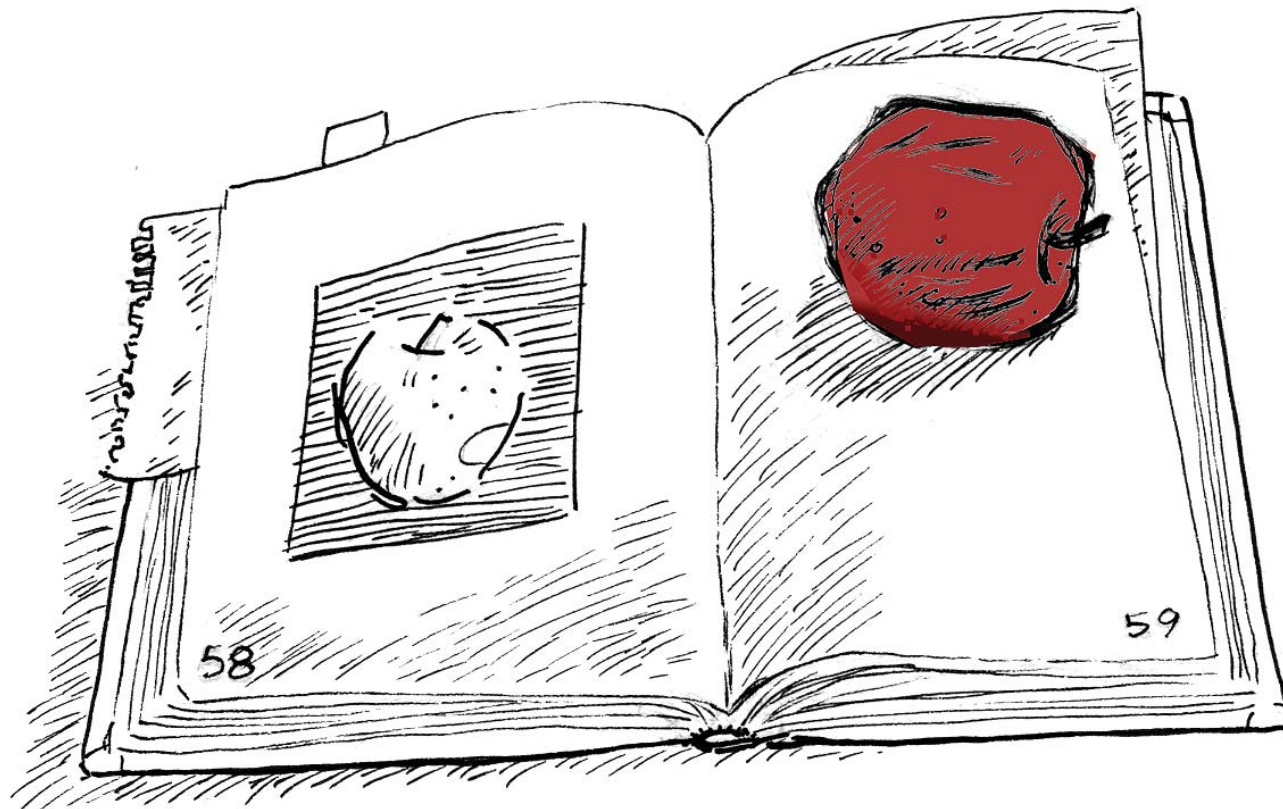


Early Colonial Ideology - part 1



Time Line overview

- 1615 • John Donne, major English poet and theologian is ordained a priest in the Anglican Church at the age of 43 years.
- 1621 • William Bradford becomes leader of Plymouth Colony > Separatists = “Pilgrims”
- 1628 • Thomas Taylor publishes book-length sermon, *Meditations from the Creatures*.
- 1630 • John Cotton delivers sermon, “Divine Right to Occupy the Land”
 - John Winthrop becomes leader of Massachusetts Bay Colony= Puritans
 - Anne Bradstreet, Simon Bradstreet (her husband, future governor), and Thomas Dudley (her father / another future governor) members of Puritans.
- 1631 • Roger Williams arrives at Plymouth Colony from England
- 1632 • Williams publicly condemns the King’s charters and the right of Plymouth Colony to occupy the land; recants position under pressure
- 1633 • Roger Williams moves to Salem; raises issues regarding the charter again
- 1634 • John Cotton sails to New World
 - Anne Hutchinson sails to New World
- 1635 • Roger Williams flees Salem

Time Line overview

- 1636 • Roger Williams founds Providence Plantation (Rhode Island)
- 1637 • Anne Hutchinson exiled from Massachusetts Bay Colony
- 1643 • United Colonies of New England is formed, one of the first notions of a collected governmental body
- 1649 • Charles I of England beheaded
 - England declared a Commonwealth
- 1652 • Providence Plantation abolishes slavery within its colony
- 1654 • John Donne's poem "Elegy XIX" is published posthumously.

February 1692 / May 1693

- Witch Trials in Salem Village, Ipswich, Andover and Salem Town.

Fast Forward

Jonathan Edwards (October 5, 1703 – March 22, 1758)

- a colonial American Congregational preacher
- lived just before the American Revolution
- followed the same Puritan ideals in his sermons and teachings
- extended the typology method from Biblical exegesis (critical explanation or interpretation of a text or portion of a text) to explain the spiritual significance of the sensible world of mortal reality.
- the natural world was a key to religion and devotional concepts

Images or Shadows of Divine Things

Natural World > typology < Heaven/God
(*accessible to human comprehension*) (*indirect comprehension*)

- his notions would be influential for future writing emerging from America
- what Edwards does (and other writers of the period) he presents you with two iconic symbols, tied together; for example, when you see a rose you recognize it for what it is physically in front of you, but in turn you view it as the religious, spiritual aspect of its nature and see the representation likewise.

