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***THE IMPACT OF PURITANISM UPON AMERICAN
LITERATURE IN THE 17th, 18th AND 19th
CENTURIES***

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Abstract

The study of any period in history cannot be understood without reference to the previous one for it explains the background of the changes that follow. In fact seventeenth century Puritan supremacy cannot be dissociated from its rejection of previous Catholic monopoly over knowledge and power. Early writings of Puritan America could not have been logically other than Puritan in form and content. Selected writers like Winthrop, Bradstreet and Rowlandson were the proponents of Puritan doctrines. However, challenge from European industrial development and intellectual questioning led to some departure from theologically-based explanations to scientific-centered arguments with respect to human existence and the working of the universe. This affected the Puritan values; their survival in the eighteenth century though not completely found advocates like Cotton Mather and Benjamin Franklin and others in the Age of Reason. Their writings can attest of their conviction and attempts to preserve Puritan faith. This had relatively to be reformed so as to survive in a more sophisticated materialist world through the works of Romantics or Transcendentalists of the nineteenth century like Waldo Emerson.

Dedication

To my parents who encouraged me

To Dr.Moulfi for her unlimited help

To my husband

To my sister Besma and my brothers Amine and Abderrahmene

To my daughter Meriem

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Introduction

Human history shows that people have never agreed unanimously upon the kind of organisation their society should have, and this is because of their different and varying conceptions and interests. These two depended on the people' s sources of knowledge, their intellectual abilities, and struggle for survival. This was the case of the Puritans among many others in human history. Challenging the supremacy of the Catholic Church first and that of the Anglican one because of their misinterpretations of the Bible and subsequent practices, the persecuted Puritans had to settle far away from the European continent and to struggle for the establishment of their biblically-based purified society. They took different measures to preserve their ideals and managed to express and propagate them in their own writings. This was obviously the case of the first generations. However, given the immutable change, namely progress in the intellectual world and economy, Church monopoly over knowledge was radically put into question.

The Age of Reason or Enlightenment that characterized the end of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century, produced rational thinkers besides some conservative ones, who, though convinced of their Puritanism, were partly influenced by the new trend of scientific evidence. The latter became however an absolute criterion for explaining the workings of the universe and organisation of the human society. The resulting doctrine or philosophy, known as empiricism, utilitarianism or even materialism came to clash with idealism. Both could present some convincing arguments, which led a group of thinkers to produce another trend called Romanticism or Transcendentalism by the nineteenth century. Such changing philosophies were

well expounded in philosophical and literary writings of colonial and postcolonial America. The survival of each one of them depended upon the kind and number of its advocates and their resistance against new intrusive ideas. The question is to find out to what extent Puritan ideals and values could be preserved. In other terms how could Puritan life influence the new generations despite the advent of opposite trends?

So in order to trace and assess such influence, it will be necessary and useful to identify Puritanism, will require first an examination of its emergence in Europe and its establishment in the New World, and second a description of the organisation of the Puritan colony. There is a large number of books related to American history which describe the evolution of the Puritan settlements, namely T Cooper's book, *The Lives of the Puritans*. This will constitute the object of Chapter One.

The existence and evolution of New England colony was the object of numerous writings from explorers, clergy, officials and men of letters. The understanding of their writings and influence of Puritan values thereon will require first the explanation of such values, and selection of both writers and their writings. Focus will be on John Winthrop, Anne Bradstreet and Mary Rowlandson who could be considered as representatives of Puritan writings and literary genres. These first settlers of the seventeen century would express and defend Puritan beliefs, and this will cover Chapter Two.

The freedom of thought and progress that characterized the Enlightenment Period of the eighteenth century produced a new type of writers challenging thus the theologian's interpretation of the workings of the universe. However, some Puritan devotees could use scientific progress to defend and consolidate their faith through their writings as this was the case of Cotton Mather who bridged

both centuries and that of Benjamin Franklin. Evidence of Puritan influence in their works will be discussed in Chapter Three.

The fourth chapter will attempt to find out the extent to which Puritan values could be safeguarded in the nineteenth century during which a large number of writers were advocating materialism while a few others tried to balance between the old and the new, producing thus a new trend within Romanticism, known as Transcendentalism. The origin and sources of inspiration of this movement will help to understand the writings and detect Puritan influence among the Transcendentalist writers under leadership of Ralph Waldo Emerson. The latter's writings will serve to trace such influence.

The assessment of such influence requires the use of the primary sources, that is the writings of the authors mentioned above besides the works of various critics which are altogether available on the Website.

Chapter One:

Emergence and Evolution of Puritanism

Introduction

Roman Catholicism was traditionally the dominant religion in Europe; as a result, it controlled many aspects of everyday life including politics, education, religion. The Pope in Rome was the leader of the worldwide Catholic Church, and strictly conforming to some sacraments, notably baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, holy orders, matrimony, and anointing of the sick. The Catholic Church was powerful because of its financial independence; it possessed land and exercised trading activities in olive and wine. It had monopoly over educational and cultural activities through its monastic schools.¹ However, some voices rose to question some of its traditions and to demand for its reforming, reformers were those theologians, clergymen, and statesmen like Wycliffe in England, Luther in Germany and Calvin in France, their works brought about the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Though the history of reform movements is quite interesting to help us understand the emergence of Puritanism, it is outside the scope of this memoir to examine all in detail. Our interest will be confined primarily to the background of Puritanism, its establishment as a denomination, its evolution and impact on Europe and more particularly later in America.

¹Paul Vingroff, *Social and Economic Conditions of the Roman Empire* (Britain: Methuen and Co Ltd, 1982, p75), Norman F. Cantor, *Civilisation of the Middle Ages*, (New York, Harper Collins Publishers, 1994), p 52

1. Background to Religious Reforms

Since education was clearly important as a socializing and indoctrination process, literacy became essential for the understanding of the Bible and the subsequent conversion of pagans. During the High Middle Ages (1000-1300), the Catholic Church could found university institutions in England like Oxford and Cambridge, and elsewhere in France, Portugal and Germany, whose main object of study covered theological studies though literature and other cultural activities were allowed so long they complied with the Church's doctrine and domination. However, interest in accumulating large amounts of wealth rather than distributing it to the parishes leading to the latter's poverty, and payment of tuition fees leading to the exclusion of serfs and illiteracy constituted major factors of the Catholic Church's diversion from pure Biblical teachings, which created antagonistic feelings towards it, and brought about reform movements.

Opposition emerged from a group known as the Cathars in 11th century France, who condemned the Catholic Church for imposing its own interpretation of the Bible rather than the Creator's orders, and rejected the Church established hierarchy through priesthood. The Church considered them as heretics, persecuted them and banned their activities and writings. Division among Catholics progressively culminated in what was known as the Great Schism three centuries later, through the rivalry between two Popes: one in Rome and the Second in Avignon in France from 1309 to 1378, when Papacy returned to Rome and conflict continued until 1417 between the Rome and French kings.

During the same period, questioning of some of the practices of the Catholic Church was voiced in England by John Wycliffe (1320-1384),

educated at Balliol, Oxford University. He and his advocates, the Lollards, stressed the supremacy of the Bible, translated it into the language of the common people, wanted to limit the Catholic Church's power and reject its supremacy, monasticism and its prohibition of clerical marriage. But the Royal Court under Richard II of the Plantagenet House did not tolerate opposition, and consequently, the Lollards, considered as heretics, experienced persecution, imprisonment and burning. The impact of the Lollards was important in the kingdom of Bohemia in central Europe, (today's Czech republic), where the Hussites, followers of Czech reformer Jan Hus (1369-1415), the forerunner of Protestant Reformation, introduced reforms and initiated Protestantism.

Since distortion of and diversion from Biblical canons was common among officials of the Catholic Church, it was clear that elsewhere, the Lutheran priests in Germany, followers of Martin Luther (1483-1546), a professor of theology, voiced their discontentment with respect to simony (elevation in church hierarchy with money), nepotism (appointment to church hierarchy of family members), indulgence (remission of purgatorial punishment or freedom from God's punishment for sin could be purchased with money). The belief in the Bible as being the only important source for authority and canon for religious life, was shared as well by French Calvinists, whose leader, John Calvin (1509-1564), a theologian, advocated the setting up of a Presbyterian Church the congregation of which would be governed by elders of equal rank. It should be noted that this type of church were established in Scotland by the mid 16th century under the Scottish theologian John Knox (1513-1572). But the Roman Catholic Church could not tolerate anyone to deviate from its own doctrine and question its supremacy; so it regarded those theologians as heretics, and burnt their writings. Its supremacy was to be however challenged by stronger forces, namely the King of England, Henry VIII (1509-1547), who decided to set up a separate church, the Anglican Church, following the Pope's

refusal in 1534 to grant him divorce from his first Catholic wife, the Spanish princess, Catherine of Aragon (she was his brother's widow). So, the establishment of the new church allowed him to be the Supreme Head in conformity with the Act of Royal Supremacy of 1534, claiming thus jurisdiction for himself, ignoring Rome and enabling the Archbishop of Canterbury to decide on a number of religious matters. In this way, the Roman Catholic Church had no longer control over English issues. This context facilitated the emergence of English nationalism versus Roman absolutism, and further translations of the Bible were achieved in 1535 by an English reformer, William Tyndale (1492-1536), and Miles Coverdale (1488-1569). There followed a series of enactments against Catholic practices and institutions among which the dissolution of chantries (places which people had to pay for after their death to be purified from sins, and to have access to Heaven).

The history of religious reforms is quite complex in that as soon as Catholic Queen Mary Tudor succeeded her brother Edward in 1533, the balance of power reverted in favour of the Catholics, who launched a merciless campaign against Protestants and reformers until 1558 when she died; she was succeeded by her half sister Elizabeth I, a rather Protestant lady until her death in 1603, leaving the monarchy to her cousin Scottish Stuart dynasty (1603-1714). Under her rule, the Protestant Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer and Service in the Church and Administration of the Sacraments was passed so as to secure peace and stability by allowing Catholics to keep their own worship but prohibiting any other forms of worship.² The main distinct Protestant practices consisted of baptism, the Supper of the Lord, authority of the Scriptures and marriage of religious clerics.

² G.M. Trevelyan, *A Shortened History of England*, (England, Penguin Books, 1967): p 267.

2. Emergence of Puritanism and its establishment in the New World

Considering that human intellectual capabilities are generally limited, and so are their own understanding of religious texts or revelations, it was obvious that in their turn, Protestants found themselves under attack by others, among whom were new reformers like Thomas Cartwright (1537-1603), a Presbyterian educated at Cambridge, and John Field (1545-1588), Archbishop of Canterbury, both representing English Presbyterianism.³ But the Tudor monarchy could not tolerate threat, and subsequently the 1593 Act compelled the new group, the Puritans, to attend the Anglican Church for fear they would meet imprisonment. This instead accelerated to some extent dissent from the latter and the emergence of Separatism with a view to purifying the Church from their wrong beliefs and practices.

Hoping for some reforms under King James Stuarts (1603-1625), himself a Calvinist, Presbyterians and Separatists presented in 1603 the Millenary Petition, emphasizing the need for deeper reforms, especially the abolition of bishopric or administrative body of bishops. King James's refusal resulted in the division of the Church into loyal members on one hand, and Nonconformist, Separatists or Independents on the other. The latter group's determination to establish their own congregation in Nottinghamshire by 1606 resulted in their persecution, arrest and migration to Amsterdam the following year. Their choice for Holland and their secret migration thereto was motivated by religious and economic factors. Holland was under the Dutch Reformed Church that proved to be very tolerant, and offered better economic and employment opportunities in the textile industry. In Amsterdam and Leyden, the English Separatist or Nonconformists managed over a decade to establish church services and the

³T. Cooper, *Lives of the Puritans*, (Britain, Cambridge University Press, 1989), p 92-100

printing press, but increasing pressure and threat from James against Holland made living and working conditions for them worse, hence the alternative of emigrating to the New World.

Having been the object of exploration by Portuguese, Spanish, French, Dutch and English traders, the New World seemed to offer better commercial prospects. Already during the rule of Queen Elizabeth, there had been Virginia settlement (reference to the Virgin Queen), and by 1607 the creation Jamestown (reference to king James) where the first settlers, comprising indentured servants, succeeded initially to grow tobacco. Such relatively successful enterprise proved to be a source of inspiration, motivation and determination for the Puritans to emigrate to the New World. Following their contact with Thomas Weston, a prominent London merchant and Governor of Virginia, renamed afterward New England, the Puritans of Leyden, known as Pilgrims, accepted to work a period of seven years in return for the financing of their voyage to Virginia.

