

# **Pilgrims and Puritans (Revised)**

Walter Sundberg

## **Basic Definitions**

**Puritans defined authentic religion as being grounded in behavior toward God. A true Christian is one who yearns for holiness.**

They are organized as follows:

**Puritans:** in the narrow sense: rid church of Romish ceremonies while remaining in the Church of England

**Presbyterians:** those who challenged the episcopal church polity and substituted a system recognizing the equality of all clergy

**Pilgrims, Congregationalists, Separatists, Independents:** those who opposed every form of the state church and wanted all authority in congregations

## **The Political/Religious Situation in England 16<sup>th</sup> Century**

Henry VIII dies 1547 as a Catholic

Ten-year-old Edward VI takes the throne; dies 1553. England Protestant

Catholic Mary I (Bloody Mary) takes the throne; dies 1558.

Protestant Elizabeth I takes the throne; rules to 1603; last of the Tudors.

James VI of Scotland (House of Stuart) takes the throne as James I. Deep Catholic sympathies.

**Puritans wanted to purify the church of this chaos. They protest against established authority and conventional religion**

## **Theology of the Puritans**

Personal salvation entirely from God

The “plain style”

Emphasis on conversion

Covenant theology

Biblicism

Organization of the church based on scripture

Reform of society

### **John Bunyan 1628-1688**

“ Pilgrim’s Progress” (1678)

THE CONCLUSION. *1. Of all the temptations that ever I met with in my life, to question the being “of God,” and truth of his gospel, is the worst, and the worst to be borne; when this temptation comes, it takes away my girdle from me, and removeth the foundation from under me: O, I have often thought of that word, “have your loins girt about with truth”; and of that, “When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”*

*2. “Sometimes, when, after sin committed, I have looked for sore chastisement from the hand of God, the very next that I have had from him hath been the discovery of his grace. Sometimes, when I have been comforted, I have called myself a fool for my so sinking under trouble. And then, again, when I have been cast down, I thought I was not wise, to give such way to comfort. With such strength and weight have both these been upon me.”*

*3. I have wondered much at this one thing, that though God doth visit my soul with never so blessed a discovery of himself, yet I have found again, that such hours have attended me*

*afterwards, that I have been in my spirits so filled with darkness, that I could not so much as once conceive what that God and that comfort was with which I have been refreshed.*

*4. I have sometimes seen more in a line of the Bible than I could well tell how to stand under, and yet at another time the whole Bible hath been to me as dry as a stick; or rather, my heart hath been so dead and dry unto it, that I could not conceive the least drachm of refreshment, though I have looked it “all” over.*

*5. Of all tears, they are the best that are made by the blood of Christ; and of all joy, that is the sweetest that is mixed with mourning over Christ. Oh! it is a goodly thing to be on our knees, with Christ in our arms, before God. I hope I know something of these things.*

*6. I find to this day seven abominations in my heart: 1. Inclinations to unbelief. 2. Suddenly to forget the love and mercy that Christ manifesteth. 3. A leaning to the works of the law. 4. Wanderings and coldness in prayer. 5. To forget to watch for that I pray for. 6. Apt to murmur because I have no more, and yet ready to abuse what I have. 7. I can do none of those things which God commands me, but my corruptions will thrust in themselves, “when I would do good, evil is present with me.”*

*7. These things I continually see and feel, and am afflicted and oppressed with; yet the wisdom of God doth order them for my good. 1. They make me abhor myself. 2. They keep me from trusting my heart. 3. They convince me of the insufficiency of all inherent righteousness. 4. They show me the necessity of flying to Jesus. 5. They press me to pray unto God. 6. They show me the need I have to watch and be sober. 7. And provoke me to look to God, through Christ, to help me, and carry me through this world. Amen.*

*Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1666)*

**Principle: In America, the fundamental principle is that government governs best which governs least. To carry out this principle in actual society the citizenry must have the essential virtues of self-government. To be self-governing requires character. For the vast majority of the citizenry, character is shaped by religious conviction. Religion in America shapes character not by political coercion but by focusing its energy in voluntary association. In this regard, the fundamental association that is prior to society and the origin of society, the family, is the seat of religion.**

The Pilgrims



William Bradford 1590-1657





### Deep sense of transcendent purpose

*“Being thus arrived in a good harbor, and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of Heaven who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth, their proper element.”*

