**Did the first settlers in the Chesapeake and New England intend to create societies that resembled the England that they had left behind, or did they intend to create societies that were markedly different from the England that they left behind? Discuss religion, politics, economics, and society in these two areas as part of your answer.**

The first two permanent British colonies in the New World, the Jamestown settlement that eventually became part of the larger Chesapeake region colonies and the New England colonies that began in Massachusetts, began in quite different ways and developed along equally different paths. Both New England and the Chesapeake Colonies remained similar in certain respects to England, but each region developed distinct aspects of their own. While many of the original differences in the two colonies originated from the disparate intentions of their respective settlers, their development did not always proceed according to the plans of their founders.

On the whole, the Chesapeake settlers represented the ideas of British expansion by way of “plantations” that had been pushed by theorists such as Richard Hakluyt. It was based around a trade company, in this case the Virginia Company of London, receiving a charter to settle an area of land with the purpose of developing it for trade. While the company was supposed to make money from the settlement, it was also assumed that the Chesapeake settlements would be a way of “planting” English society overseas. In New England, on the other hand, settlers moved there for a different reason. The vast majority of early settlers in New England were Puritans who felt some level of religious oppression in Anglican England, and by moving to New England, they hoped to establish a society according to their religious beliefs. Doubtless they hoped to make money as well, as they established their own trade company, the Massachusetts Bay Company, but the driving factor behind their settlement was religious.

While the two areas had different desires for the settlements that they were creating, the way in which the development of the settlements played out did not necessarily reflect these desires. In the Chesapeake area, the settlers no doubt “planted” certain English establishments such as a language and culture. They did set up a political system based around an elected representative assembly and local county courts, importing an English version of democratic government. But in many other ways, the Chesapeake colonies developed down a path that did not mirror England much at all. In its early years, the Jamestown settlement seemed to be such a money-losing venture that the Virginia Company latched on to the first available crop that appeared to be a source of income: tobacco. The cultivation of tobacco, and the effects of basing development around such a crop, would shape the region for centuries to come.

Living conditions were very poor in the early Chesapeake settlements and English families were not easily compelled to move there. Most of the settlers were single, young men who had been granted land in exchange for several years of indentured labor. The result was a population that grew only with increased immigration. For those who did raise families, the survival rates for children were much lower than in England. The economy of the Chesapeake colonies was largely agricultural (especially based on tobacco), and most land was held in the form of plantations based around rivers used to transport the crop. In addition to the indentured workers brought from Europe to work the plantations, slaves were imported from Africa and the Caribbean, and by the year 1700 made up over 12 percent of the population in Virginia. While the Chesapeake colonies may not have become the “England-like” settlement that its founders had intended, we can see in these colonies the foundations for the development of much of the rest of the American South.

The development of the New England colonies took a much different route. With the beginning of the Great Migration to Massachusetts that began in 1630, the largely Puritan settlers put their indelible stamp on their colony. The Puritans who moved to Massachusetts were, by and large, wealthier in their home country than were the settlers of the Chesapeake, and both their wealth and standard of living immediately came into play. Because of their shared religion, these settlers also shared a much closer bond and united cause than did those in the Chesapeake. Moreover, they tended to migrate as whole families, thus producing a population that would grow dramatically even without continued immigration.

In New England, the Puritan church formed the basis of social organization. The company founded by the Puritans moved its authority to Massachusetts and thus became a de facto government that would later develop into a representative assembly. The Puritans placed a large emphasis on education and set up the first system of public schooling in the New World, along with its first university. Religious dissension was not allowed, and those who raised trouble with the church were banished. Ironically, some of those who were expelled from Massachusetts went on to found other colonies in New England. Economically, the New England colonies developed in a way quite different than in Virginia. The Puritan settlers saw industriousness as a saintly virtue, and they quickly developed a mixed economy with industries strong enough to export many goods to England. Indeed, the New Englanders were so successful economically, especially in the areas of fishing, boatbuilding, lumber, and iron, that commerce would eventually become the dominant form of society, overtaking religion. While the Puritans had left England looking to create a society distinct from that of their homeland, the New England colonies eventually developed to resemble England in many ways.