After their arrival in New England by 1620, the Puritans had to find ways how to cope with the native Indians, namely the surrounding ones: the Pequot, Wampanoag, Narragansett and Mohegan, who lived on agricultural produce such as corn, beans, melons and inedible crops like tobacco. Survival and better opportunities attracted more Puritans to immigrate, leading to more settlements from 1620. It is not the purpose of the memoire to trace back the origins of each colony, but to synthesize their historical development so as to understand the factors that may have influenced writing therein for over three centuries.

The first six Puritan colonies comprised Plymouth (1620), New Hampshire (1623), Massachusetts (1628), Connecticut (1634), Rhode Island (1644), and New Haven (1644). This was not achieved without conflict with

native Indians. It should be noted that the creation of few of these colonies resulted from the divergence among Puritans as to the kind of religious, social or political pattern to establish, which pressed them to depart from a colony and found another, like in the case of Rhode Island. However, all were guided by community development or covenant under the responsibility of the Congregational Church.

Considering that literature is an expression of real life or even ideals, understanding of the Puritan communities, their religious, social, political, economic, cultural, and educational living conditions and ideals will but enable us to understand their impact on writings and identify the most important preoccupations of American writers during the period under study.

3. The Puritans and Organisation of the Colony

Having opposed the Pope and King's absolutism, and emigrated for the sake of conforming to better and purified religious worship, practices, and community life, the Puritans adopted their conception of Presbyterianism, in that Church members could govern their own affairs. But the question of membership posed serious problems in a way that some believed that it should be restricted to 'Visible Saints', in relation to the concept of predestination (to be discussed in the second chapter) as advocated by Calvinists; those elected had to be literate so as to be able to read the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. Agreement among members governed the management of the Congregation, whose activities included worship, legislation, charity and assistance in civic life. Such Puritan congregational churches estimated at 501 by 1800 successively established in the various colonies, could but express the

rising rate of adherence to Puritan values and beliefs.⁴ These will be examined in the second chapter.

Obedience to the Creator was an absolute rule among Puritans, in conformity with which Puritans were to organise the management of their colony's resources, and consequently, enforce Church decisions over various aspects and activities, among which the collection of taxes for church officials. Church members were compelled to attend church services and conform to certain rules on the Sabbath, such as prohibition of drunkenness, swearing, card games otherwise sinners would have to pay fines, or even likely to be whipped.

Strict adherence to Puritanism compelled the faithful to enact laws with a view to converting the Indians into their own religion, for whom churches were set up. This was facilitated by the fact that in England, a revolution led by Puritan Oliver Cromwell against Stuart absolutism, encouraged the conversion of Indians; and finance was provided for the translation and printing of the Bible into Indian Algonquian. It should be noted that this enterprise of conversion was extended to new immigrants, the Black slaves bought from Africa for labour purposes.

It was clear that Puritan religious beliefs could not be dissociated from their implications in the political, social, economic, educational and cultural life, for they had to be in conformity with what was prescribed in the Bible. Their alternative to the rejection of Tudor and Stuart absolutist political institutions was based on the fact that the Covenant, formal, i.e. solemn and binding agreement, and consent which guided their political philosophy. Already, their

⁴Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Church, 1971, quoted in Bekkadouri, Fewzia,, *The Puritan Experience in New England, Its Growth and Influence*, Doctoral thesis, Oran University, 2014, p 83

own initial departure from England and settlement in the New World could illustrate their consent for a common purpose. The ruler had to be a learned man so as to understand clearly and without ambiguity God's laws, and people could depose him in case he would distort such laws and not respect the people's consent. The Puritans' understanding of electing their rulers, as understood in the Bible, was to determine the selection process, which counteracted the prevailing political philosophy of absolutism advocated by the Italian historian Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), and that of the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679).⁵

It should be underlined that Puritan settlements had charters, granted by either the Virginia Company or the English King, which defined the kind of organisation to be instituted. Generally, such charters stipulated for the institution of political machinery that was to consist of a government and a law making body. The former would consist of an elected governor every two years and a deputy governor together with a number of assistants. Besides the charters as a source for legislation, codes were enacted as in the case of Plymouth in 1636, deriving their legal source from the Bible.⁶ Colony residents had to choose the assistants, whose task was primarily advisory and legislative; the assistants together with the governor, would compose the General Court and General Assembly performing respectively judicial and legislative functions. Differences in the election rules existed among the Puritan colonies; in a few of them, the right was granted only to family heads while excluding unmarried men, in others it was restricted to church members while excluding non conformists.

Since the preservation, stability and supremacy of the Puritan society could not be secured without values being reproduced or indoctrinated to the

⁵. Encarta Encyclopedia, CD UK, Edition 1993-1997.

⁶. William George, *A History of England*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1966): p 51

next generations, the initially essential tasks undertaken by the Puritans were obviously in education. This was closely linked to the belief that literate educated people would give up sins and become good Christians, and would thus serve properly and usefully their community. Educational philosophy was to be inspired from the Bible; homes first had to provide teaching, reading, writing and vocational training until some form of public schools could be built in towns from 1635 in Massachusetts.⁷ The development of schooling developed mostly in the same way as in England, there were Dame Schools, Grammar Schools, and Latin Grammar School in Boston by 1635. Education in some Puritan colonies became compulsory like in Connecticut, and Plymouth, while other colonies were rather liberal minded, and did not enforce the principle of compulsory education until penalties were imposed upon them for failing to provide education. Financial contribution from the Church, the wealthy people, philanthropists and taxes from trade helped to develop educational institutions.⁸

Since the objective of Puritan colonies was to produce good Christians, it was obvious that the contents of education was to be basically Christian-oriented with additional courses in geography, mathematics and English literature to be provided for White Puritans first, and then to Indians but reluctantly for Blacks because of their belief that the emancipation of the slaves would threaten the settlement economically. Historian David Keller referred to slaves benefiting from education, could write their own passes and escape from slavery.⁹ Education was obviously important for the Puritans, and higher education formed part of their objectives. Harvard College was established in 1636 in Massachusetts, followed by others in the other Puritan colonies: Yale in

⁷Ralph Sloane, *The Intellectual Life in New England*, (New York, Harper, 1957), 108-109.

⁸ Roger Mark, *The American Educational Experiment*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999), p 112

⁹David Keller, *Educational in Puritan New England*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1975), p 102

Connecticut (1701), New Haven (1716), Rhode Island (1765). However, claims for reforms from the beginning of the 19th century were expressed so as to encourage scientific studies and vocational training, and enable women to have access to education. Basically for the Puritans, women's education was initially restricted with home affairs and educating children; the rate of girls' literacy amounted to 02% in the second half of the 17th century rising to almost 50% by 1830.¹⁰

Since conversion and indoctrination could not be conceived without literacy, efforts were undertaken to develop and extend it thanks to the printing enterprise, establishment of public libraries, publication and distribution of newspapers. The first public library was set up in 1636 in Boston and others followed thanks to private donations. Booksellers on the other hand were in charge of importing, and distributing books; whereas weekly newspapers played the socializing and information role.¹¹

Since Puritans left England by the early 17th century, the first literary men could only write about the milieu in which they were brought and raised. They did not think of themselves in the early stages as being Americans but rather European immigrants until the emergence of the national idea with the American Revolution. However, the particular conditions which the Puritans had to undergo before and after their settlement had most likely affected the type of their writings. This constitutes the object of the second chapter.

¹⁰.Willy Mandolin, "Reforms and Response: Women's Education", *History Education Quarterly*, Vol.5, No 1, March 1965, p 16 (quoted in Bekkadouri, op cit.)

¹¹Few examples of newspapers: *The Boston News Letter* (1704), *The Boston Gazette* (1719), *Weekly Rehearsal* (1731), *Boston Evening Post* (1734).

Chapter Two

Impact of Puritanism on 17th century New England Literature

Introduction

As indicated in Chapter One, New England, situated in the northeastern United States, composed initially and progressively of various colonies, constituted the first area of English Puritan settlement from 1620, when a royal charter was granted to colonists to rule first Plymouth. The ideal of the first settlers, namely Quakers and then Puritans, was spiritual; they rejected the supremacy of the Church of England, which they believed, did not conform faithfully to God's rules, and wanted to follow the teachings of John Calvin, a French theologian (1509-1564) who, while rejecting political and religious absolutism in Europe, was strongly convinced that "the safeguard of the rights and freedoms of ordinary people would constitute the basis of democratic government, and that cooperation between both the Church and State would be essential for the people's interest."¹² The Puritans wanted then to purify the Protestant Church, and organise society upon Puritan values which were the source of inspiration for authors in New England.

Since the subject matter of literary works generally turn around society including human actions and feelings, social relations, religion, nature, and catastrophes, the authors' concern, interest and writings range from what society is to what it could or should be. Puritan writers' sources of inspiration were

¹² Jan Weerda, *Calvin*, in *Evangelisches Soziallexikon*, Stuttgart (Germany) (1954), col. 210, quoted in John Calvin, Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia

rather to derive from the difficulties of the new environment and forcibly from their theological principles. Though this memoir is not concerned with theological studies, it proves to be necessary to introduce and explain the major Puritan values and concepts that constituted the driving force for inspiration and pursuit for an ideal for Puritan writers. It is not the purpose of the memoir to explore all the writers and their writings during the seventeenth century but to select those considered most representative of such Puritan influence.

1. Puritan values

Chapter One has presented the historical context in which a group of English citizens decided to emigrate and settle in the eastern coast of north America where they believed and hoped, to build up eventually their ideal society. Though this memoir attempts to assess the impact of Puritans upon New England writings it will be difficult to understand it without reference to the Puritans' prevailing theological doctrine. This comprised their conception as to their relation with God, the Bible, the church, man and his predestination and salvation, ethics and political organisation of their society.

1.1 God, the Bible and Covenants

Believing absolutely in the complete sovereignty of an omnipresent God, who is the source of all good, the Puritans were absolutely convinced that obedience to God's will should be absolute because man is unable to comprehend God's true nature. The righteousness and sovereignty of God directing all things by the exercise of His will and to an intelligent end constituted the basis of Puritan beliefs. This is known as God's Providence,

which according to Puritans, "extends to the natural world, the affairs of individuals and to their free actions whether being sinful or good actions."¹³

To Puritans, God's love towards mankind is true and God's grace is freely given. Grace is defined "as the saving and transfiguring power of God, offering newness of life, forgiveness of sins, and the power to resist temptation, and a wonderful peace of mind and heart." Calvin insisted on a personal sense of the workings of God's grace in the life of the individual.¹⁴

To conform to God's rule, the standard conduct in Puritans' daily life had to derive from the Bible, which is seen as the direct word or the law of God, which would enable to pursue moral and ecclesiastical purity. This would require the private study of the Bible but to Calvinists the 'matter of interpretation of the Scriptures was not to be lightly undertaken by the half-educated or the dull-witted'.

God reveals His will in many ways, like the Bible and natural forces and law, and Puritans actively read the Bible, listened to sermons and tried to analyze nature for signs and the extraordinary events like earthquakes and material prosperity in order to learn about God's will. They believed that they could communicate directly through their faith to Him because their concept of "justification-by faith" enabled them to reject the Pope's authority. This "justification-by faith" meant that God decides to remove the guilt and penalty of sin, and declare a sinner righteous. The Calvinists and Puritans viewed this as a gift from God to all those who exercise faith alone.

¹³ <http://www3.gettysburg.edu/~tshannon/hist106web/site15/bobs/puritanbeliefpage11.htm>

¹⁴ Rod W. Horton, *Backgrounds of American Literary Thought*, third edition, Prentice-hall Inc. New Jersey, 1974, p. 24

Being God's true law, the Bible was for the Puritans a plan for living, and a strict adherence to Biblical principles would imply a rejection of the "worldliness" of society and compliance with mission and covenants. The Puritans were strongly convinced that their mission to spread Christian values and save the sinful people was similar to that of the Jews as God's chosen or elect people. This notion of mission was strongly connected to their basic conception of contract or covenant between God and His elect and that of predestination.

The covenants or God's promises make clear to men and women what their duties are and also force them to face their inferiority; because of their corrupted natures, they are incapable of fulfilling their duties to God. Such covenant which was central to Puritan thought includes the Covenant of Grace, Covenant of Works and Covenant of Redemption.