### The Plymouth Combination, or The Mayflower Compact

*IN the Name of God, Amen. We whose Names are under-written, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the grace of God of Great Britain, France and Ireland, King, Defendor of the Faith &c. Having undertaken for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our K[i]ng and Countrey, a Voyage to plant the first Colony in the Northern parts of Virginia; Do by these Presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God and one another, Covenant and Combine our selves together into a Civil Body Politick, for our better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid: and by virtue hereof do enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Officers, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our Names at Cape Cod, the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France and Ireland the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth, Anno Dom. 1620.*

### Letter describing the first Thanksgiving

Edward Winslow 11 Dec. 1621 (found 1820)

You shall understand, that in this little time, that a few of us have been here, we have built seven dwelling-houses, and four for the use of the plantation, and have made preparation for divers others. We set the last spring some twenty acres of Indian corn, and sowed some six acres of barley and peas, and according to the manner of the Indians, we manured our ground with herrings or rather shads, which we have in great abundance, and take with great ease at our doors. Our corn did prove well, and God be praised, we had a good increase of Indian corn, and our barley indifferent good, but our peas not worth the gathering, for we feared they were too late sown, they came up very well, and blossomed, but the sun parched them in the blossom; our

harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a more special manner rejoice together, after we had gathered the fruit of our labors; they four in one day killed as much fowl, as with a little help beside, served the company almost a week, at which time amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest King Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain, and others. And although it be not always so plentiful, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty. We have found the Indians very faithful in their covenant of peace with us; very loving and ready to pleasure us: we often go to them, and they come to us. ..

### **The necessity of private property established**

“The failure of this experiment of communal service, which was tried for several years, and by good and honest men proves the emptiness of the theory of Plato and other ancients, applauded by some of later times, — that the taking away of private property, and the possession of it in community, by a commonwealth, would make a state happy and flourishing; as if they were wiser than God.”

William Bradford, *History of the Plymouth Plantation*,

### **John Winthrop (1588-1649)**



**Wee shall finde that the God of Israell is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies; when hee shall make us a prayse and glory that men shall say of succeeding plantations, "the Lord make it likely that of *New England*." For wee must consider that wee shall be as a citty upon a hill. The eies of all people are uppon us.**

*A Model of Christian Charity 1630*

## **Ann Marbury Hutchinson 1591-1643**



## **John Cotton 1584-1652**

### **Antinomian controversy**

**Covenant of grace: we receive salvation by the pleasure of God; good works are not the evidence of salvation**

## **Roger Williams 1603-1683**



**Arrived Massachusetts 1631**

**Banished October 9, 1635**

**1636 founded Providence Rhode Island**

**Pequot War 1637**

**1644 Rhode Island Charter: “God requireth not an uniformity in religion”; “soul liberty”**

**Christenings make not Christians (1645)**

**Who are then the nations, heathen, or gentiles, in opposition to this People of God? I answer, All People, civilized as well as uncivilized, even the most famous States, Cities, and the Kingdomes of the World.**

**Matthew 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.**

**If now the bodies of Protestant Nations remaine in an unrepentant, unregenerate, naturall estate, and so consequently farre from hearing the admonitions of the Lord Jesus. . .I say they must sadly consider and know. . .that Christ Jesus hath said, they are but as Heathens and Publicans, vers. 17.**

**Puritan experience: From halfe-Protestanisme halfe-Popery under Henry the eight, to absolute Protestanisme under Edward the sixth: from absoluer Protestantion under Edward the sixt to absalute popery under Quegne Mary, and from absolute Popery nder**

**Queene Mary, (just like the Weathercocke, with the breath of every Prince) to absolute Protestantisme under Queene Elizabeth, &tc.**

**Where the power and authority of sending and giving the Commission Math. 28 &tc. I say where that power now lyes?**

**It is here unseasonable to number up all that lay claime to this Power, with their grounds for their pretences, either those of the Romish sort, or those of the Reforming or Re-building sort and the mighty controversies which are this day in all parts about it. . That may make us ashamed for all that wee have done, Ezek. 43, and loath ourselves for that (in whorish worships) we have broken him with our whorish hearts Ezek 9. To fall dead at the feet of Jesus, Rev. 1 as JOHN did, and to weepe much as he Rev. 5 so that the Lamb may please to open unto us that WONDERFUL BOOK and the seven SEALED MYSTERIES thereof**

