ministry was unwilling to discard their visions of a religious and republican Utopia in the United States; furthermore, they were unwilling to give up their role in forming this Utopia.**

Nathan Hatch articulated the challenges faced by the conservative clergy in *The Democratization of American Christianity*. These challenges resulted from the increasingly republican nature of society. **"In such a society the elites could no longer claim to be adequate spokesmen for the people in general. In this climate, it took little creativity for some to begin to reexamine the social function of the clergy and to question the right of any order of men to claim authority to interpret God's Word."**⁹¹ The clergy faced the difficult task of proving their usefulness to society and the necessity of their traditional role in this new republican society. Unfortunately, for the clergy, the developing society of the 1790s in no way resembled the society the clergy had envisioned.

Americans were beginning to emphasize new ideals, as "in the early years of the new nation . . . evolution was away from a republicanism defined largely by civic humanism, with ideals of disinterested public virtue and freedom defined as liberation from tyranny."⁹² **Increasingly, the new definition of republicanism emphasized "ideals of individualized private virtue and freedom defined as self-determination," making the traditional clerical role increasingly obsolete.**⁹³ **The changing concept of virtue is key to their understanding of the threats they faced.** Through each fast day, thanksgiving, and election sermon, conservative clergy railed against the state of virtue in the new nation. In the minds of the religious elite, the means of influencing the morals of society lay in the connection between virtue and piety. Morse and other members of the conservative Congregational faction feared this new social ideal did not align with the traditional principles of New England religion. Pg. 36-38

- The passage above describes the social context within which the conservative congregationalist clergy found themselves.
- Society was changing and the new values being emphasized undermined the clergy's relevance.
- These developments threatened the role the Clergy saw for themselves in shaping this new society; and threatened their understanding of the correct relationship between church and state.

CH.2 “The Demoralizing Principles of a Foreign Nation:” The Political Preconditions of the Bavarian Illuminati Threat”

The political situation of the 1790s provides an essential context for exploring the significance of the Bavarian Illuminati controversy. The social climate alone did not lead to Morse's enthusiastic propagation of the Bavarian Illuminati threat; the orthodox clergy's perception of their increasing political marginality also pushed them into the pulpit. The Bavarian Illuminati sermons mark the orthodox clergy's attempts to reassert their role as social watchmen in the political arena through reinvigorating the jeremiad tradition. They viewed political commentary as a traditional and appropriate function for the clergy. Furthermore, they claimed political preaching had been an essential function of the clergy since the dawn of Christianity: "the priests and prophets under the Old Testament dispensation; Christ and his apostles under the New; the faithful Christian clergy in every age and every country, have preached politics." 108

Morse described the role of the clergy in politics as advisory, but nevertheless essential, claiming the clergy "cautioned the people against animosities and divisions, warned them of their dangers, whether from foreign or domestic enemies, and have exerted their talents and influence to support the religion and lawful government of their country." 109 This advisory role was essential to the New England jeremiad tradition and largely responsible for the name jeremiad, "the central element in the American Puritan configuration was the analogy between New England and latter-day Israel in the prophetic period before the Exile- in covenant with [the] Lord as his chosen people, but decaying in spirit and liable to ever more severe chastisements." 1 Once more, the inhabitants of New England perceived a similarity between their present situation and the Biblical narrative of the Israelites. Pg. 45-46

- The orthodox clergy saw themselves not only as guardians of the moral purity of society, but as political advisors against threats to the nation both foreign and domestic.
- They viewed America as being in a position similar to that of the Jewish nation in the Old Testament - in covenant with God and liable to suffer severe chastisements on account of their apostasy.
 - This view only further necessitated their role (in their eyes) as guardians of the nation's interests.

Morse not only had the background and ambition that led him to endorse the Bavarian Illuminati threat, he also had the political connections that provided the evidence to legitimate his cause. For Morse and his allies, the Bavarian Illuminati represented an opportunity to create social change. The existence of a threat to both religion and government could influence the public to mend their ways. What remained was to find a means of informing the republic of the present danger. **Unwittingly, President John Adams would provide Morse and his cronies with an opportunity to address their grievances.**

No evidence of any contact between Adams and Morse exists from this period, however, in the late 1790s they found themselves in remarkably similar positions.