The Covenant of Grace is God's promise to send his Spirit to the elect so that they believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. This covenant restores man to a normal relation with God. Since human beings were unworthy to receive salvation because of their depraved natures, the Puritans saw grace as a gift from a kind and loving God. To Puritans, God's love towards mankind is true and God's grace is freely given. Grace is defined "as the saving and transfiguring power of God, offering newness of life, forgiveness of sins, and the power to resist temptation, and a wonderful peace of mind and heart." Calvin insisted on a personal sense of the workings of God's grace in the life of the individual.¹⁵

¹⁵ Rod W. Horton, *Backgrounds of American Literary Thought*, third edition, Prentice-hall Inc. New Jersey, 1974, p. 24

The Covenant of Works is God's promise to Adam, who would merit God's reward in case of return for perfect obedience. The reward in this covenant does not result from grace; it is rather a debt owed to Adam for keeping his part of the covenant. But, Adam's failure to keep the covenant led to the withdrawal of the free gifts on which salvation depends. The third type is the Covenant of Redemption which promises that Christ's suffering would redeem humanity or save it from disgrace; God sends the Holy Spirit to the elect to enable them to repent, to have faith, and to be eligible for eternal life, otherwise to those who are predestined to it.

1.2 Predestination, Hard Work and Church

To Calvin and the Puritans, human beings were innately depraved and corrupt sinners by inheriting the original sin of Adam and Eve, but God, in His infinite mercy, predetermines who is to be damned (also called reprobation) and elects who is to be saved (also called regeneration), and no one could know which group they were in. Since salvation is the privilege of God, the Puritans believed that their religious purity and salvation could be achieved through self-discipline, self-improvement and hard work. So predestination in Puritanism strengthened Puritans' self-awareness to perfect themselves; they considered hard work as a religious duty.¹⁶ To rid of depravity, the Puritans believed that man could achieve good only by severe and continuing discipline. and this way

¹⁶ Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Puritanism and Predestination*,
<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/eighteen/ekeyinfo/puritan.htm>
and <http://www3.gettysburg.edu/~tshannon/hist106web/site15/bobs/puritanbeliefpage11.htm>,
"Puritanism and Its impact upon American Values," *Review of European Studies* Vol.1 N 2
Dec 2009, www.ccsenet.org/journal.html

should be constantly reformed by the grace of God to combat the “indwelling sin” and do the right before God.

Hard work was an honor to God which would lead to a prosperous reward; it enabled them to look for wealth and conquer the nature and develop more frontiers. Relying on themselves through hard work and thrift they succeeded to get out of poverty and become rich, which stimulated the development of American capitalism and expansion towards the western areas. German sociologist Max Weber affirmed and acclaimed these qualities in his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. He argues that the "Protestant or Puritan Ethic motivated Puritans to develop their own enterprise, most probably related to the belief that self-confidence taking the place of the assurance of God's grace would lead to worldly success through the investment of money which gave an impulse to nascent capitalism."¹⁷

The Puritans had to conform to the divine law and do everything in moderation while condemning those who would take things to excess. For them Godly people were to be sober in drinking, disciplined in dancing while condemning sexual dancing. They believed strongly in marriage, disapproved of illicit sexual activities, and condemned adultery. High standards of moral excellence and conscience guided their behaviour.

Being mostly founded on Calvinism, the Puritan Church set out clearly its position with respect to other Christian churches; Puritans were opposed to the mediating monopolistic role that the Catholic Church imposed on the spiritual life of the individual because they believed that Catholicism had undermined the

¹⁷ Max Weber; "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism and other Writings," Penguin. Retrieved 21 August 2011.
in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Protestant_Ethic_and_the_Spirit_of_Capitalism

relationship between God and the individual. For them, any Christian could communicate directly with God through his faith to Him, and everyone could be his own priest with worship having to be plain and focused on God.

And though the Protestants in England rejected Catholic practices and established the Anglican Church, they found themselves under attack from the Puritans who sought to purify such Established Church from some remaining Catholic influences. These comprised Catholic summation in the Church of England (Anglo-Catholics or Anglican Papalists still celebrating the Mass according to Roman Catholic rite), notably the Book of Common Prayer, the sign of the Cross in baptism and kneeling to receive Holy Communion.¹⁸ The Puritans could not tolerate the idea of a multiplicity of creed and denominations because this would represent a direct contradiction of the Divine Unity.

Their church was to be autonomous, and not to be submitted to any other religious authority. According to them, the congregation of saints should have the right to choose its members, hire and even fire its ministers.¹⁹ and Church membership had to be a necessary qualification to holding any office of the church. Church services were rather to be simple with no instrumental music or art.

¹⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puritans>

¹⁹ Horton, op cit, p. 25

2. 17th century New England writers

G. McMichael and James S. Leonard and Norton's *Anthology of American Literature* present altogether a list of seventeen American authors. It comprises fourteen male and three female authors, among whom nine were born in the late 16th c and lived through part of the 17th c while the remaining shared both the 17th and 18th century.²⁰ Fourteen of them were born and educated in England before settling in America (John Cotton, John Smith, William Bradford, George Morton, James Rosier, Mary Rowlandson, William Strachey, Nathaniel Ward, Roger Williams, Edward Winslow, John Winthrop, Edward Taylor, Samuel Sewall, Anne Bradstreet, whereas two were born in America (Elisabeth Meader Hanson and Cotton Mather) and one in Jamaica (Jonathan Dickinson).

Since it is not possible to examine all of them neither all their works, the selection has been determined by the availability of their primary sources, their religious faith and experience in New England so as to focus on who can represent most Puritan influence, while it may seem on the hand self evident that most of those writers could but express Puritan values in their works since some of them left England for religious reasons.

²⁰ The *Concise Anthology of American Literature* edited by G McMichael and James S. Leonard (Longman, USA, 2011) list the following as writers of early America: Captain John Smith (1580-1631), John Winthrop (1588-1649), William Bradford (1590-1657), Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672), Mary Rowlandson (1637-1711), Edward Taylor (1642-1729), Samuel Sewall (1652-1730), whereas Wikipedia Norton's anthology adds other authors. These include: William Strachey (1572-1621), James Rosier (1573-1609), Nathaniel Ward (1578-1652), John Cotton (1585-1652), George Morton (1585-1624), Edward Winslow (1595-1655), Roger Williams (1603-1683), Jonathan Dickinson (1663-1722), Cotton Mather (1663-1728), Elisabeth Hanson (1684-1737),

The various biographies available show that among these writers, some were known as forming part of the groups of Separatists who had to leave England to Holland and then to America (William Bradford, George Morton, Roger Williams, Edward Winslow) and others for their Puritan faith (Anne Bradstreet, Nathaniel Ward, John Winthrop, Edward Taylor and Samuel Sewall).

As far as experience or occupation is concerned, some belonged to the official circles whether as governors, magistrates (John Smith, William Bradford, Edward Winslow, John Winthrop and Samuel Sewall) whereas four acted as theologians or pastors (John Cotton, Nathaniel Ward, Roger Williams and Edward Taylor).

Among them all were two poets (Bradstreet and Edward Taylor), two others representing the captivity narrative, and others writing accounts of history and exploration (William Strachey, James Rosier, Nathaniel Ward).

In order to identify the forms and contents of writing in seventeenth century colonial America, it may be useful to have an idea about what prevailed in England with respect to literary genres and particularly Puritan writings so as to find out whether there was some kind of Puritan approach to colonial writings.

Since literature has a role to display various aspects of society, seventeenth century Stuart England witnessed a gradual shift from the predominant age of faith to an emerging age of reason, serious religious controversies, a civil war, abolition of monarchy in 1649 succeeded by a Puritan republic under Oliver Cromwell from 1649 to 1660, followed immediately by the restoration of monarchy under Charles II, and then a Silent Revolution in 1688. Within this context, new ideas and deep feelings were concentrated upon

religion and the passion for freedom. The printing press had already allowed literature to be mass-produced, and 1611 *King James Bible* written in English benefited greatly from it so as to be an important piece of literature. generally Puritan genres or forms of writing included sermons, diaries, chronicles, histories and poetry and progressively political pamphlets. Puritan values realistic writing with an emphasis on religious themes.

Though the reign of both the Stuarts and Cromwell hampered literary production, it caused other forms of writing, especially pamphleteering to flourish. When John Milton (1608-1674), an English poet, polemicist and a man of letters, joined the Puritans in Parliament, he began writing pamphlets on the church reform. He claimed the freedom of the press and writing in his 1644 pamphlet, *Areopagitica*. as a reaction to the Licensing Order of 1643. The latter stipulated that any written material (book, pamphlet etc) had to have the consent of the government before being printed so as to establish government control over what the latter considered as untrue, offensive or even blasphemous writing against it and the church. Milton argued that Parliament, composed of Protestants, should not revive a Catholic practice, otherwise the Parliament and its law would have to censor songs, dancing, clothing and jokes in order to protect people from bad influences. He was famous for his poems in *Paradise Lost* (1667) and *Paradise Regained* (1671), where Milton "respectively mourns the end of Cromwell's Puritan or godly Commonwealth as a sign of Fall from Grace and continues however to believe in salvation."²¹ There was no doubt that Puritanism was a major feature of the seventeenth century, and to AD Innes. To him, "Puritanism as a force in literature gave to the world of its best in Milton

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<http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?ParagraphID=kni#ixzz3sDyCFVvu>//<http://study.com/academy/lesson/introduction-to-17th-and-18th-century-literature-major-authors-and-works.html>//// <https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/welcome.htm>

through his poetry, and prose."²² Others in colonial America had already displayed and other would pursue such enthusiasm and determination in their Puritan faith, among whom John Winthrop, Anne Bradstreet and Mary Rowlandson.

2.1 John Winthrop

John Winthrop (1587-1649), an English Puritan lawyer, educated at Cambridge, was profoundly religious. He witnessed Stuart kings' absolute rule: James I (1603-1625) and Charles (1625-1649), their antipathy, mistrust, intolerance and persecution of the Puritans, who saw Charles' marriage with a Roman Catholic French princess, a threat to Puritanism. Winthrop decided to emigrate to the New World in 1629 and to be among the founding figures of the Massachusetts Bay colony.

His Puritan faith and belief in work ethic and assistance was a reference in the initial stages in the construction of the colony. Bremer Francis reports that Winthrop " had to work with his own hands and encourage thereby the others, so that there would not be any idle person in the plantation."²³ Since the organisation of the colony was based on a charter stipulating an election of the officials including the governor, his deputy and assistant magistrates by the colon's freemen, Winthrop was elected governor at different periods of the first quarter of the seventeenth century. He was known to be authoritarian, assisted

²² AD Innes, (1912), "17th c Literature and Science" From '*A History of the British Nation.*' <http://www.britainexpress.com/History/17th-century-Literature.htm>

²³ Bremer, Francis. *John Winthrop: America's Forgotten Founder.* New York: Oxford University Press. (2003), p 104

by a small group of religiously approved citizens, refusing thus to extend voting and other civil rights.²⁴

Winthrop had to face a serious religious issue whereby Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643) a Puritan adviser, disapproved of the religious convictions and practices of the Puritan clergy in the Boston area. This case was known as Antinomian controversy. Hutchinson adhered to the view that 'following religious laws was not required for salvation' in opposition to Winthrop who considered this as dangerous heresy. Hutchinson was judged and subsequently banned from the colony.²⁵ The second issue which Winthrop had to deal with was slavery, which he believed was not sinful to God in conformity to the Old Testament, and therefore he supported it.

Unlike other prolific Puritan writers like John Milton, Winthrop expressed his beliefs in a private religious journal, known as his *Experientia*, and produced written accounts of historical events and religious manifestations. His major works were *A Modell of Christian Charity* (1630) also published as *Christian Charitie. A Modell Hereof*; *A Journal of the Transactions and Occurrences in the Settlement of Massachusetts and the Other New England Colonies, from the Year 1630 to 1644* (journal) 1790; also published as *The History of New England from 1630 to 1649*, 1825-26, rev. ed. 1853. Others include: *The Humble Request of His Majesties Loyal Subjects* (London, 1630), *Antinomians and Familists condemned by the synod of elders in New-England: with the proceedings of the magistrates against them, and their apology for the same* (history) 1644; also published as *A Short Story of the rise, reign, and ruin of the Antinomians, Familists & libertines that Infected the Churches of New England* (London 1644), *A Declaration of Former Passages and Proceedings Betwixt the English and the Narrowgansets, with Their Confederates, Wherein*

²⁴Morison, Samuel Eliot. *Builders of the Bay Colony*. Boston: Northeastern University Press. 1981 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Winthrop

²⁵Bremer, op cit, p 285.

the Grounds and Justice of the Ensuing Warre are Opened and Cleared (history) 1645, and *Winthrop Papers*. 5 vols. (prose, journal, history, letter) 1929-1947.

