

ピューリタンの選挙日説教と形式： Danforth, “Errand into the Wilderness”

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The Puritans' Election Sermons

— Danforth, “Errand into the Wilderness” —

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Election sermons, which commemorated the election of the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and were delivered at the General Court on the last Wednesday of May, originated in 1634 and continued for 250 years until 1884. The first half of this paper explores the inception, the history, and the form of these election sermons, and the second half analyzes Samuel Danforth's famous sermon “Errand into the Wilderness.”

The typical election sermon consists of three parts: the Text, the Doctrine, and the Uses. The Text section introduces a quotation from the Bible and briefly explains the meaning; the Doctrine section, usually written in italics, presents the theme of the sermon and adds the minister's interpretation; in the Uses, the text and the doctrine are applied to the present situation and examined in the contemporary context. Following this process, the text is gradually unfolded in the subsequent parts and in the conclusion the minister offers solutions to present problems. (The Uses section is also called the Proposition or the Application.)

In the text of “Errand into the Wilderness,” Danforth asks why people have come to the wilderness. This “errand” is the central motif, and it continues throughout the sermon. In the doctrine, Danforth says people's weak and intermittent faith fails to honor the prophets, bears prejudice against the prophets, and causes the people to forget their “errand” of establishing a holy commonwealth. In the dramatic Uses section, Danforth uses a dialogue technique (dialogism) with ten questions and answers. He says the cause of this deterioration of faith is not in God, but in people's worldly cares, lusts, and passions. He says we should not be “a reed shaken with the wind,” but rather “solid, serious, and sober Christians.”

Danforth serenely and intellectually traces New England's errand.

Fate, doom, and God's fury, which characterize so many Jeremiad sermons, do not appear in this sermon. Danforth's strategy is not to evoke fear and terror in the hearer. The theme of "Errand into the Wilderness" is developed and reinforced from various points of view. Danforth is at his best in re-creating the theme of "errand" and giving various illustrations of it.