Adams's father had sent him to Harvard to study for the ministry, but his decision to study the law led him instead to become one of the leaders in the American founding era. Instrumental throughout the revolutionary struggle and after for his role in the creation of the Declaration of Independence, the crafting of the Massachusetts State Constitution, and his diplomacy in Europe, by 1798, the outcome of the Revolution was not what Adams had anticipated. He could take little satisfaction in his office of chief executive. His own cabinet consistently undermined him, his own party sought to replace him, diplomacy with France was at a standstill and the opposition press continued to vilify him. Pg. 53

- John Adams was president of the United States in 1798 and 1799. He lost re-election in 1800.
- He found himself hard pressed by political enemies and in a diplomatic crisis with a powerful foreign enemy (France).

Relations with revolutionary France would prove the most problematic and most criticized aspect of Adam's presidency. Beginning with French naval ships impressing sailors from American merchant vessels, the problem escalated after the XYZ Affair. An infamous incident in American-French relations, the XYZ Affair occurred when French diplomatic officials, discreetly referred to in the American press as Monsieurs X, Y and Z, demanded an extravagant bribe from the American envoy sent to France by Congress to discuss cessation of impressments. The American diplomats, President Adams, and the American public were outraged by this behavior, and this event inaugurated an undeclared naval war between France and America throughout the Atlantic world. This conflict, combined with the public's demand for retribution and what Americans perceived to be the perversion of revolutionary ideals in the bloodshed and violence of the French Revolution, made difficult Adams's desire to allow diplomacy and a mutual desire for peace soothe relations.¹²³

In typical New England fashion, Adams reacted to the difficulties in his presidency with appeals to God. Although Adams's 1798 and 1799 fast day proclamations met with public opposition, his proclamations were not without precedent.

The strongest fast day tradition came from Congregational New England that "had long held an annual governmentally declared fast day on a weekday in the spring." Echoing perhaps the fast day exhortations of his youth, Adams declared, "The American republic ought to acknowledge its dependence upon Almighty God, especially in dangerous times." During the Revolution, the Continental Congress proclaimed several through Adams's influence,

On 14 June 1775 the First Continental Congress echoed the familiar New England penitential tone drafted by a committee including John Adams. This protonational fast day, held on 20 July 1775, set the precedent for confessional fast days which Congress continued to declare every spring throughout the Revolutionary War. Pg. 54

- Adams resorted to appeals to God through the proclamation of national fast days.

...The majority of the populace viewed fast days and jeremiads as outworn colonial traditions, unacceptable in a republican nation.

Despite the popular opinion, in his fast day proclamations of 1798 and 1799, President John Adams supplied the clergy with a public forum where they could address the dangerous moral decay they felt was rampant in American society. Sermons preached on fast days, election days, thanksgiving days, military occasions or any other event that warranted a special weekday sermon reached a broader audience than the Sunday morning regulars. In the 1790s, when Congregational Church membership diminished rapidly and women comprised the bulk of church members, Congregational clergy turned to the fast day sermon to reach a larger segment of society.

The content of fast day sermons differed from the weekly Sunday sermon. On Sundays the clergy functioned as guides to personal salvation for their congregations. Alternatively, "on weekdays- as the occasion required- they would become social guardians telling the nation who they were and what they must do to retain God's special covenant interest."¹³⁴ The fast day sermon generally followed the format of the jeremiad; it was an opportunity for the clergy to address the shortcomings of the population in front of a large audience. "The primary occasion for publicly recognizing these times of trouble was the fast day- the time when ministers integrated the theory of federal covenants into the public life of their particular communities. Pg. 56-57

- The orthodox clergy used these national fast days to address their own social and political concerns and bolster their position against the changes they felt threatened them.