Given the context during which he wrote his essays and historical events, Winthrop was undoubtedly guided by the Puritan ideal. In fact, while still on board the vessel towards the New World, he was able to write his famous essay *A Model of Christian Charity*. He was aware of the challenges that the Puritan colonists were to face in the new social and political order given the inequalities between the members of the community. His concern centered mostly on reconciling and balancing the relations between the good of the individual and that of the community within a conception of a community based on a contractual basis, whose mission would be partly to help the poor. This stemmed from his belief in the existence of social inequalities clearly expressed in the first lines of his essay:

God Almightye in his most holy and wise prvidence hath so disposed of the Condicion of mankinde, as in all times some must be rich some poore, some high and eminent in power and dignitie; others meane and in subjection.²⁶

For him such inequalities would not prevent the development of the community which should be guided by charity and brotherhood in order to serve the Lord and secure salvation. He writes:

²⁶ John Winthrop, *A Model of Christian Charity*, (1630), p.3 text in Source: Edmund S. Morgan, ed., *The Founding of Massachusetts: Historians and the Sources* (Indianapolis, 1964) in [.http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/phall/03.%20winthrop,%20Christian%20Cha.pdf](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/phall/03.%20winthrop,%20Christian%20Cha.pdf)

We must be knitt together in this worke as one man, we must entertaine each other in brotherly Affection,... The end is to improve our lives to doe more service to the Lord the comferte and encrease of the body of christe whereof wee are members that ourselves and posterity may be the better preserved from the Common corrupcions of this evill world to serve the Lord and worke out our Salvacion under the power and purity of his holy Ordinances.... for wee must Consider that wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill.²⁷

The last phrase, Francis Bremer asserts, derives from the Bible's Sermon on the Mount delivered by Jesus " *You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden,*" emphasizing the special pact or covenant with God to create a holy community.²⁸

Within this community women had a limited role to play as wife, mother and farm hands because for patriarchal authority was supposed to be invincible, and women to be subject to the authority of their husbands and fathers. The Puritan's conception of male supremacy or patriarchal society excluded women from decision-making in the church, for viewed as the instrument of Satan because of Eve's original sin, women were, according to Puritans, susceptible to temptation and immorality. So they had to dress themselves correctly covering their hair and arms. On the other hand, they were not allowed to possess property neither conduct a business, their husband could own everything for Puritanism did not regard men and women as spiritual equals though the latter could have access to some literacy and education.

Laurel Thatcher, in his essay about John Winthrop's *City of Women*, underlines that Winthrop's discriminatory attitude towards women's education

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ op cit, p 5-6 and Findling, John E; Thackeray, Frank W (2000). *Events That Changed America Through the Seventeenth Century*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group. p 61, quoted in Free Wikipedia

was obvious, they could learn only a little because they were ill suited for intellectual pursuits. He refers to some passages from his Journal stating:

Ann Hopkins, wife of Connecticut's governor, lost her wits by occasion of her givinge her selfe whooly to readinge & writinge, & had written many bookes: her husband beinge very lovinge & tender of her, was lothe to greive her, but he sawe his error when it ws too late: for if she had attended her houshold affaires, & suche thinges as belonge to women, & not gone out of her waye & callinge, to meddle in suche thinges as are proper for men, whose mindes are stronger &c: she had kept her wittes, & might have improved them usefully & honorably in the place God had sett her.²⁹

Although Puritan jurisprudence did nothing to challenge male authority, the impact of Renaissance was that some people were inspired by Christian egalitarianism, also known as biblical equality, which considers all people equal in God's sight, and others became were attracted by new ideas of personal liberty. Winthrop refers to a twofold liberty, one natural and the other civil or federal or moral. The former is common to man and animals comprising both a liberty to evil and good but it cannot Winthrop argues, be compatible and consistent authority. The second, which according to him refers to the covenant between man and God, "is just, good and honest, and it is the proper end and object of authority... it is of the same kind of liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."³⁰ Such notion of liberty with respect to women is well illustrated in the following statement:

The women's own choice makes such a man her husband; yet, being so chosen, he is her lord, and she is to be subject to him, yet in a way of liberty, not of bondage; and a true wife accounts her subjection her

²⁹ Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. "John Winthrop's "City of Women" *Massachusetts Historical Review* 3: 19-338. 2001.

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³⁰ John Winthrop, *On Liberty*, <http://www.constitution.org/bcp/winthlib.htm>

honor and freedom and would not think her condition safe and free but in her subjection to her husband's authority. Such is the liberty of the church under the authority of Christ, her king and husband.³¹

But he advised well-born women rather than low class ones not to give too much attention exclusively to household affairs for this might endanger the soul, their social and economic power should be used to support the colony. One of these Puritan women was Anne Bradstreet, the daughter of a Puritan who participated in the establishment of the Massachusetts bay Colony serving few times as its governor.

2.2 Anne Bradstreet

She was born in Northampton, England in 1612, and landed on the American soil in June 1630. She was the daughter of a Puritan who participated in the establishment of the Massachusetts bay Colony, and serving few times as its governor. Despite her ailing health, she managed to bring up her children. Anne Bradstreet died on September 16, 1672 at the age of 60.

She learned history, language and literature, and she strongly kept her religious devotion and knowledge of Biblical scriptures. Her education enabled her to write in history and theology.

She wrote several poems including the following: *Upon a Fit of Sickness*, (1632), *The tenth Muse lately Sprung Up in America* (1650); *The Prologue* (1650); *An Exact Epilogue of the Three First Monarchies* (1650); *Upon My Son Samuel His Going For England* (1657), *In Reference to Her Children* (1659); *Verses upon the Burning of our House* (1666); *As Weary Pilgrim* (1669); *Before*

³¹ <http://www.constitution.org/bcp/winthlib.htm> " On Liberty' by Winthrop.

the Birth of One her Children (1678); *A Letter to Her Husband, Absent upon Public Employment* (1678); *Deliverance from Another Sore Fit* (1678); *Contemplation* (1678); *The Flesh and the Spirit* (1678); *To My dear and Loving Husband* (1678).

For some of the works, it has not been possible to trace their date of production or publication. These are: *A Dialogue between Old England and New, Another, Another II, For Deliverance From A fever, In Honour of that High and Mighty Princess, Queen Elizabeth, the Author to her Book, The Four Ages of Man, Four Seasons of the Year, Four Elements, Of The Four Ages of Man, The Four Monarchies , To Her Father with Some Verses, and Upon Some Distemper of Body.*

What are the major issues that were expounded or questioned in Bradstreet's poetry, and to what extent could they reflect Puritan ideals or principles?

Before tackling the subject matter, it is quite important to underline the fact that Anne Bradstreet was the first female poet brought up in a Puritan family and society, which in conformity with the Colony's first code of law of December 1640, displayed a patriarchal conservative pattern. The latter considered women as secondary subjects to their husbands, and did not allow them to speak in church or lead discussions on theology. This was related to men's discriminatory belief in their being intellectually lower than them. It should be noted that though the Puritans insisted on literacy so that everyone, including women, could read the Bible, they did not allow the latter publicly to interpret the scriptures. For them women had to serve God and the community by being good wives, mothers and household manageresses.

In fact, Bradstreet expressed concern for the world around her, particularly family and religious themes. As far as marriage is concerned,

Puritan Bradstreet considered it as a gift from God since it is ordained by Him. In *To My Dear And Loving Husband*, she reveals that she is one with her husband. Starting her poem with

If ever tow were one, then surely we,
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee;
If ever wife was happy in an man,
Compare with me, ye women, if you can³²

In order to preserve and value God's gift, Bradstreet she confesses her eternal love for him and she prays so that he would be rewarded in heaven. She writes in the former poem and in

A Letter to Her Husband, Absent upon Public Employment,

Thy love is such I can no repay,
The heavens reward thee manifold I pray

If two be one, as surely thou and I
Flesh of thy flesh, bone of thy bone
I here, thou there, yet both but one³³

It should be underlined that Bradstreet did not intend to address a public audience expressing her ardent love and devotion to her husband, but she meant it to be private for such romantic relationship could not be conceived to be expressed in public in a Puritan milieu because it glorifying romantic love was not proper to such milieu and would divert the Puritan from true worship to God.

Taking care of children was certainly the task of a Puritan mother, and in this context, she wrote " "Before the Birth of One of Her Children", expressing her love for them before and after being born, or even after when she felt that

³² G McMicheal, op cit 91

³³ Op cit, p 91 -92, and Gonzales, Ramon, *Anne Bradstreet 1612-1672*, Mark Canada, Retrieved 27 Feb. 2012

her husband would marry again after her death. Children were seen as God's gift.

And when thy loss shall be repaid with gains
Look to my little babies, my dear remains
And if thou love thyself, or loved'st me
These O protect from step-dame's injury.

Her Puritan conviction and patience is strongly expressed in a poem after her home had been burnt. She did not want to express grief or anger, she looked rather unaffected, hopeful and consoled. She believed that it was a test from God who could give and take possessions and other things.

Then, coming out, beheld a space
The flame consume my dwelling place.
And when I could no longer look,
I blest His name that gave and took,
That laid my goods now in the dust.
yea, so it was, and so 'twas just.
It was His own, it was not mine,
far be it that I should repine.³⁴

On the other hand, Bradstreet was seen as an intellectual and a free thinker in a Puritan society where women, considered inferior to men, had their role restricted to the management of the home: a wife, mother, and servant. Such stereotypical idea was to some extent rejected by Bradstreet in her first published work in London, *The Tenth Muse lately Sprung Up in America, by a Gentlewoman of those Parts*, and in another poem, *The Prologue*. This was to show that a woman could elevate her position in society and was not meant remain exclusively a servant. She writes:

³⁴ McMicheal, op. cit p 94

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue
Who says my hand a needle better fits,
A poet's pen all scorn I should thus wrong.
For such despite they cast on female wits,
If what I do prove well, it won't advance,
They'll say it's stol'n, or else it was by chance.³⁵

Referring to Queen Elizabeth Tudor (1558-1603), in her poem *In Honour of that High and mighty Princess Queen Elizabeth of Happy Memory*, (1643), Bradstreet praises the Queen's excellent leadership and prominence in England's history. Bradstreet rejects the fact that women were devalued due to patriarchal dislike and arrogance:

Who was so good, so just, so learned so wise,
From all the Kings on earth she won the prize.
Nor say I more then duly is her due,
Millions will testifie that this is true.
She has wip'd off th' aspersion of her Sex,
That women wisdom lack to play the Rex.³⁶

Given the context of Puritans' supremacy, some critics pointed to the fact that Bradstreet dared questioning their misconception as to the position and role of women in society, but she was not radical like Anne Hutchinson, another Puritan writer.³⁷

Anne Hutchinson, born Anne Marbury in 1591 in England, was the daughter of an Anglican cleric, and she had to emigrate with her husband in 1634 to Boston where she practised midwifery and acted as a Puritan spiritual adviser to other women with a view to encouraging them to learn and discuss sermons. She disagreed with the established Puritan clergy in Boston with respect to the subordinate status of women in colonial Massachusetts. She was

³⁵ McMicheal, op cit p 80

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Tonti, Kaitlin, *Seeping Through the Divide: The American Experience in Bradstreet's Verse* (2013). Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs). Paper 1879.)

an adherent of the principles of Puritan orthodoxy, and held progressive notions about the equality and rights of women. The subsequent ministers' complaints and disapproval resulted in what was known the Antinomian Controversy or Free Grace Controversy. Governor John Winthrop of Plymouth Colony accused her of preaching a doctrine that was contrary to Puritan beliefs; she was brought to trial and forced to leave the colony, and she together with her supporters established the settlement of Portsmouth, later Colony of Rhode Island.

Anne Bradstreet uses metaphors in her poetry; in *To My Dear and Loving Husband*, she values her *loves more than mines of gold*, and in *A Letter to her Husband*, she compares him with the Sun and summer for their respective warmth:

I prize thy love more than whole Mines of gold
and
I wish my Sun never set, but burn.³⁸

2.3 Mary Rowlandson

Mary Rowlandson, née White, later Mary Talcott (1637 -1711), was 13 years old when she emigrated with her parents by 1650 to Salem in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. There she married Reverend Joseph Rowlandson six years later, and they got five children but their eldest daughter died young. In 1678 her husband died, and one year later, she married Captain Samuel Talcott and took his surname.

Though the first Pilgrims, who founded Plymouth Plantation, were wise enough to forge friendship with the native Indians, the new immigrants of the

³⁸ McMichael , op cit p 92

1660s and 1670s, consisting partly of fortune seekers were brutal so as to cause friction, misunderstanding and conflict and war with the Wampanoag tribe under the leadership of Metacomet known as King Philip. It was the first armed conflict between 1675-1678 during which the Indians attacked Lancaster, killing about 13 and kidnapping about 14 among whom Mary Rowlandson, her son Joseph, and her two daughters, Mary and Sarah, the latter a six-year old was to die a week after due to her wounds. Mary was freed after three months of captivity in return for a ransom, and her children later after being sold as property while in captivity.