The two are one.

Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God

The sermon is broken down into ten short sections where he outlines a very bleak concept of life on Earth:

- God might cast wicked men into hell at any moment in time.
- The wicked deserve to be cast into hell.
- They are already under a sentence of condemnation to hell.
- They are now the objects of that very same anger and wrath of God that is expressed in the torments of hell.
- Satan stands ready to fall upon them and seize them as his own, whatever moment God shall permit him.
- God has laid himself under no obligation by any promise to keep any natural man out of hell one moment.

Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God

Jonathan Edward's sermon was a major contribution to the “Great Awakening” period of colonial America—a period when a even higher standard of strong conservative and religious thought were in control of the various colonies.

Edwards ends the sermon with one final appeal: “Therefore let everyone that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come.”

Without explicitly saying, Edwards indirectly gives a sense of hope to those currently out of Christ. Only by returning to Christ can one escape the stark fate outlined by Edwards. He says that it is the will of God that keeps wicked men from the depths of Hell; this act of restraint has given humanity a chance to change their ways and return to Christ.

The Puritan Mind-Set

For Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Taylor, and other Puritans—all words were a necessity, even sensuous words, despite their limitations. Unlike the First Americans who viewed only spoken words as a means of achieving a spiritual connection, the Puritans viewed all forms of words (spoken, printed, casual thoughts, prayers) played in the plans for ultimate salvation — because all were created by God and should serve to glorify God.

New England was established as a means of redeeming the sins of Europe—through their actions as English citizens.

- Keep in mind they did not consider themselves as a new form of government but an off-shoot.

The Puritan Mind-Set

Closer Examination of Early Colonial Puritans

The term “puritan” began as an English connotation—in later centuries it has “morphed” into a New World, *American* connotation. This is ironic due to the fact they considered themselves to be *English* citizens.

In high school textbooks, they tend to paint the Puritans as first religious settlers in a wild, untamed American landscape, as a people wanting to escape religious persecutions from an overbearing government.

However, their *theological* beliefs closely mirrored the Church of England; their studies of God and His relationship to the Universe were the same values stressed in English churches.

The Puritan Mind-Set

The marked distinction between Anglicans in England and the Puritans who chose to colonize Americas is based on their ecclesiastical beliefs.

To clarify:

theology: pertains to study of divine things or religious truth

ecclesiastical: pertains to the church's laws or the duties of the clergy

Predestination

The Separatists/Puritans' main break with the Church of England

- they felt a stronger conservative measure was needed
- the English Reformation was still too closely linked to the Church of Rome
- one of the major conflicts, the belief of Predestination

Predestination

- as an omnipotent being, God knows in advance the fate of the Universe
- some humans are already on the salvation list, and others are not
- one cannot escape the pre-determined list
- one cannot save themselves, no matter how hard one tries
- if God has established you are damned to hell, even as a chaste Puritan,
you are damned
- however, one should try to avoid sin and fight against its influences.

Theocracy

- No one is pure. Everyone is stained with Original Sin.
Everyone is equal in God's Eyes due to the Fall of Man.
- Despite this, the American Puritans did not establish a democratic system.
- Colonial Separatists and Puritans established religion controlled the politics, creating a theocracy.

Theocracy: a form of government in which God or a deity is recognized as the supreme civil ruler, the God's or deity's laws being interpreted by the ecclesiastical authorities.

- The social order followed a rigorous system of order.
- No other religion was tolerated.
- No other form of Puritanism were allowed within individual colonies.

Cultural Expectations

- Ironically, in England they were actually more tolerant of other denominations of faith.
- Within the Separatists/Puritan communities, plays, gambling, and may-pole dances were banned.
- Some music was permitted outside of church, but not dancing.
- Self examination is important. Conscious prayer and meditation of self control keeps the individual on track.

Clash of Cultures

- With Predestination, the expectation was that the Puritans themselves would be on the selected list.
- They arrived in the “wilderness” of North America their acts were sanctioned by God.
- Native Americans were savages, primitive heathen akin to devils.
- These indigenous people would not be on the saved list, even if they converted.
- The plagues of European diseases (small pox) which decimated the Native population only proved to be a sign of the Puritans’ right to claim the lands.
- It has been estimated that 90% of the Native Americans in New England were wiped out by the time of the Puritans’ arrival.

Clash of Cultures

- The settlers found a somewhat controlled environment of cultivated fields and organized forests.
- The landscape was not a completely vast hostile wilderness.
- As early as 1634, John Winthrop, governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony knew of the epidemics wiping out the Native populations.
- In a letter he wrote to a friend in England, he states that plagues was “miraculous”— “But for the natives in these parts, God hath so pursued them, as for 300 miles space the greatest part of them are swept away by the smallpox which still continues among them. So as God hath thereby cleared our title to this place, those who remain in these parts, being in all not 50, have put themselves under our protection...”

Clash of Cultures

- Consequently, during the first fifty years no elaborate threat arose from the Native Americans.
- The number of deaths among the people seemed sanctioned by Divine Law.
- William Bradford, governor of the Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts, also mentions this:

For it pleased God to afflict these Indians with such a deadly sickness that out of 1,000 over 950 of them died, and many of them lay rotting above ground for want of burial.