In the hands of a speaker accustomed to integrating religious and political imagery, such as Morse, Jefferson became the weak and wicked Ahaz and Adams the pious and wise Hezekiah. The message was blunt; any person familiar with Isaiah would oppose the election of a presidential candidate with many similarities to the Biblical King Ahaz. As Abiel Holmes so appropriately questioned in 1799, "Who does not perceive a happy resemblance between the conduct of the Jewish King, and of the AMERICAN PRESIDENT?"¹⁴²

Morse expressed particular concern about the leadership abilities of an irreligious leader. He asked his congregation, "Can he be a friend to his fellow creatures who hates Christianity, who opposes its progress, who seeks its subversion, ridicules its ordinances, and vilifies its teachers?"¹⁴³ There was no need for Morse to name the man he spoke of, every citizen of Massachusetts and Connecticut was well aware that the conservative clergy opposed the election of Jefferson, widely suspected of holding deist beliefs, a position the clergy equated with atheism. If Jefferson was portrayed as the wicked Ahaz, Adams was clearly the good King Hezekiah, "whose moral, religious, and political character are well known." There were no secrets with Adams, a pious son of New England, his Unitarian leanings conveniently forgotten. Only Adams reliably navigated the ship of state. Morse believed Adams had already proven his worth. Pg. 60-61

- Jedidiah Morse was among the conservative clergy that used these fast day sermons to their own ends.

- Liberal political leaders like Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton held an understanding of the separation of church and state that was contrary to that of Morse and the Conservative Clergy. They thus became the target of Morse's attack sermons.
- And inversely, politicians like Adams who were friendly to the orthodox clergy received support.

When Jedidiah Morse climbed into his pulpit in 1799, he declared to his expectant audience, "It has long been suspected that secret societies, under the influence and direction of France, holding principles subversive of our religion and government, existed in this country."158 Furthermore, by emphasizing concerns held by both the political and religious leaders in New England, he provided the conservative elements of American politics and religion with an immensely effective explanation. The Bavarian Illuminati combined the threats presented by the French and the growing evangelical faiths into one and fashioned an enemy New Englanders in particular could identify as the ultimate enemy, the ever-present Anti-Christ of civil millennial discourse.

Although Morse's main source of anxiety remained the condition of New England society and the preservation of Congregationalism, he harnessed the Illuminati threat for political means. The choice of states harboring Illuminati societies were no coincidence. Virginia, of course, was the home state of Thomas Jefferson and New York the home state of Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton had recently become an enemy of Adams and his loyal supporters by authoring a villainous letter that relentlessly criticized Adams. Even more suspect were "the not-so-covert efforts of the Hamiltonians to slip Charles Cotesworth Pinckney in ahead" of Adams in the 1800 presidential election. By implying a strong Illuminati presence in each of these states, Morse further suggested that they might also have a role in the politics of that state, especially since many charged the Illuminati with endeavoring "to destroy the confidence of the people in the constituted authorities and divide them from government."160 Pg. 67-68

- Morse harnessed the Illuminati threat for political means.
- It was effective because it combined the threats presented by America's foreign enemies and that of the growing evangelical faiths into one.
 - Fear and suspicion were thus the key impulses upon which the Illuminati threat played.

Morse's Illuminati sermons of 1798 and 1799 made clear that only true Christianity could preserve the American republic, and only the respect and obedience of the people toward proper elected leaders and the clergy could ensure the creation of a Christian republic. Morse's message became part of a larger clerical campaign when ministerial colleagues picked up similar themes. Timothy Dwight continued the Illuminati discourse in a sermon given on the Fourth of July, 1798, several weeks after Morse's original sermon. Dwight echoed similar allegations against the Illuminati. Undeniably a superior orator and writer with a strong background in poetry, Dwight declared, "In the societies of Illuminati doctrines were taught, which strike at the root of

human happiness and virtue; and every such doctrine was either expressly or implicitly involved in their system.”¹⁶² Pg. 68-69

- Morse’s sermons argued that Christian morality, observed by society and promoted by the state, would preserve the nation from apostasy and the judgements that would follow.
- He presented the creation of a Christian Republic as the solution.
- His messages gained traction as they became part of a broader campaign by conservative clergy.

CH.3 Watchmen of the New Jerusalem: Jedidiah Morse, The Bavarian Illuminati and The Rebirth of the Jeremiad

During the Revolutionary War and Washington administration, New England Congregationalists presented a united front. "They generally stood together in their public pronouncements, although theological segmentation did contribute to a breakdown in consensus regarding the national covenant."²³⁰ **The beginning of serious competition between clergy with different theological loyalties had many causes; one early issue that split the clerical opinion was the Illuminati crisis of 1798 and 1799. Morse and his orthodox, Old Calvinist supporters emphasized the social role of the church, a role they saw diminishing and desperately tried to rescue. The liberal Congregationalists stressed the importance of theology and dedicated their efforts to maintaining the theological purity of the Congregational Church.**

Liberal Congregationalists such as William Bentley found the clerical role advocated by Jedidiah Morse unacceptable. While Morse believed he advocated a return to past religious tradition, the liberal Congregationalists felt quite the opposite. They believed his actions polluted the church and altered the role of the minister. For liberals, more engaged with intellectual and theological pursuits than civic involvement, the political scheming of orthodox clergymen was reprehensible. Pg. 94-95

- Many issues lay at the root of the conservative/liberal split in the churches. The Illuminati threat was only one.
- Another was the differing perspectives the two sides had about the role of the clergy within the political realm.