In 1682, six years after her ordeal and liberation, she got her story published in Massachusetts and London under the title *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God: Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*. It offers an account starting with the attack of the Algonquians in New England, who held Mary Rowland and her children captive after they murdered her friends and relatives. She relates in her private narrative of captivity the severe conditions which she had to experience during her three-month "removals" in very severe winter conditions until her liberation after being ransomed.

The account is divided into twenty "removes" or different stages corresponding to one day or more before moving to another site. It includes Mary's spiritual accounts, generally embodying the values of Puritan colonial culture in an alien culture and setting.

As a Puritan, Mary believed in Divine Providence, which means that God alone made and governs this world, and has an eternal plan for it, and consequently she understood that the events related to the conflict and war with the Indians as being predestined or foreordained by God. The Puritans had

strong faith in God and his word, the Bible, the Scriptures of which that is sacred texts divinely inspired, and authoritative for all issues of faith and morals, had to be strictly carried out or followed.

When reading successively the various "removes" as is stated in the original text, we notice within the first one Mary's anxiety and uncertainty of life; she writes that " " all was gone (except my life), and I knew not but the next moment that might go too." However, her strong faith in God helped her to survive and feel even stronger, when she wrote during the second remove :

but God was with me in a wonderful manner, carrying me along, and bearing up my spirit, that it did not quite fail...But the Lord renewed my strength still, and carried me along, that I might see more of His power; yea, so much that I could never have thought of, had I not experienced it.³⁹

She continued to console herself and thank God for preserving her life:

I have thought since of the wonderful goodness of God to me in preserving me in the use of my reason and senses in that distressed time, that I did not use wicked and violent means to end my own miserable life.⁴⁰

She felt even better and happier when she was offered a copy of the Bible from an Indian during her third remove and after the Indians had raided another area. She narrated the following:

One of the Indians that came from Medfield fight, had brought some plunder, came to me, and asked me, if I would have a Bible, he had got one in his basket. I was glad of it, and asked him, whether he

³⁹ Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God: Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, Second Remove

⁴⁰ Op cit, Third Remove.

thought the Indians would let me read? He answered, yes. So I took the Bible, and in that melancholy time, it came into my mind to read first the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, which I did.⁴¹

Since then, the Bible was her companion, and whenever she experienced something, she found comfort when resorting to it. She used to refer to some psalms like " Wait on the Lord. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen tine Heart, wait I say on the Lord." ([Psalm 27:14])

Various literary critics found the narrative quite interesting because it was the first in American colonial literature, and Rowlandson was the first woman to write a captivity narrative. The narrative shows that she had to struggle to overcome her anxiety by referring to God's providence in sending her affliction, or painful suffering.⁴² In fact, According to Lisa Logan a, Biblical verses comfort and provide reassurance in an uncertain world, that helped her to make sense of her sorrow, while being member of the NE Puritan elect, and serving God.⁴³

While feeling unrest and tense, Mary believed the Lord had presented her with an extreme test of her faith and humility. And like any Puritan believing in God's grace and predestination, and unwavering faith in God's will, she hoped that " .. all these wearisome steps that I have taken are but a forewarning to me of the heavenly rest: "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." ⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Kathryn Zabelle Derounian, *Puritan Orthodoxy and the "Survivor Syndrome" in Mary Rowlandson's Indian Captivity Narrative*, Early American Literature, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring, 1987), p. 88

⁴³ Lisa Logan, *Mary Rowlandson's Captivity and the "Place" of the Woman Subject*, Early American Literature, Vol. 28, No. 3 (1993), p.253

⁴⁴ Rowlandson, op. cit Remove Eleven.

Commenting on the narrative, Tiffany considers it as a powerful reflection of the spiritual state of a highly devout early Puritan woman, and her efforts to maintain her Eurocentric Puritan self identity, which could be representative of any and all members of the Puritan elect who are afflicted and redeemed through God's mercy⁴⁵. On the other hand, Kathryn argues that Mary tried 'to minimize the survivor syndrome so as to conform to the Puritan doctrine of providential affliction.'⁴⁶ Rowlandson' narrative contains recurrent images of depression and persistent anxiety, but she considers such a state as being affliction or punishment from God, for in the Puritan ideology, she could do nothing to save herself but she could only surrender to the His will. She writes in her last "remove" number 20:

God seemed to leave his People to themselves, and order all things for His own holy ends. Shall there be evil in the City and the Lord hath not done it? They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, therefore shall they go captive, with the first that go captive. It is the Lord's doing, and it should be marvelous in our eyes.⁴⁷

Richard Ruland concludes in his chapter about Puritan legacy that The Puritan mythos (a pattern of beliefs expressing symbolically the characteristic or prevalent attitudes in a group or culture) guided Rowlandson in that she linked her captivity with " that of the soul snared by sin and the countless captivities of the Bible."⁴⁸

Critics differed in their assessment of the narrative. While Murphy Baum reviewing Breistwieser's study, concludes that the narrative was" a realistic

⁴⁵ Tiffany Potter, *Writing Indigenous Femininity: Mary Rowlandson's Narrative of Captivity*, *Eighteenth Century Studies*, Vol. 36, No 2, False Arcadia (Winter 2003), p 153.

⁴⁶ Kathryn, op cit p. 83

⁴⁷ Rowlandson, op cit, remove twenty.

⁴⁸ Ruland, R and Bradbury M, *From Puritanism to Postmodernism*", Penguin, London 1992, p 27-28

work", that is an account of experience that 'breaks through or outdistances Rowlandson's and her culture's 'dominant means of representation', Kathryn sees the narrative's duality, that is the author being at the same time participant and observer is but a class of codes clash of codes between her psychological and religious interpretations.⁴⁹ In fact, it would not have been easy to remain objective and unaffected under such circumstances so as to play both roles objectively. Balancing between the spiritual and the real could not have been an easy task for Rowlandson.

Conclusion

It is almost self evident to refer to the writers examined above as representing Puritan writings as far as the contents are concerned for they were guided by the Bible, as God's word, and aimed at building up and preserving a Puritan personality through their own writings.

⁴⁹ Review by: Rosalie Murphy Baum on Mitchell Robert Breitwieser, *American Puritanism and the Defense of Mourning: Religion, Grief, and Ethnology in Mary White Rowlandson's Captivity Narrative*. Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press. 1990, in American Literature, Vol. 64, No. 1 (Mar., 1992), pp. 155-156, and Kathryn, op cit, p. 82.

Chapter Three

The Impact of Puritanism upon 18th Century American literature

Introduction

Keeping in mind that a given order in society whether it is political, economic or social and even cultural has always been put into question by new ideas despite attempts of preserving it, the eighteenth century European and American society could not constitute an exception. In fact, man had been able to free himself from religious absolutism, inquire, search and partly discover the forces that make the universe work. Idealism on one hand and opportunism and search for better life on earth on the other were the driving forces of the period known as the Enlightenment during which the Puritan ideal was put into question by a number of scientists, philosophers and writers. Since there can never completely be any radical change following the introduction of new scientific, cultural or political and literary ideas and ideals, and that there is determination to preserve some of the traditions, ideas and practices or even balance between the two trends, the chapter will attempt first to trace resistance to or questioning of Puritan ideas and practices, and second to find out resistance to the new emerging ideas and attempts at preserving those Puritan practices and ideals through the writings of American authors, namely Cotton Maher and Benjamin Franklin.

1. Resistance to Puritan Absolutism and the Enlightenment

Resistance to Puritan domination came from Indians, namely the Wampanoag in Plymouth, and other Christian and Jewish denominations under the Baptists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Methodists, Quakers and Jews. Religious diversity resulted inevitably from increasing immigration, economic prosperity in the colonies, and the Puritans' intolerance towards other denominations. The Baptists were first to dissent from the Church by rejecting Puritan absolutism, stressing their disagreement about baptism, and advocating separation between Church and State. They extended the right of voting to non Baptists and decided to establish their own church in 1639, followed by the Presbyterians in Massachusetts in the 1640s, who petitioned for religious toleration, extending the right of office holding to non Congregationalists.⁵⁰

In Maryland the 1649 Toleration Act allowed freedom of worship for all Trinitarians but sentenced to death anyone who denied the divinity of Jesus, and nine years later, the Jewish community managed to establish their synagogue in Rhode Island colony despite religious intolerance to Judaism. Later by 1689, The Toleration Act passed in England allowed freedom of worship to Nonconformists but not to Catholics. It had repercussions in the New England colonies and led to the emergence of new sects, for example, Pennsylvania comprised Quakers and Roman Catholics who were themselves tolerant towards other religious denominations. Anglicans set up their church from 1689 in Boston, by 1704 in Rhode Island, in 1729 in New Hampshire, Lutherans did as well in 1739 at Maine, Methodists in 1784 in Massachusetts followed by the Universalists with their Independent Christian Society in Massachusetts. The

⁵⁰the Grolier Encyclopedia, CD, USA: Grolier, 1997, quoted in Bekkadouri, Fewzia, Doctoral Thesis, University of Oran, 2014, op cit p 104.

Methodists considered as a revival within of 19th century Church of England, established their own after the death of their leader John Wesley (1703-1791) whose doctrine emphasized Christian perfection, an assurance of salvation and the priesthood of all believers and the primacy of works of piety and charity, but he argued against the Calvinist doctrine of predestination.⁵¹

As to the Universalists, religion is a universal human quality, believing in a universal reconciliation between humanity and the divine, and that salvation was not limited to the few elect but extended to all. Besides these, another group, known as the advocates of Unitarianism, appeared in early 18th century Massachusetts, rejecting the doctrine of Trinity for which, they believed, there was no reference in the Bible, and consequently founding their own Unitarian Church under the leadership of Boston-born Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), known for leading the Transcendentalist movement, and being as well a philosopher, and poet. The latter will be examined in detail in Chapter 4.

Besides the emergence of the opposing doctrines dealt with above, opposition to Puritans' theocracy can be traced back to revolts from Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643) and Roger Williams (1603-1683) against the former's rigid control over persons for their religious opinions. Anne was a Puritan who supported a covenant of grace while accusing the Puritan ministers of preaching a covenant of works. The former covenant promises eternal life for all people who have faith in Christ whereas the latter covenant was made in the Garden of Heaven between God and Adam, promising life for perfect and perpetual obedience and death for disobedience, and since Adam broke the covenant, he,

⁵¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Wesley

and all mankind of mankind would stand condemned.⁵² Due to this divergence, she was tried and forced to leave the colony. On the other hand, Roger Williams, an English Puritan theologian disagreed with New England theologians with respect to the relationship between state and church. He was proponent of religious freedom and the separation of church and state. Puritans believed that the State could not be dissociated from the Church for it was simply a temporal extension of its authority, which could explain the fact that suffrage was restricted to church members in the early days until 1661 when this was modified completely. Horton estimates that at that time only 20% of settlers were church members.⁵³ He saw the first period being dominated by two major attitudes: idealism and opportunity, the former expressing Puritans' theological conception of society and the latter being the drive for economic opportunities and better life that the New World could offer.

Besides these internal dissenting factors, other external ones contributed to the questioning of Puritan relative supremacy and intolerance; they resulted from the emerging scientific rationalism of the late 17th and 18th centuries known as the Enlightenment. The question will be first to find out the arguments and scientific evidence with regard to the workings of the Universe as advanced by the new wave of liberal thought, and secondly to assess the extent to which Puritans' idealism could be preserved in this ineluctable process of change as it could be expressed in 18th century literary works.

⁵²https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antinomian_Controversy,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Covenant_theology#Covenant_of_grace,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne_Hutchinson

⁵³ Horton, op cit, p 45.

Opposition to the Church's indisputable monopoly over knowledge became evident with the development of intellectual life based mainly on reason and scientific enquiry rather than on emotions and mysticism (the belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality can be attained through subjective experience as intuition or insight). Though believing in the order and perfection of the Divine Mind, some intellectuals could no longer accept that "the Church was absolutely the only guardian of that order and perfection on one hand, and that the Bible was the final appeal in all matters."⁵⁴ For them, man could be the master of his fate instead of being governed by theological and mystic hypotheses. For scientists and philosophers the existence of God should be established on a rational rather than a metaphysical basis; natural laws revealed by reason would reveal the truth, and the existence of such rationally operated laws would in themselves constitute a proof of the existence of a Divine being whom Newton considered as a Supreme Architect for the Great machine.⁵⁵ Others like Copernicus (1473-1543), Descartes (1596-1650), Newton (1642-1727) Lavoisier (1743-1797) and others turned to science in order to understand the Universe. Copernicus showed that medieval cosmology was wrong by proving that the sun rather than the earth, was the center of the universe. It is not the purpose of the memoire to examine the scientists views and discoveries, but it is sum up with Horton's conclusion that "the Enlightenment philosophers rejected the older pessimistic belief in man's total depravity, and instead of the gloomy doctrine of Original Sin, the new thought embraced the concept of man capable of infinite perfectibility, and whose good or evil traits resulted from environmental conditions rather than from Divine Grace or the Sins of Adam and Eve."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid p.42

⁵⁵ Horton, op cit, p 59

⁵⁶ Ibid

The attempt of reconciling science and religion resulted in the emergence of a form of thinking of a limited number of highly educated people whose movement was known as 'Deism' in early 18th c Europe. Such a movement was not materialized in a church or a formal institution. Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648), considered as the founder of the movement, defined the principles of Deism as follows: "1. there is a Supreme Being, 2/ the Sovereign Power must be worshipped, 3/ the good ordering of the faculties of man constitutes the best part of divine worship, 4/ vices and crimes should be expiated and effaced by repentance, 5/ there are rewards and punishments after this life."⁵⁷ To them Divine worship would be restricted to a private relationship between the individual and God rather than to attendance at public services.

