

## The Beginnings of the American Tradition to 1760

### A Brief History – England, Late 16<sup>th</sup> Century

- England = Catholic Church
- King Henry VIII established his own (divorce and polygamy) = Church of England or Anglican Church
- The churches hated each other and...
- Some Anglicans felt Henry did not rid their church of all things Catholic (stained glass, incense, fancy robes, etc.) – they wanted church to be “pure” = Puritans (or Separatists)
- King James I = “attend Church of England or...jail”
- Many Puritans escaped to Holland, others boarded the Mayflower (originally set to land in Virginia, but missed...)
- Mayflower’s population = half Puritans (escaping persecution) and half “Strangers” (looking for adventure)
- Landed in Plymouth in 1620 and vowed to “fight the war against Satan”

### Puritanism 101

1. **Total Depravity** – through Adam’s fall, every human is born sinful = original sin
2. **The Doctrine of Election** – God will choose those He will save and those He won’t – no-one knows if they are to be saved or damned...
3. **Predestination** – only a few are selected for salvation
4. **Limited Atonement** – Jesus died for the chosen only, not for everyone.
5. **Grace** – God’s grace is given; it cannot be earned
6. **Preservation of the Saints** – the “chosen ones” have full power to interpret the will of God.

### Interest in the New World Went from Exploration to Settlement

- America = food is plentiful and poor people can own land!
- Literature = pamphlets and poems appeared in Europe advertising America

### **The North = Puritans**

- 1620 – 120 people to Mass and 10 years later, 1000 more
- Their writing had 1 purpose = to glorify God
- Sermons, religious poems, and diaries and journals (to exorcise demons in their souls and to trace the rise of grace)
- First book published in America = *The Bay Psalm Book (1640)*
- First American “best seller” = *The Day of Doom (1662)* – see page 9

### **Three Main Pillars of Puritanism**

1. **Grace** = a wish to cleanse oneself of sin and have one’s feelings drastically changed (granted by God)
  2. **Plainness** = eliminate any human influence of religion and life
  3. **Divine Mission** = God led them to America to spread His word
- \* Puritanism only lasted about 100 years, but “The Great Awakening” revived it (briefly) in about 1740.

### **The North vs. The South = Gentlemen Planters**

- Puritan settlement = community whereas the South = vast farms
  - The South practices the Church of England
  - The southern attitude = generous, self-controlled, polite etc.
  - Southerners wrote about nature and society
  - Southerners purpose = entertainment and diversion (comic poem in 1708 and plays/the first American theater in Virginia in 1716)
- \* Both the Puritans and the Southern Farmers had a huge influence of American literature and introduced the concept of the American Dream that still exists today.