Boston born and Harvard educated, William Bentley had been pastor of Salem's second Congregational Church since 1783. He was a member of the liberal branch of Congregationalism, which would soon break off to become Unitarianism. Because of his position in Salem, his Harvard education and his Democratic-Republican sympathies, Bentley emphasized good works over rigid Calvinist doctrine. For twenty years, beginning in 1797, Bentley wrote twice-weekly columns for the Salem Gazette discussing news and politics. Decidedly liberal-minded, Bentley often shared his pulpit with preachers from other sects. Unlike Morse, Bentley apparently harbored no political

ambitions, content instead to tutor promising students and use his own salary to support the poorer members of his congregation. Bentley did twice decline the offer of prominent positions from Thomas Jefferson suggesting he had strong political connections. In summary, he was the antithesis of Jedidiah Morse.²⁴⁰

- William Bentley was a liberal congregationalist minister who was the antithesis of Jedidiah Morse. He challenged and eventually overthrew Morse's conspiracy theory.

With his background and connections, it was logical that Bentley would challenge Morse's presentation of the Bavarian Illuminati threat. Already connected to area newspapers, Bentley used the newspaper column to discredit Morse and the theory of a conspiracy by the Bavarian Illuminati. This choice of medium allowed Bentley to reach a wide audience, "By linking regions together with bonds of political consciousness, interconnected partisan newspapers were a nationalizing influence, a literal arm of government connecting the extended republic through chains of information."²⁴¹ In his earliest denunciation of the Bavarian Illuminati, Bentley expressed no harsh feelings toward the clergy he believed had been misled by ignorance and the present cultural climate. **In early 1799, he published under the pseudonym Cornelius a pamphlet entitled Extracts from Professor Robinson's "Proofs of Conspiracy" with Brief Reflections, which documented the various inconsistencies and illogical arguments that he believed crippled Robinson's text, damaged his credibility. Bentley believed a few bad apples influenced the orthodox Congregationalists, "But into this order men will intrude, who have studied their Bible, and not mankind for whom it was written. Who know more of their own opinions from dogmas, than from history and investigation."** Bentley believed the clergy suffered undue influence from unscrupulous and ambitious individuals and from their own personal ignorance and intolerance. He remained hopeful that "the scandal will be removed, when the order becomes enlightened."²⁴³
Pg. 99-101

- Bentley publicly critiqued some of the sources Morse used to establish his theory - one being a book by entitled Proofs of Conspiracy by a Professor Robinson.
- This elicited public responses by Morse in defence of his sources.

Morse responded to Bentley's attacks by sending reviews praising Proofs of Conspiracy to the Boston papers. Feeling this tactic insufficient to vindicate his reputation and his actions, Morse began to submit open letters to various Boston papers defending himself and Robinson. **Meanwhile, both Morse and Bentley sought irrefutable proof for their own position from abroad, through correspondence with German geographer Christoph Ebeling. In 1799, Ebeling wrote them similar letters explaining the existence of the Bavarian Illuminati. According to Ebeling, the Illuminati had been formed several decades earlier to oppose the Jesuits. Confident the order was now defunct; Ebeling claimed their only goals had been liberalization in church and state. Ebeling also addressed Robinson's text, "Ebeling ridiculed Proofs of Conspiracy for its many erroneous statements about the men**

whom it described, and he even charged that it was written as propaganda at the behest of officials in the British government." Shortly after Morse received his letter rumors began to circulate about its contents.