The divergence that existed between the Puritans and the Deists was that for the former, God is in control of everything in the world, that everything happens for a reason and that everything they have is a gift from God, whereas for the latter's belief, God created man with the gift of reason so they could figure things out on their own. Second, Puritans' believed that the world and its creation could be understood through strict interpretation of the Bible and that any outside theory or attempt to expound on what was written was blasphemous. They saw no need for scientific inference into the detail, but called on their faithfully to blindly accept the word as truth. But the Enlightenment scientists were inclined to seek and find reasons and explain why things were created and how they worked together; for them the ordered system of the universe needs to be discovered, understood and explained for they rejected exclusive dependence on faith as a reason for explaining and believing.

⁵⁷ Op. cit p 60.

The Enlightenment reached New England in the late 18th century making the eastern coastal cities the centers of rationalistic thought turning against mysticism and advocating individual practicability and self reliance. Balancing between the old and the new vision had an impact on certain sectors of the American society. Religious Freedom was advocated by both English and American philosophers and writers. John Locke insisted on separating Church matters from Government prerogatives, Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), the third US president in 1801 was opposed to slavery and religious absolutism; he wrote in *The Virginia Statute for religious Freedom*, "no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever...nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief."

Another major aspect of change was the creation of a second legislative chamber, adopting thus bicameralism illustrated in the setting up of an Upper House (governor, his deputy and assistants), and a Lower House (deputies). Further changes were extended covering a number of colonies that decided to work in the form of Confederation as in the case of New England Confederation so as to resist all together Indians' attacks. Gradually, opposition was to be directed against English despotism leading to the American Revolution of 1775, and elaboration of a common constitution, guided basically by Biblical sources.

The Puritan character in the American Revolution was driven by the concept of Covenant to the people, which was clearly expressed in the 1776 Declaration of Independence, "governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whatever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to

alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government."⁵⁸ However, divergence as to the structure of government, and relationship between states and the federal or central government prevailed among states, and subsequently it resulted in the formation of two distinct groups: Federalists and Anti Federalists.

Puritan impact was not restricted only to politics, but guided relatively economic activities; the Puritan Church being in charge indirectly of distributing land to their respective membership. Puritans grew a variety of agricultural produce in their own farms, raised domestic animals, and developed markets. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution in England from 1760, the colonial cottage shoe, textile, furniture, iron, saw making, and ship building industry was, witnessed the development of such small scale manufacturing to larger export oriented ones and the emergence of a new others, such as rum production, spinning, requiring thus larger masses of labour. The concurrence of Puritanism and the industrial development was well expounded by Max Weber, a German sociologist (1864-1920), who established connection between the two, arguing that Protestantism was behind the emergence of capitalism in the New World. Puritans believed in God 's reward for hard working, trustful entrepreneurs and labour.

American ideals and the changing circumstances resulting from the Enlightenment were the subject matter of some of the writers of the eighteenth century, whose number amounted to more than 60 of whom 22 females and 3 Blacks.⁵⁹ Twenty one of them bridged both the eighteenth and nineteenth

⁵⁸ <http://www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/freedom/doi/doi.html>, *The Declaration of Independence*, July 1776

⁵⁹ Names in bold followed by F are females writers

John Adams (poet and lawyer)-- Joel Barlow (poet-politician)--Benjamin Smith Barton (writer-scientist)--William Bartram (writer-scientist)--Ann Eliza Bleecker (poet-novelist) F-- Robert Bolling (poet)--Hugh Henry Brackenridge (writer-lawyer)--Martha Wadsworth

centuries, and nine died before the American Revolution. A few of them kept their Puritan zeal and expressed it in their own writings while being partly affected and becoming convinced by the new Trend of Enlightenment, among whom Cotton Mather and Benjamin Franklin, considered as the most prominent of the period. It is not intended here to sum up the contents of each of their works, but to attempt to trace the influence of the basic tenets of Puritanism such as the belief in God, role of religion, the Bible and Jesus, and some values and practices as advocated and experienced by former Puritan Americans.

2. Cotton Mather

Cotton Mather (1663-1728), born in Boston, was a grandson of prominent and influential Puritan ministers, John Cotton and Richard Mather,

Brewster (poet-writer) F--Charles Brockden Brown (novelist)--William Hill Brown (novelist)--Mather Byles (poet-clergyman)--William Byrd (poet-musician)--Ebenezer Cooke (poet)--Samuel Davies (poet)--William Dawson (poet)--Joseph Dennie (journalist)--William Dunlap (novelist)--Timothy Dwight IV (poet)--Jonathan Edwards (writer-theologist-scientist)--Margaretta Faugeres (novelist-poet) F--Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson-(poet-writer) F--Hannah Webster Foster (novelist) F--Benjamin Franklin (writer-politician-scientist)--Philip Freneau (poet)--Winifred Gales (novelist-memorist) F--Joseph Green (poet)--Hannah Griffitts (poet) F--Sarah Ewing Hall (poet) F--Alexander Hamilton (writer-politician)--*Jupiter Hammon (poet) Black*--Mercy Harbison (writer) F--Sophia Wington Hume (writer-quaker) F--*Red Jacket (orator) Indian* --Thomas Jefferson (writer-politician)--Susannah Willard Johnson (writer) F--Jackson Johonnet (writer)--Drury Lacy (writer-clergy)--Cotton Mather (writer-clergy)--William Moraley (writer)--Milcah Martha Moore (poet) F--Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton (poet) F--Robert Munford (novelist-soldier)--Judith Sargent Murray (poet-politician) F--James Otis Jr.(writer-lawyer)--Thomas Paine (writer-philosopher-politician)--Robert treat Paine Jr (poet-lawyer)--Joseph Priestly (writer-theologist)--Benjamin Prime (poet-song writer)--James Ralph (writer-politician)--Susanna Haswell Rowson (poet-novelist) F--Thomas Rowley (poet)-- Jonathan M. Sewall (poet-lawyer)--Samuel Stanhope Smith (writer-clergy)--Annis Boudinot Stocktonn (poet) F--John Swanwick (poet-politician)--Lucy Terry -(poet) F slave--John Trumbull (poet-artist)--St George Tucker(writer-lawyer)--Jane Colman Turell (poet) F--Royall Tyler (playwright) --Mercy Otis Warren (novelist) F--Helena Wells (novelist) FPhillis Wheatley (1754-1784) (poet) F African--Williams Williams (novelist)--Charles Woodmason (poet-clergy)--Susanna Wright (poet-scientist) F.

and the son of Increase Mather, the pastor of Old North Church and president of Harvard College.

He learnt to read Scripture daily and to develop habits of prayer when he was young. He could have access to Harvard where he received his MA in 1681 at the age of eighteen, and thirty years later, by 1710 he was offered an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Glasgow University. He showed interest in major fields of contemporary knowledge ranging from theology to natural philosophy and medicine and due to his contribution to science, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1713.

When he finished his M.A he started his job first as assistant Pastor to his father at Boston's original North Church and then as Pastor after his father's death in 1723, a position he held until his death. Despite being a guardian of tradition, and consecrated his efforts to do good works and to perfect Christian attitudes, he was both pragmatic and susceptible to change and acquired a spirit of tolerance. Like other scientists of the day and later the Deists, he saw the orderly laws of nature and diversity and wonder of the creation as expressions of the Divine Creator.

He was a prolific author and pamphleteer, and the understanding of his writings cannot be dissociated from the prevailing context in which he lived, for he bridged both periods of Puritan supremacy and the Enlightenment period. Mather published more than 380 works over the course of his life, covering various forms: sermons, biography, fables, history, theological and scientific treatises, and verse. The major works which are referred to by literary historians and critics are the following listed chronologically:

A Token for the Children of New England (1675), *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (1684), *Boston Ephermeris* (1686), *Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcraft and Possessions* (nonfiction) (1689), *Work upon the Ark: Meditations upon the Ark as a Type of the Church*(sermon) (1689), *The Wonderful Works of God Commemorated: Praises Bespoke for the God of Heaven, in a Thanksgiving Sermon* (sermon) (1690), *The Triumphs of the Reformed Religion, in America: The Life of the Renowned John Eliot; A Person justly Famous in the Church of God, Not only as an Eminent Christian and an Excellent Minister, among the English, but also, as a Memorable Evangelist among the Indians, of New-England* (biography) (1691), *Things to be Look'd for* (1691), *Preparatory Meditations upon the Day of Judgement* (sermon) 1692, *Ornaments of the Daughters of Zion* (1692), *Political Fables* (1692), *Wonders of the Invisible World* (nonfiction) (1693), *Early Religion, Urged in a Sermon, upon the Duties Wherein, and the Reasons, Wherefore, Young People Should Become Religious* (sermon) (1694), *Brontologia Sacra: The Voice of the Glorious God in the Thunder Explained and Applyed* (nonfiction) (1695), *Piscator Evangelicus. Or, The Life of Mr. Thomas Hooker* (biography) (1695), *The Biblia Americana* (1693-1728), *Problema Theologicum* (1695-1703), *Decennium Luctuosom: A History of the Long War* (1699), *Pillars of Salt* (1699), *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), *The Negro Christianized* (1706), *Corderius Americanus: A discourse on the Good Education of Children* (1708), *Bonifacius : An Essay Upon the Good That Is to Be Devised and Designed* (1710), *Theopolis Americana; An Essay on the Golden Street of the Holy City* (1710), *Curiosa Americana* (1712, 1714), *Triparadisus* (1712-1726), *Psalterium Americanum* (1718), *Bonifacius, or Essays To Do Good* (1718), *The Christian Philosopher* (1721), *Religious Improvements* (1721), *The Angel of*

Bethesda (1724), *The Angel of Bethesda* (1722), *Manductio ad Ministerium: Directions for a candidate of the ministry* (1726).⁶⁰

Though this memoire aims at finding out the influence of Puritanism upon American literature, it is quite difficult to attempt to trace such influence in all Mather's works for the simple reason that they are not available in the Algerian libraries, nor are they entirely on Website. So, reference will be made to some of the works which some literary critics consider important.

In order to understand easily the author's concern, it is quite useful to mention the prevailing issues that characterized his period. There was the question of the separation of church and state, witchcraft as well as the development of the frontier and that of a newly profit-oriented society which altogether caused popular apathy toward the church, and progressive disintegration of orthodox creeds and practices. It should be underlined that the colonies were established under different charters which made some aristocratic like Virginia, theocratic like Massachusetts, but they were undergoing experiments in democracy and liberty.

The divergences were not without consequences. In fact, the Puritan order became increasingly under attack. Besides Hutchinson's criticism about Puritan intolerance (previous chapter), the Salem witch trial of 1692 represented a threat to the stability of the Puritan colony. Salem, the most important seaport located on the north shore of Massachusetts, experience a short period of trouble known as the Salem Witch trials.

⁶⁰ A list compiled from various sources available on the Net.

