

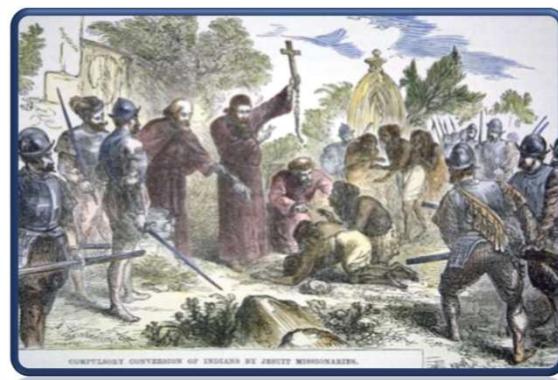
Faith of Freedom: A Survey of Christianity in America



CLASS 1

European Reformation and Expansion

- Catholic Missionary Presence
- Protestant Reformation
- Anglican Establishment



Catholic Missionary Presence

- The first Christians in North America were Catholic Missionaries in the 1400s & 1500s, who saw 'The New World' as the opening of a new era in the history of God's salvation ('Doctrine of Discovery')

"We therefore are rightly led, and hold it as our duty...to seek out and discover certain islands and mainlands remote and unknown and not hitherto discovered by others, to the end that you might bring to the worship of our Redeemer and the profession of the Catholic faith their residents and inhabitants..." – Pope Alexander VI (1493)

- Spanish mission churches were founded among natives in the American Southwest and Florida.
- French Jesuit priests made converts among the Indian Tribes in the Northeast



Protestant Reformation

- Within two generations of their first foray into The New World, the backlash against Catholicism had left Europe religiously divided. That division would set the stage for diversity of Christian faith in America.
- Led by figures such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, who saw corruption in the practices, authority and doctrine of the Church, many new forms of Christian faith arose during the 1500s.
- Influential ideas during the period included access to the Bible for the common people, and justification before God on the basis of grace, by faith and not works.



Anglican Establishment

- One of the major outcomes during the time of the Protestant Reformation was the separation of the Church of England from the pope, whereby King Henry VIII became the de facto head of the national church.
- By the late 1500s, his successors had been convinced of the economic benefits of expanding England's territorial and religious interests in America, leading to the establishment of the Virginia colony and the Jamestown settlement in 1607.
- Though the settlers came for economic opportunity, the settlement was chartered with a Christian motive to bring Christ to the New World



Anglican Establishment

- In 1619, Virginia affirmed that the Church of England would be the official, and only state-supported church in the colony.
 - Parishes were laid out to define religious communities and clergy support
 - Any clergyman was required to present ordination credentials to the governor in Jamestown; Any non-ordained ministers were 'suspended'
 - Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles and Book of Common Prayer were the standard for doctrine and worship practice
- Many Problems for first Anglicans in Virginia
 - Harsh living conditions resulted in disease and death
 - Parish land sizes were too big for the population
 - Second-rate ministers and no 'American' Bishop
- Anglican faith grew only due to its 'official' status



CLASS 2

Puritan Life and Faith

- Journey to the New World
- Social and Religious Life
- Puritan Dissenters



Journey to the New World

- For a short period between the separation of the Church of England from Roman Catholicism in the 1530s to the establishment of the Virginia colony in the early 1600s, English Queen Mary Tudor ardently turned the country back toward Catholicism
 - In the 6 years of Mary's reign, nearly 300 Protestant believers were burned at the stake
 - Many others devoted to the English Church fled to continental Europe, many to Geneva and the society led by John Calvin
- Influenced by Calvin, many English Protestants became proponents of Reformed (Calvinist) Theology, but also the structuring society on religious grounds



Journey to the New World

- After Mary Tudor's death in 1558, Protestants were welcomed back to their homeland, but many aspects of Roman Catholicism doctrine and worship were retained. This led many of those who had been exiled to form a party within English Protestants which called for the 'purification' of the Church.
- When the reforms called for by these 'Puritans' were not fully met, many became supportive of the English ventures to The New World.
 - In 1630, Puritan leaders obtained a new charter for the New England Company to form the Massachusetts Bay Colony
 - In the following decade 20,000+ Puritan immigrants (sometimes also called 'Separatists') crossed the Atlantic Ocean to settle new English colonies



Social and Religious Life

- The distinctive character of Puritan religious culture has gained an almost mythological connection to American origins. Major convictions included:
 - Humans depend upon God alone for salvation. This followed the principles of the European Protestant Reformers
 - The authority of the Bible – specifically that the Scripture exerts a 'regulative' authority over life and faith. This went beyond some of the Reformers.
 - God created all of life as a unified whole – church and state / public and private life are complementary spheres both guided by God.
 - All relationships – between God/individuals, God/society, individuals/society – work as 'covenants.'

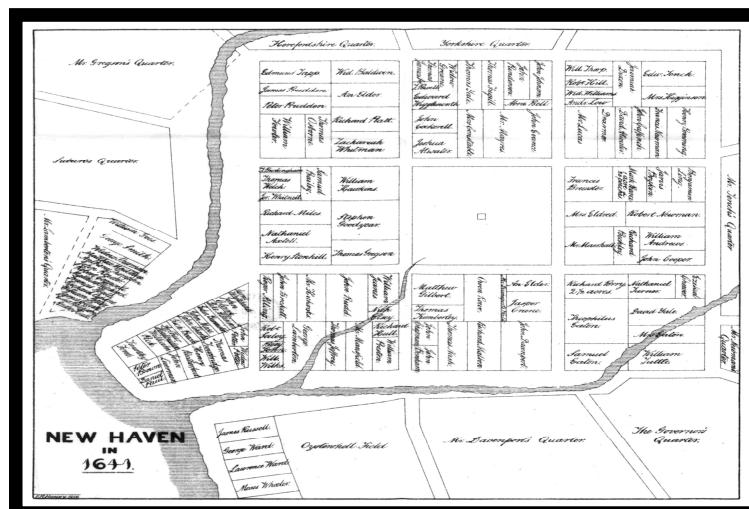


Social and Religious Life

- The ‘New England Way’ resulted in new standards that tied together religious and social life:
 - Membership and participation in Colonial life, including democratic voting rights within the colony, required that a man become a full member of a covenanted church
 - Church membership itself was based on mutual covenant between those who could offer up credible testimony of their experience of God’s salvation
 - Public law required church attendance every Sunday
 - Strenuous personal piety and devotion to God became hallmarks of public leaders
 - The church meeting house was a focal point of community. Located at the center of the town square, it held meetings for worship and public business.



