

## Lecture 19 – “A City Upon a Hill”: Calvinism in the New World

“There wasn’t enough of it” (Michael O’Brien of the United States Embassy in Britain, on why Oxford University—which was founded in the 12th century—rejected a proposal to establish a chair in American history).

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.” Matthew 5:14

### Background Reading

Gonzalez, ch. 24, pp. 217-28

### Prayer

From Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672) (See Puritan Poetry)

“All praise to Him who now hath turned  
My fears to joys, my sighs to song,  
My tears to smiles, my sad to glad. Amen.”

## “A City Upon a Hill”: Calvinism in the New World

### I. The Huguenots

- A. Gaspard de Coligny’s mission to Brazil (1555)
- B. The mission to South Carolina (1562) and Florida (1565)
- C. Huguenot emigration to America after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685)

### II. Anglicans in Virginia

- A. Many early Puritan settlers
- B. Enforced Anglican conformity under the Stuarts

### III. Puritans in New England

- A. The Great Migration of the 1630s—a “New England” in America
  1. The Mayflower and Plymouth (1620)—separatists (Robert Browne); William Bradford, governor
  2. Massachusetts Bay (1630s)—Congregationalists; John Winthrop—“We shall be a City upon a Hill. The eyes of all people are upon us.”
  3. Puritan tensions—Roger Williams (Rhode Island, first Baptist church in America organized in 1639), Anne Hutchinson
  4. The Cambridge Platform (1646)
  5. Bases of the Puritan society—town, family, school, church
- B. The Puritan Revolution of the 1640s—a “New England” in Old England
- C. Four Puritan histories
  1. *Wonder-Working Providence of Sion’s Saviour* in New England (1654) by Edward Johnson, a ship’s carpenter  
“The theme of the Pilgrim’s Progress applied to a people” (Bremer, 187).
  2. *Of Plymouth Plantation* by William Bradford, governor of Plymouth Colony. “A scrupulously accurate and humble presentation of the facts” (Bremer, 188).
  3. *The History of New England from 1630 to 1649* by John Winthrop, first governor of Massachusetts Bay.  
“Filled with factual information concerning the political events of moment and such remarkable acts of providence as the destruction of a copy of the Anglican Prayer Book by a garret mouse which left the [nearby] Bible untouched.” Winthrop’s *History* “is one of the most valuable sources for reconstructing the early years of Massachusetts and the nature of the New England mind” (Bremer, 188).

4. *Magnalia Christi Americana* by Cotton Mather, Puritan minister and theologian. The largest and most famous of the Puritan histories, this book covers the history of the church in New England from 1620 to 1698.

#### IV. The Presbyterians and the Dutch Reformed in the Middle Colonies

##### A. The Presbyterians

1. Presbyterians “by conviction” in New England and Virginia
2. First Presbyterian congregation organized in 1640 at Southampton, Long Island
3. Scottish settlers along the Atlantic coast (and in the 1700s the “Scotch-Irish” on the frontier)
4. Francis Makemie (1658-1708)
5. First American presbytery met in 1706 (Synod of Philadelphia—1717)
6. Associate (Seceder) and Reformed (Covenanter) churches and independent Presbyterian churches and presbyteries

##### B. The Dutch Reformed

1. Dutch Reformed Church organized in New Amsterdam (Manhattan Island) in 1628
2. Dutch settlements and churches in New Jersey, along the Hudson, and Long Island

#### Questions from Class

How did the Cambridge Platform (1649) so quickly embrace the Westminster Confession of Faith?

How could Congregationalists have synods?

Was Anne Hutchinson right in her critique?

When did the central pulpit begin in churches?

#### For Further Study

\**A Religious History of the American People* (1972) by Sydney E. Ahlstrom and *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (1992) by Mark A. Noll

The two standard general histories of American Christianity.

\**The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards* (1976) by Francis J. Bremer  
 Surveys the major features of New England Puritan history from its English origins to the Great Awakening. According to Bremer, the New England “experiment” was primarily a religious movement, with profound social, political, and economic manifestations. This book will help students, Bremer states in the preface, “to resist the natural inclination to impose their twentieth-century biases upon the seventeenth-century colonists.”

A. Read “The Christian Calling” by John Cotton from *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings*, ed. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson (Harper & Row, 1963), vol. 1, 319-27. John Cotton (1584-1652) was born in Derbyshire, England, and educated at Cambridge. For twenty years he served a church in Boston, Lincolnshire, until he was forced to resign in 1633 for nonconformity. He came to New England on the same ship with Thomas Hooker, the only other minister in New England who could approach him in reputation and learning. He was immediately called to be pastor of the Boston church. Cotton’s many writings on church polity were looked upon both in New England and in England as the standard expositions of the Congregational system, and his sermons and other writings set the model for New England orthodoxy.

Cotton’s sermon on “Christian Calling” summarizes the Puritan attitude on vocation and work.

\*In what two categories does Cotton divide our “outward and temporal life”?

\*What is the rule by which a Christian lives his or her “civil life”?

\*What do you think of Cotton’s exegesis of Leviticus 11:3?

\*What are the three rules by which a Christian determines a “particular calling”?

\*According to Cotton, faith enables us:

- a. to depend upon God to properly fulfill our callings

- b. to serve both God and other people in our callings
- c. to persevere in difficult tasks
- d. to cast all the burdens and concerns of our callings on the Lord
- e. to view our successes with moderation
- f. to “lay down” our callings with “comfort and boldness” when it pleases God

Summarize the three uses (or applications) of Cotton’s sermon.

\*What do you think of the Puritan “work ethic”? Is it a good thing or a bad thing? Why?

B. Read the poems by Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor. To some, taught to believe that the Puritans were opposed to pleasure and the arts, “Puritan poetry” must seem an oxymoron. But the fact is that the Puritans were the first poets (as well as the first historians) in American history. Their themes were religious, since all of life revolved around their relationship to God. Two of the better known Puritan poets, Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor, are represented here. Anne Bradstreet (1612-72) was the first significant poet in America. (Her father was the leader and later governor of the colony in Massachusetts.) Trained at the new college of Harvard, Edward Taylor (1642-1729) spent the rest of his life as pastor and doctor in the farming village of Westfield, one hundred miles west of Boston.

Anne Bradstreet’s phrase—“to show my duty with delight”—is an apt summary of the Puritan motivation in life. Edward Taylor’s unusual theme is found in his prayer that God make him his “spinning wheel.” Notice how he sustains the image of the spinning wheel through the poem. Also notice the lines, “Then dye the same in heavenly colors choice, All pinked with varnished flowers of paradise.” So much for the idea of Puritan drabness!