This started when the daughter and niece of Salem's minister showed signs of contortions and violent screaming by January 1692. The symptoms which were still unidentified at that time, were diagnosed and interpreted by a local doctor as bewitchment. Other cases appeared leading to hysteria and arrest warrants. Several women accused of witchcraft confessed that they were in the service of the devil against the Puritans. Mather influenced the trials with his conditional acceptance of spectral evidence, or testimony about dreams and vision, that is having the accused confirm that they were tormented by some invisible ghost. The consequence was that 29 were convicted, among whom 19 were executed, including 14 women and 5 men.⁶¹

This explanation of this event is connected to the widespread belief in the influence of witchcraft, for the Devil could influence pious Christians through witches, heretics etc. Cotton Mather could not but share this prevailing common belief, and given the lack of piety, he feared divine severe punishment. Mather had already tried to show the demonic spirits in his 1689 study, *Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions, a narrative of trouble experienced by a pious family in Boston and sadly molested by evil spirits. In his Introduction, Mather writes:*

The blessed God hath made some to come from the Damned, for the Conviction (may it also be for the Conversion) of us that are yet alive. The Devils themselves are by Compulsion come to confute the Atheism and to reprove the Madness of ungodly men.⁶²

In the last section (XXXIII) he concludes after narrating the whole story being convinced that:

⁶¹ <http://www.history.com/topics/salem-witch-trials>

⁶² Cotton Mather, *Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions*, (1689) http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/ASA_MATH.HTM,

But I am resolv'd after this, never to use but just one grain of patience with any man that shall go to impose upon me a Denial of Devils, or of Witches. I shall count that man Ignorant who shall suspect, but I shall count him down-right Impudent if he Assert the Non-Existence of things which we have had such palpable.⁶³

Cotton's position was usual in an age absorbed by providences, that is God reveals His will in the events of the material world, in various forms such as storms, miraculous cures, and on the other hand, the devil could influence the outcome of earthly events through for examples witches, heretics. This could be seen as a sign of anxiety or fear of losing God's grace and their status as the elect or chosen which would affect consequently the holiness of their colonial community. It is interesting to link this period with the failure of Cromwell's Puritan Republic and the restoration of monarchy under Catholic kings succeeded by the predominance of the Anglican Church under the 1688 Silent Revolution. Another explanation could be that since the Puritans had a covenant with God that had to be preserved and implemented with strict accordance to His laws, Mather believed that the event could show God's anger and disappointment with the transgressions of the Puritans through physical acts such as storms and disease, while the Devil attempting to prevent God's plans through witches. Mather firmly believed in the existence of witches, who were doing the work of the Devil; and proved to be guilty upon confession such witches should be to death.

Following the trials, Mather published an account of the witch trials in *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (1692), after being given the official records thereof. He used the incident at Salem so as to prove the existence of the spiritual world as a way of combating the emerging materialistic philosophy

⁶³ Op. cit

which advocated that only physical objects exist. It was his battle against Satan and his witches as a way to secure God's blessings for the Puritan colony.⁶⁴

Though being a staunch defender of Puritan conscience like his father, Mather witnessed and partly experienced the transition into the Enlightenment thinking. He wrote *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), in which he presented biographical and historical narratives with respect to detailed church history of America as a land for those who sought religious freedom. In his Book IV, he underlines the Puritans belief in God's interference in human lives and to the determination of preserving the colony's sacred mission:

you have consecrated your labours, your time, your whole man, unto the service of the sovereign monarch of the whole world; that Lord, who is ador'd by all the angels. Your own consciences, Sirs, as well as mine, must needs tell you, you cannot bring with you, too much humility, not too much self-abasement, not too much self-annihilation, nor too much simplicity and sincerity when you come into His presence...Sirs, that God will give you his holy spirit, without whom you are nothing and can do nothing.⁶⁵

Convinced of his apostolic mission, Mather turned to slaves and Indians about whom he wrote *The Negro Christianized, An Essay to Excite and Assist that Good Work, the Instruction of Negro-Servants in Christianity*, (1706) and *India Christiana* (1721). The former refers to the participation of Puritan members belonging to Cotton's congregation at the Second Church in the slave trade and calls them to educate their Negro servants in the Christian religion. Mather writes:

⁶⁴ Reiner Smolinski, ed. *The Wonders of the Invisible World. OBSERVATIONS As well Historical as Theological, upon the NATURE, the NUMBER, and the OPERATIONS of the DEVILS*, Zea Books, 2011, Lincoln, Nebraska, introduction, in <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/zeabook/4/>

⁶⁵ Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 1702, p 23. Book vi, full text in https://archive.org/stream/magnaliachristia02math/magnaliachristia02math_djvu.txt, full text.

And such an Opportunity there is in your Hands, O all you that have any Negroes in your Houses ; an Opportunity to try, Whether you may not be the Happy Instruments, of Converting, the Blackest Instances of Blindness and Baseness, into admirable Candidates of Eternal Blessedness. Let not this Opportunity be Lost.⁶⁶

As far as the Christian mission is concerned with the Indians, Mather delivered *A discourse unto the Commissioners for the Propagation of the Gospel among the American Indians*. Cotton laments that Indians showed little progress towards civility, and he reports that Christianity was under decay compared to the efforts made by John Eliot (1604-1690), a Puritan missionary to the American Indians called the apostle to the Indians, who worked hard to bring Indians into obedience of the only true God and savior of mankind.

Mather was generally known as an apostle of altruism, and missed no opportunity for doing good things. He wrote an essay by 1710 entitled, *BONIFACIUS. AN ESSAY Upon the GOOD, that is to be Devised and Designed, BY THOSE Who Desire to Answer the Great END of Life, and to DO GOOD While they Live*. He stressed that

That the only Wisdom of Man, lies in Conversing with the Great GOD, and His Glorious CHRIST; and in Engaging as many others as we can, to joyn with us in this our Blessedness; thereby Promoting His Kingdom among the Children of Men; and in Studying to Do Good unto all about us; to be Blessings in our several Relations; to heal the Disorders, and help the Distresses of a Miserable World, as far as ever we can Extend our Influences.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Cotton Mather, *The Negro Christianized. An Essay to Excite and Assist that Good Work, the Instruction of Negro-Servants in Christianity*, 1706, full text in <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1028&context=etas>, p. 1

⁶⁷ Cotton Mather, *BONIFACIUS. AN ESSAY Upon the GOOD, that is to be Devised and Designed, BY THOSE Who Desire to Answer the Great END of Life, and to DO GOOD While they Live*. (1710), p 6, in <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/phall/08.%20Mather.pdf>

For him, a world of Good would exist thanks to men devising Good by which the evil manners of the world would be reformed, mankind would be rescued from corruption and slavery, miserable people would be relieved and comforted. For him the "Kingdom of God in the World, Calls for Innumerable Services for us. To Do Such THINGS IS TO DO GOOD."⁶⁸

These essays had a powerful influence of Benjamin Franklin as stated on the first two pages:

When I was a boy," he wrote Mather's son later in life, "I met with a book, entitled Essays to Do Good, which I think was written by your father. It had been so little regarded by a former possessor, that several leaves of it were torn out; but the remainder gave me such a turn of thinking, as to have an influence on my conduct through life; for I have always set a greater value on the character of a doer of good, than on any other kind of reputation; and if I have been, as you seem to think, a useful citizen, the public owes the advantage of it to that book.

Mather's Puritan commitment and influence was not restricted exclusively to social or religious activities, but also had an impact on his scientific ones. He was strongly influenced by Robert Boyle (1627-1691), an Anglo-Irish chemist, natural philosopher and physicist.⁶⁹ Like many Puritan ministers he was an advocate of vaccination against smallpox though some Puritans thought of the smallpox as an epidemic given to them by God as punishment for sin, and they had to make with it rather than resist it. In his *The*

⁶⁸ op.cit p 7

⁶⁹ Middlekauf, Robert (1999), *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals 1596-1728*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, quoted in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cotton_Mather

Christian Philosopher (1721), he saw no conflict between science and religion but rather harmony; science was rather an incentive to religion that could promote reverence and moral insight. Progress in science could explain God's Providence and advance divine purposes in the physical universe.⁷⁰ In his Essay XXXII on Man, he explains the role of 'reason' as a faculty in the mind of man formed by God; such 'reason' enables man 'to discern certain Maxims of truth which God himself has established and to make true Inferences from them.' Mather adds that "whenever any reasonable thing is offered, I have GOD speaking to me."⁷¹

With his *Christian Philosopher*, entitled as well *A Collection of the Best Discoveries in Nature, with Religious Improvements*, Mather attempts to give a rational foundation and explanation for Christianity by trying to reconcile Scripture revelation with the new sciences, presenting scientific explanations supported by theological justifications. His writings can be understood within the context of the Puritan ideology and the concerns of the time. In fact, Being an ardent Puritan and scientist, at the time of the Enlightenment, he wanted to show how Calvinism could progress and adapt to a new philosophy. His views had certainly influenced other eighteenth century writers, namely Benjamin Franklin, and formed a prelude to nineteenth century Emerson's Transcendentalism.

⁷⁰ Adapted from James 1:17, the New Testament quoted in Rev. Cotton Mather *The Christian Philosopher A Collection of the Best Discoveries in Nature, with Religious Improvements* p.1; National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox *Becoming American: The British Atlantic Colonies, 1690-1763*.

<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/ideas/text6/christianphilosopher.pdf>

⁷¹ Cotton Mather, op. cit. p 12.

3. Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), was born in Boston, (Mass), from very pious Puritan parents, and baptized at the Puritan congregation, the Old South Church. He stopped schooling at the age of ten due to lack of money when he started working for his father and then as an apprentice at his brother's printing trade. After a few years in Philadelphia and then in London working in printing houses, he settled in Philadelphia in 1726 creating the *Junto*, a discussion group, which created a library from their own books and papers. Such initiative led to the establishment of the Library Company of Philadelphia by 1731. His belief that the press had a public-service duty to instruct Americans in moral virtue, stemmed from his conviction, like those of the Puritans, that his initiative constituted a service to God.⁷² This motivated him to consecrate time in scientific inventions like such as the lightning rod, glass armonica, bifocal glasses with a view to increasing efficiency and human improvement. On the other hand, given the emerging of radical politics, Benjamin became more involved in political life of colonial America.

With the exception of Bagatelles and Satires published posthumously in 1845, the other works amounting to nineteen had been produced by Benjamin Franklin between 1722 and 1790:

Silence Do good letters (1722), *A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain* (1725), *Pennsylvania Gazette* (1729–1790), *Poor Richard's Almanack* (1732–1758), *Advice to a Friend on Choosing a Mistress*, (1745), *The Speech of Polly Baker* (1747), *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, etc.* (1751), *Experiments and Observations on*

⁷² Philip. Gleason, "Trouble in the Colonial Melting Pot." *Journal of American Ethnic History* (2000) pp: 3–17., in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Franklin

Electricity (1751), *Birch letters* (1755), *The Way to Wealth* (1758), *Pennsylvania Chronicle* (1767), *Rules by Which a Great Empire May Be Reduced to a Small One* (1773), *Proposed alliance with the Iroquois* (1775), *A Letter To A Royal Academy* (1781), *Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America* (1784), *The Morals of Chess* (1786). *An Address to the Public* (1789), *A Plan for Improving the Condition of the Free Blacks* (1789), *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1771–90, pub. 1791), *Bagatelles and Satires* (pub. 1845),

Undoubtedly Franklin was influenced by the Enlightenment Movement, for instead of taking training for a career in the church as his Puritan parents intended, he rather adhered to the religious belief in Deism,⁷³ he wrote in his *Autobiography* " I soon became a thorough Deist"⁷⁴ but his early commitments to Deism did not last long. He strongly asserted his belief in God as " all wise, all good, all powerful." In *His Articles on Belief and Acts of Religion*, he begins with the affirmation of the existence of "one Supreme most perfect Being."⁷⁵ This stems from his adherence to both Puritan and rationalist doctrines which unequivocally emphasize the existence of God as the Creator of the universe and man. " I never doubted, for instance, the existence of the Deity; that He made the world, and governed it by His providence; that the most acceptable service of God was the doing good to man; that our souls are immortal; and that all crime will be punished, and virtue rewarded, either here or hereafter." ⁷⁶ He referred to American independence as the result of strong faith in God as the

⁷³ Deism was the belief that God created the world and allowed it to operate according to natural laws. Deists believed God did not intervene in the lives of His human creation. Their religious belief was based on reason rather than divine revelation.

⁷⁴ Franklin, Benjamin.' *Autobiography*, Chapter IV. reprinted on USGen Net.org.