**Your unworthy Country-man Roger Williams**

### **Cambridge Platform 1646-1648**

*The like trial is to be required from such members of the church as were born in the same, or received their membership, or were baptized in their infancy or minority by virtue of the covenant of their parents, when being grown up unto years of discretion, they shall desire to be made partakers of the Lord's Supper; unto which, because holy things must not be given unto the unworthy, therefore it is requisite that these, as well as others, should come to their trial and examination, and manifest their faith and repentance by an open profession thereof, before they are received to the Lord's Supper, and otherwise not to be admitted thereunto.*

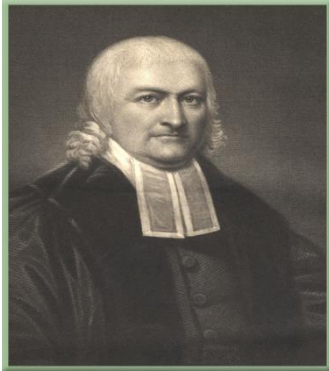
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### **Halfway Covenant 1662**

Proposition 5th. Church-members who were admitted in minority, understanding the Doctrine of Faith, and publickly professing their assent thereto; not scandalous in life, and solemnly owning the Covenant before the Church, wherein they give up themselves and their Children to the Lord, and subject themselves to the Government of Christ in the Church, their Children are to be Baptized.

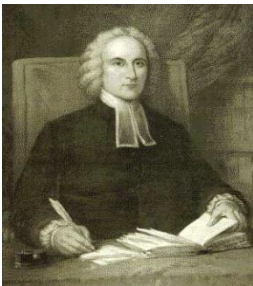


### **Solomon Stoddard 1643-1729**

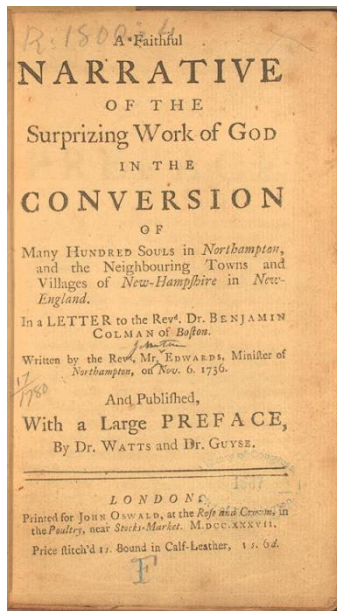


- 1) biblical preaching for the purpose of conversion. This means making people aware of damnation.
  - 2) expect God to act but expect it to be a “special season” and not to be controlled.
  - 3) expect that the church is subject to change.
  - 4) use all means of grace for conversion: Lord’s Supper is ‘a converting ordinance.’
- Revivals: 1679, 1683, 1696,  
1712, 1718

### **Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758**

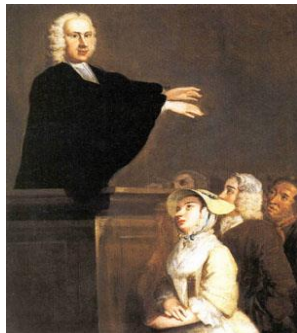


1727 associate pastor in Northampton with maternal grandfather, Stoddard  
1728 married Sarah Pierrepont  
Conversion: 1. love for divine things; 2. relish harmony and order of God in their own right; 3. consent to “Being in General.”