Social and Religious Life



Social and Religious Life

- Another hallmark of Puritan life was church organization
 - They accepted the Westminster Confession of Faith, a C of E-based creed espousing Calvinist doctrine and theology. However, they differed significantly on the matter of church governance
 - Puritan churches were mostly ‘Congregational’ in that they believed that local churches were self-governing and autonomous.
 - Synods of ministers were convened, but played a strictly advisory role
 - The most influential person within any church was the Minister



Social and Religious Life

- The worship of the Congregational church bore a distinct character as well:
 - Traditionally plain/unadorned meeting place, where the pulpit was the center of focus
 - The ‘main event’ of any worship service was the sermon, which almost always spoke of the covenant of God’s saving grace for sinners, who now follow God’s law.
 - Sermons were usually around 2 hours long, and became the dominant form of public discourse
 - The Minister was not viewed as an ‘intermediary’ for salvation, required no formal ordination, and wore no robes/vestments
 - The church honored no saints or the Virgin Mary



Social and Religious Life

- The worship of the Congregational church bore a distinct character as well:
 - The ‘sacraments’ of the church were only baptism and communion
 - Baptism was an initiation into the Christian community (for infants)
 - The Lord’s Supper was offered as God’s sustained grace for the church.
 - Kneeling when receiving the Bread/Wine was outlawed due to its symbolic connection to Transubstantiation
 - Music was only congregational singing
 - Churches did not use musical instruments
 - Only sang translations and paraphrases of the Psalms
 - Later attitudes softened on music, leading to scandalous practices such as singing in parts or using printed music



Social and Religious Life

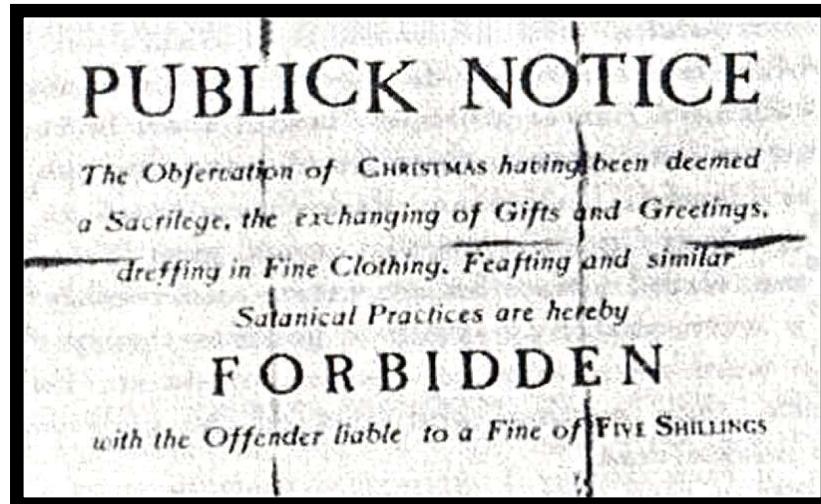
- Other aspects of Puritan life:
 - Skeptical of visual art, religious poetry became an expression of some:

The Purest Wheate in Heaven, his deare-dear Son
 Grinds, and kneads up into this Bread of Life.
 Which Bread of Life from Heaven down came and stands
 Disht on thy Table up by Angells Hands.
 – Minister Edward Taylor

- Heavy emphasis on religious education
- Honored Sunday as the Sabbath day
- Did not celebrate Christmas or Easter



Social and Religious Life



Puritan Dissenters

- Puritan Leaders came to New England colonies for a measure of religious freedom – but there was no intent to offer free exercise of religion for everyone. Puritans still believed in an official state church, only one according to their own determination and direction
- Puritan preaching of salvation by faith were challenged by people who saw their community institutions and regulations as destructive to faith.
- Anne Hutchinson, a faithful member of the MBC, was accused of promoting ‘anti-nomianism’ among the faithful. She claimed that the Holy Spirit spoke to her directly apart from Scripture and so was banished by the community leaders.



Puritan Dissenters

- Roger Williams argued against state-based religion on the grounds that Christian action proceeds from the heart. After expulsion from the MBC, he founded Providence, Rhode Island, the first colony to promote freedom of religious worship as a 'human right.'

The doctrine of persecution for cause of conscience, is most evidently and lamentably contrary to the doctrine of Christ Jesus the Prince of Peace. – Roger Williams

- In the late 1600s, paranoia about declining morality and an influx of native occult practices across several Puritan settlements led to the infamous Salem Witch Trials, in which 20 people were executed for 'covenanting with the Devil.'



Review Questions

A) In his sermon 'A Model of Christian Charity,' John Winthrop conveys his sense of the spiritual importance of the MBC community when he states that they will be a 'city upon a hill.' What are the implications of that idea?

B) How is the virtue of 'brotherly love' expressed within this sermon? Did the Puritan social order embody this?

C) How would you assess the Puritan commitment to Scripture? In what ways did they succeed and fail in upholding that commitment?