...In response to letters questioning Ebeling's statements, Morse wrote that, "Though Ebeling indeed had ridiculed and rejected both Robison's and Barruel's representations of the Illuminati, his letter had actually supported their charges. Ebeling had said that the Illuminati did exist."²⁴⁶ Morse managed to stretch the truth regarding the Ebeling letter until an alleged extract, that was in fact a fraud, appeared in the American Mercury. The extract claimed to contain snippets of the letter written by Ebeling to "an eagle-eyed detector of Illuminatism" in America. Pg.101-102

In October, Bentley sent his letter from Ebeling to the Massachusetts Spy. The letter appeared in early October with the following vague introduction: "A Gentleman in this State, who has a literary Correspondent in Germany, has lately received the following Letter from his friend in that Country, on the subject of Robison's Book of Illuminati, &c. As that book has been such much the subject of conversation, the Letter may be interesting to some of our Readers."²⁵¹ Although purposefully misleading, the introduction was not technically a lie. Bentley was indeed a correspondent of Ebeling and had received such a letter. The contents were particularly damaging to Morse, as a reading of the letter demonstrated that Ebeling most certainly did not support Robison's claims, and that he claimed Bavarian government had suppressed and extinguished the Illuminati many years before.

Bentley's letter, attributed to Morse largely because of the letter's vague introduction and despite Morse's strong denial, appeared in papers up and down the Atlantic seaboard, including in Philadelphia's partisan Democratic-Republican Aurora. Within the span of a few weeks, Morse became an object of national ridicule. The clerical campaign in shambles and his supporters absent, Morse finally conceded to print his letter. William Bentley celebrated Morse's complete defeat in his diary,

In yesterday's gazette we had the last roar of poor Morse. His only fort was in recourse to vulgar prejudice. He did not dare to meet the argument fairly. He ranted upon the zeal of Masons in his old Copie [sic] of Robison, then condemned all Secret Societies, & after saying that 3/4s of what had been said was nothing to the point, he ended by saying nothing was understood.²⁵²

After, Morse conceded to print his letter from Ebeling, he made no more reference to the Bavarian Illuminati conspiracy. Pg. 103-104

After the publication of Morse's letter, discussion of the Bavarian Illuminati threat ceased. Later Jeremiahs would occasionally resurrect the possibility of a threat to government and religion with the Bavarian Illuminati, perhaps because it was such a perfectly engineered threat to American mentalities. But for Morse and his cohorts, the potential of the Bavarian Illuminati had been spent. Proven a fraud, with no possibility of debate, Jedidiah Morse had seemingly lost his bid to preserve clerical authority and with it the possibility of establishing a New Jerusalem on American soil. Pg. 104

- Both Morse and Bentley corresponded with a German Geographer Christopher Ebeling seeking information that would vindicate their respective positions on the Illuminati.
- The publication of Ebeling's letter vindicated Bentley and completely humiliated Morse.
- Following the publication of the letter Morse did not make any more references to the Illuminati threat.

CH.4 Conclusion: The New Jerusalem in the 19th Century

...The Bavarian Illuminati affair holds significance apart from its primary spokesman. The actions of Jedidiah Morse and his colleagues represent a significant turning point in the refashioning of the American jeremiad and, therefore, point toward broader currents in American cultural history. Pg. 106

Historian Sacvan Bercovitch described the Federalist Jeremiahs as linked to the Puritan past. "They were berating the present generation for deviating from the past in order to prod it forward toward their vision of the future. In ritual terms, they were asserting consensus through anxiety, using promise and threat alike to inspire (or enforce) generational rededication."²⁵⁴ Morse and his cohorts held very specific millennial expectations for the American republic or the New Jerusalem as they imagined it. They firmly believed the American republic could not survive without a virtuous citizenry, and the only means of maintaining a virtuous citizenry, in their opinion, was through regular church attendance and deference to the leadership of educated leaders. Accordingly, they envisioned a very precise and narrow path toward achieving their goal and were not inclined to accept any deviation. Therefore, when examined within its political, social and religious context the Bavarian Illuminati affair very clearly becomes much more than a diverting historical footnote or an example of mass hysteria amongst the clergy. It represents an attempt by Morse and his cohorts to use anxiety to prod their congregations toward their vision of the future, and it was an outstanding failure. Pg. 106-107

- The assessment that the Bavarian Illuminati affair was a failure is only correct within its limited context. That the same conspiracies and the same methodologies being are used by the conservative clergy today is significant when considered within a broader context.