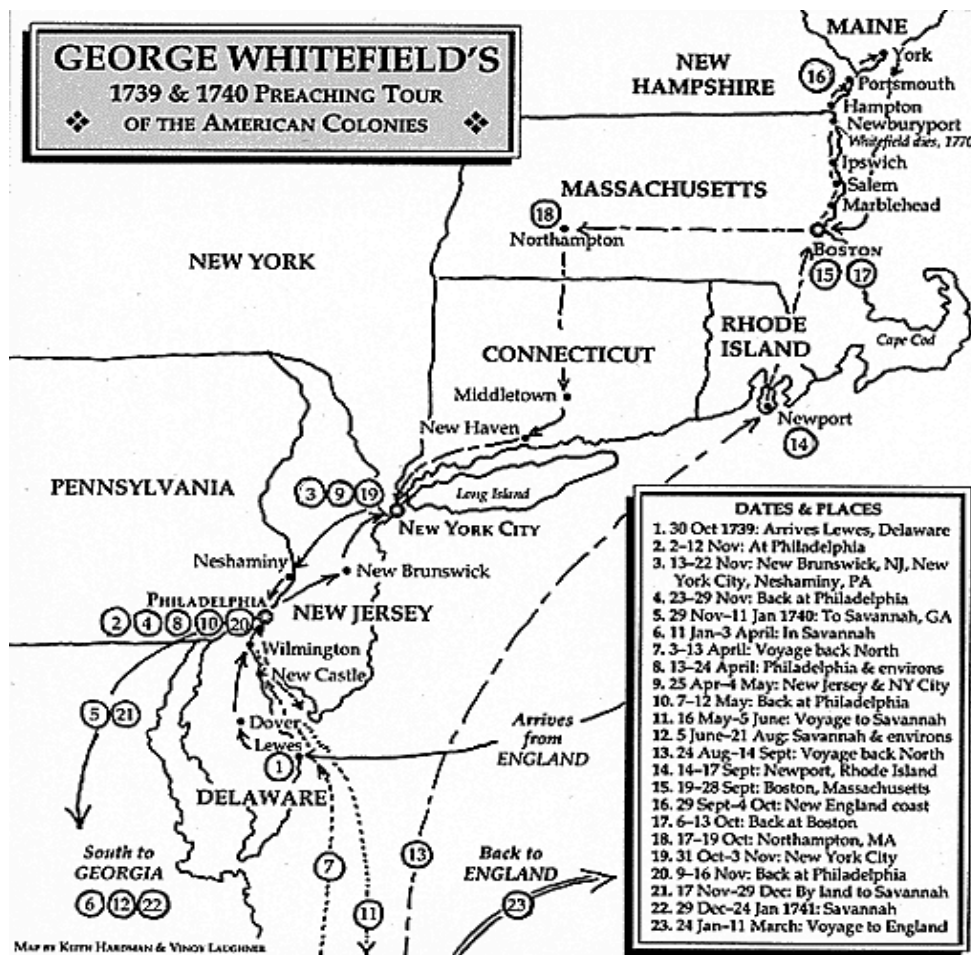


“Old Lights”  
“New Lights”

### George Whitefield 1715-1770 and the First Great Awakening



Ordained 1737 as preaching deacon  
Seven trips to America between 1738 and 1770  
Heard by 80% of colonists, New Hampshire to Georgia



The first major result of the Awakening was the strengthening of the churches of America. The Congregationalists of New England received the greatest benefit: according to Ezra Stiles, president of Yale College, during the 20 years following 1740 the establishment of “ ... above 150 new churches has taken place. ... ” The Awakening brought the total number of Congregational churches to 530. Historians have estimated that from 25,000 to 50,000 people were added to the membership of New England churches as a result of the revival. The population of New England in 1750 was approximately 340,000, so that (taking the conservative estimate of 25,000 converts as our number) more than seven percent of the entire population of the New England colonies would have come into the churches as a direct result of the Great Awakening.

In the Middle Colonies, the increase in the New Light Presbyterian churches was the greatest. From 1740 to 1760 the number of Presbyterian ministers in the American colonies increased from 45 to over 100. The churches had multiplied even faster, and in 1760 there were more than 40 churches in need of pastors in Pennsylvania and Delaware alone. Substantial gains were also made in the Southern colonies.

While the Baptists had shown some opposition to the Awakening, they shared dramatically in its fruitfulness. During the period 1740-1760 in New England, Baptist churches increased from 21 to 79. In the South, the foundation was laid for the enormous Baptist expansion there later.

Spiritual Awakenings in North America: Christian History, Issue 23,  
(Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, Inc.) 1997.

**Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), Autobiography**

*He had a loud and clear voice, and articulated his words in sentence so perfectly that he might be heard in understood at a great distance, especially as his auditories, however numerous, observed the most exact silence. He preached one evening from the top of the Court-house steps, which are in the middle of Market Street, and on the west side of Second Street, which crosses it at right angles. Both streets were filled with his hearers to a considerable distance. Being among the hindmost in Market Street, I had the curiosity to learn how far he could be heard, by retiring backwards down the street towards the river; and I found his voice distinct till I came near Front Street, when some noise in that street obscured it. Imagining then a semicircle, of which my distance should be the radius, and that it were filled with auditors, to each of whom I allow two square feet, I computed that he might well be heard by more than thirty thousand. This reconciled me to the newspaper accounts of his having preached to twenty-five thousand people in the fields, and to the ancient histories of generals haranguing whole armies, of which I had sometimes doubted.*

*By hearing him often, I came to distinguish easily between sermons newly composed, and those which he had often preached in the course of his travels. His delivery of the latter was so improved by frequent repetitions that every accent, every emphasis, every modulation of voice, was so perfectly well turned and well placed, that, without being interested in the subject, one could not help being pleased with the discourse; a pleasure of much the same kind with that received from an excellent piece of music. This is an advantage itinerant preachers have over those who are stationary, as the latter cannot well improve their delivery of a sermon by so many rehearsals.*

**Results of the Great Awakening**

National cohesiveness  
Distrust of hierarchical traditions and ‘old light’ traditions  
Emergence of Baptists and Methodists  
Impulse to higher education  
Evangelical ecumenism (“functional catholicity”)

**BISHOPS AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

Walter Sundberg

In the political cartoon from 1769, an Anglican Bishop, in fear of his life, is climbing the rigging of ship docked in Boston harbor. His carriage, crook, and miter have been unceremoniously dumped on board. An angry group of colonials stand demonstrating while two of them push the ship away with poles. They are not an unruly mob. They carry volumes by John Locke and Algernon Sidney, two great theorists of the Glorious Revolution in 1688 that secured the power of Parliament over the monarchy and thus marked the beginning of representative

government in early modern Europe. What the colonists in the cartoon represent is the desire for political and religious liberty. Against liberty, the office of bishop stood in the way.



We all learned in school about the political and economic grievances that led to the American Revolution in 1776. The Boston Tea Party of 1774 protesting restrictions placed upon colonials to buy goods is part of our folklore. But perhaps because our public schools shy away from the subject of religion, we fail to appreciate the extent to which the debate over episcopal government was a contributing cause of rebellion. "The apprehensions of episcopacy," wrote John Adams, "contributed. . . as much as any other cause to arouse not only the inquiring mind but the common people."

The situation was this. During the eighteenth century, the Anglican Church pursued an aggressive policy to control American religious life. From its official establishment in Virginia, it moved out to take political control of religion in Maryland, South Carolina, the City of New York, and then North Carolina and Georgia. From its outpost in New York, the Church's ambition extended to the northern colonies where the Puritan tradition of Congregationalism held sway. The strategy Anglicans employed was heavy handed to say the least. Under the principle "No Bishop, no King," Anglican missionaries denigrated Puritan divines such as Jonathan

Edwards and Ezra Stiles, implying disloyalty to the crown. Doctrinally, Anglicans claimed that dissenting clergy were not truly ordained to “the administration of God’s Word and Sacraments” and thus lacked the principles of “true religion.” In the Schism Act passed by Parliament, Anglicans required all teachers to be licensed by a bishop, thus attempting to close all schools run by dissenters. (The act was not effectively enforced.) They also sought to establish an Anglican episcopate directly in the colonies, not only for the purpose of regularizing their polity, but also so that they could take legal control of the income provided by the taxes meant for religious purposes. This aggressiveness put the dissenting clergy, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, etc. on the defensive. It also contributed to the general rebelliousness that marked the New England colonies during the 1760s and 1770s and ultimately led to revolution.

Much of the opposition to the Stamp Act of 1765, for example, revolved around the fear that the money raised would be used to pay for, in the words of Ezra Stiles, “half a dozen bishops on this continent.” Hierarchical control of church life would mean an end to liberty and indeed to the fundamental Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*. “God be thanked,” Stiles wrote, “we are not embarrassed by oaths to uninspired rules for defining truth, in this land of liberty, where the SCRIPTURES are professedly our only RULE.” One newspaper of the time, the *St. James’s Chronicle*, spoke of “stamping and episcopizing” as two sides of the same “plan of power.” This the colonists would not accept.