⁷⁵ Isaacson, Walter (November 30, 2004). *Isaacson, 2003, p. 45*. Google Books. . Retrieved September 21, 2009, and http://www.beliefnet.com/resourcelib/docs/65/Articles_of_Belief_and_Acts_of_Religion_1.html

⁷⁶ Franklin Benjamin *Autobiography*, section 2 reprinted on USHistory.org.

wellspring of morality and goodness in man, whose virtues would be essential for the success of a republic. Believing in the humanity's inherent goodness Franklin aimed at 'moral perfection' through a number of virtues. His approach to morality derives from his view of a forgiving, wise and all powerful God and consequently of a man being naturally good. Part Two of his *Autobiography*, mentions a list of thirteen, which comprised temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity, and humility. Franklin explains them as follows:

Temperance first, as it tends to procure that coolness and clearness of head, which is so necessary where constant vigilance was to be kept up, and guard maintained against the unremitting attraction of ancient habits, and the force of perpetual temptations. This being acquir'd and establish'd, Silence would be more easy; and my desire being to gain knowledge at the same time that I improv'd in virtue, and considering that in conversation it was obtain'd rather by the use of the ears than of the tongue, and therefore wishing to break a habit I was getting into of prattling, punning, and joking, which only made me acceptable to trifling company, I gave Silence the second place. This and the next, Order, I expected would allow me more time for attending to my project and my studies. Resolution, once become habitual, would keep me firm in my endeavors to obtain all the subsequent virtues; Frugality and Industry freeing me from my remaining debt and producing affluence and independence, would make more easy the practice of Sincerity and Justice, etc.⁷⁷

This list of virtues, which would make the citizen honest and virtuous, reflect the ethical guidelines set by the Puritan Church. It should be noted that, Franklin partly disagreed with the Puritans' pessimistic outlook on human nature, which consisted in considering people as innately evil because of Adam

⁷⁷ <http://www.arvindguptatoys.com/arvindgupta/e-ben-franklin.pdf>, p 77-78

and Eve's sin of disobedience, and then deserving to be damned, but would be saved because of God' mercy through Jesus and if they lived morally.

Franklin had no doubt as to the importance of religious beliefs, and in order to keep men good to their fellow man, he was convinced that this could be achieved through organised religion, self discipline and associational activity. He insisted on the addition of churches and practice of daily common prayer, though he did not attend regularly church services. His approach and conviction partly derived from the conception of the Puritan preacher Cotton Mather, a philosopher who responded to modern scientific study by warning that "the danger of scientific thought is the temptation to atheism that 'must be hissed out of the World."

The Puritan concept of voluntary basis of the civil society based on self examination and mutual self criticism as formulated in the spiritual sovereignty in the government of the church influenced Franklin in a way that he extended it to political and economic sovereignty. In fact, the Puritans rejected the monarchy because monarchs should not be above God's laws or those of the land, and consequently, their political philosophy rested upon the government by the people, which was clearly expounded in the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson expressed this Puritan political approach to the relationship between the ruler and his subjects in his own personal motto " rebellion against tyrants is obedience to God". Franklin supported the right to freedom, and advocated the abolition of slavery when he wrote *An Edict by the King of Prussia* (1773), *An Address to the Public*,(1789) and *A Plan for Improving the Condition of the Free Blacks* (1789).

In the first essay, it is a satire in which Franklin reminds the English monarch as being part of Prussia because of the Anglo-Saxon invasion of their country, and he satirizes the British attitude towards the American colonies

through the list of restrictions and punishment that the King of Prussia imposed upon England. Franklin writes:

All the persons in the said Island are hereby cautioned not to oppose in any wise the Execution of this Our Edict, or any Part thereof, such Opposition being HIGH TREASON, of which all who are suspected shall be transported in Fetters from Britain to Prussia, there to be tried and executed according to the Prussian Law. Such is our Pleasure.⁷⁸

As regards slavery, he wrote in his *An Address to the Public* (1789), a date corresponding to the French Revolution:

Slavery is such an atrocious debasement of human nature, that its very extirpation, if not performed with solicitous care, may sometimes open a source of serious evils.... The unhappy man, who has long been treated as a brute animal, too frequently sinks beneath the common standard of the human species...Attention to emancipated black people, it is therefore to be hoped, will become a branch of our national policy.⁷⁹

Besides these, Peter Dobkin Hall attributes the work ethics of Franklin as similar to Puritan writer Winthrop about the fact of becoming rich through hard work, discipline, honesty, and diligence. He mentions a proverb quoted by Winthrop "Honor the Lord with thy riches" meaning "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine", and the one cited by Franklin as follows:

Seest thou a man diligent in his calling, he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men" and comments mockingly that he has

⁷⁸ <http://explorepahistory.com/odocument.php?docId=1-4-2D9> full text

⁷⁹ http://www.pbs.org/benfranklin/pop_address.html (full text) of *An Address to the Public*,(1789)

since “stood before *five*[kings], and even had the honor of sitting down with one, the King of Denmark, to dinner.”⁸⁰

It should be noted that diligence or careful and conscientious had work formed part of Puritan pillars, values and form of worship because it could be please God if conducted with the right attitude; It was also understood as a sign of being a member of the God's elect or chosen by God unlike those who were considered damned because of their idleness. The belief that hard work, thrift and self reliance would bring prosperity, wealth for them and the needy conformed to their belief as a sign of God's blessing. Franklin's ethical writings or insistence on the virtues, could be seen as a culmination of the Protestant or Puritan Ethic, which according to German sociologist Max Weber, contributed to the creation of the necessary conditions for eighteenth century capitalism.⁸¹

Puritan influence can also be traced in the power of the press, which according to Cotton Mather was an "essential complement to promoting the work of perfecting society." In fact, Franklin was at an early age associated with the printing trade and witnessed the creation of the first independent newspaper in the colonies which was published in Boston by his brother James Franklin. This was the *New England Courant* starting in 1721 and suppressed in 1726. Two years later, Franklin and Hugh Meredith bought a newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Gazette* which was printed until 1800 in which Franklin authored the first political cartoon in America.

⁸⁰ <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/phall/10.%20Franklin.pdf>

Documentary History of Philanthropy and Voluntarism in America ©2003 Peter Dobkin Hall, (Prov. 3:9 for Winthrop; (Autobiography, 95)

⁸¹ Weber, Max *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit of Capitalism"*, (Penguin Books, 2002), translated by Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells, pp. 9–11.

His interest in newspaper writing could be traced in the *Pennsylvania Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, founded in 1767 and published in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania. Besides essays published in those newspapers, Franklin published in a yearly almanac, notably *Poor Richard's Almanac* from 1732 to 1758.⁸²

When learning to write, authors initially tend to imitate and eventually consolidate the style of others before creating their own, which generally lead to the creation of new literary forms or genres. The latter comprise tragedy, comedy, epic, satire, allegory and creative nonfiction which altogether can be in the form of prose or poetry.

Franklin's writings include so as to name a few: periodical essays *The Way to Wealth* (1758), pamphlets *A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain* (1725), fictional stories *The Speech of Polly Baker* (1747), satire *An Edict by the King of Prussia* (1773), political journalism *Letters to the Press* (1775), autobiography *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1771-1790), and poems *On the Freedom of the Press*, *Equivocation*, *Death is a Fisherman*, *The Benefit of Going to Law*, establishing thus a tradition in American writing the style of which is considered by McMichael, as simple and utilitarian.⁸³

First person narratives characterize most of his works such as in his *Autobiography*:

I had been religiously educated as a Presbyterian; and tho' some of the dogmas of that persuasion, such as the eternal decrees of God, election, reprobation, etc., appeared to me unintelligible, others doubtful, and **I** early absented myself from the public assemblies of

⁸² almanacs were popular books in colonial America; they contained a variety of topics from weather forecasts to American vernacular.

⁸³ McMichael, op cit p 200.

the sect, Sunday being my studying day, I never was without some religious principles. I never doubted, for instance, the existence of the Deity.⁸⁴

On the other hand, literary critics agree that Franklin's writings contain short declarative sentences similar in part to those found in some former Puritan writings: "About this time, I met an odd volume of the *Spectator*. I had never before seen any of these magazines. I bought it, read it over and over..⁸⁵

Conclusion

Unlike seventeenth century writers, advocates of the Puritans' supremacy and their theologically based explanations of the universe, and social and political organisation had to face emerging opposing arguments as a result of the development of science. Cotton Mather and Benjamin Franklin, though convinced of the progress of the latter, attempted to balance between the spiritual and the material philosophy of life.

⁸⁴ Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*, p.75.

⁸⁵<http://literarydevices.net/benjamin-franklin>,
<http://anna-pphs2011.blogspot.com/2011/10/ben-franklins-writing-style.html>

Chapter Four

Impact of Puritanism on American Literature in the 19th century; the case of Emerson's Transcendentalism

Introduction

There is no doubt that the understanding of the emergence of successive and different philosophical and literary movements cannot be dissociated from the gradual questioning of prevailing authoritarian or ineffective doctrines. This was the case of absolutist Catholicism leading to Protestantism, which in turn was questioned by Puritanism whose intolerance towards other denominations was rejected by the Enlightenment writers. The latter were inclined to use reason rather than emotions or spiritual factors to explain the truth and the workings of the Universe. But their exclusively rationalistic based approach did not enable them to explain that, which led other thinkers, known as the Romanticists or Transcendentalists, to try to balance between the rationalistic and spiritual approaches. Puritan reformed views were then incorporated in the process by some writers in nineteenth century America, the most prominent of whom was Waldo Emerson. The chapter will attempt to trace back the emergence of this new movement, its principles and the impact of Puritan values on Emerson's writings.

1. Background to Transcendentalism

Considered as a subsequent form of the romantic movement that prevailed in Europe from the late eighteenth until the mid nineteenth century, Transcendentalism emerged as a religious, literary and philosophical movement in New England from the 1830s to the 1850s. The Romantic movement,⁸⁶ was generally regarded as a reaction against classical formalism (emphasis of form over content and meaning), and convention, and against the rationalistic approach of the Enlightenment. Its advocates opted for intuitive perception rather than rationalism, stressed a high value to individual imagination and achievements, and considered the world as inherently good. In other terms, it was marked by an emphasis on emotion, spirituality, subjectivity, and inspiration. Historians relate the emergence of this movement due to the influence of theological, philosophical and literary trends. Though the paper is about the impact of Puritanism upon American literature, and that it is not possible to dissociate this from theology nor from philosophy, there will be a need to explain very briefly some of the concepts at the basis of the Transcendentalist movement.

There was no doubt that Emerson's parents' Puritan religious convictions, New England Calvinism as well as Unitarian principles influenced Emerson's thought. But the inadequacies of authoritarian and intolerant Puritanism led a group of Christians, originally in Poland by the late eighteenth century and then in England to establish the Unitarian Church. The latter believed that God is only one person, thus rejecting the Godhood of Jesus, and consequently Trinitarianism which defines God as three persons in one being. Under the

⁸⁶ Encyclopedia Britannica. *Romanticism* retrieved 30 January 2008, from Encyclopedia Britannica, Online, Britannica.com retrieved 2010-0824.

leadership of William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), a Unitarian preacher in the United States, Unitarians believed 'in salvation by character and progress of mankind onward and forward forever.' For them "God is all loving and all pervading, the presence of this God is in all men makes them divine, and the true worship of God is good will to all men."⁸⁷ They preached a more humanistic and, emotionally expressive form of religion, but Emerson, who embraced this doctrine, found himself questioning some of its aspects and wanted to reform the Unitarian church.⁸⁸

Emerson had some doubts about orthodox Christianity with respect to some rituals, namely concerning the use of bread and wine during the Communion or Lord's Supper, which he believed should be discontinued, considering the Lord's Supper as a remembrance rather than a sacrament.⁸⁹ His explanation delivered in a sermon in 1832 was rejected by the Church, after which he decided to resign from his pastorate. His gradual independence from

⁸⁷ For the Unitarians, the Bible was written by man, so it is not infallible; there are no states of absolute salvation or damnation; man is a progressively spiritual creature; Jesus was a man, leader; sin is a matter of morality involving human relationships, and not an offence against God; man is responsible for his acts; few can achieve goodness in life; -the Bible is not inspired, is read for ethics rather than for theology; the church is a human institution; the church has no monopoly on the means of salvation, greater emphasis on the part the individual can play in working out his own spiritual salvation; ; the sacraments of baptism, the Lord's supper are regarded simply as memorials (Horton p 114-15)

⁸⁸ Standard Encyclopedia of Philosophy, *Transcendentalism*, first published Thu Feb 6, 2003; substantive revision Wed Aug 12, 2015

⁸⁹ During the Last Supper Jesus took a loaf of bread and gave thanks to God. He gave pieces to His disciples and said, "'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you'" (Luke 22:19-21). He concluded the feast by singing a hymn.

A sacrament is a Christian rite or ceremonial. While the Catholic Church defines the sacraments as "efficacious signs of grace" instituted by Jesus and entrusted to the Church, Protestant denominations identify two sacraments instituted by Jesus, The Holy Communion or Eucharist or Lord's Supper and Baptism.

What is the importance of the Lord's supper / Christian Communion?
<http://www.gotquestions.org/communion-Christian.html>

the church became clear when departing from "preaching God reliance to essays stating the principle of self-reliance in the "Divinity School Address of 1838."⁹⁰

Besides the theological source, Samantha Harvey writes that Neo-Platonism and Romanticism contributed to the emergence of Transcendentalism. Among the influential philosophers and writers, Harvey cites Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) an English poet, literary critic and philosopher; Walter Scott (1771-1832), a Scottish historical novelist, playwright and poet; Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), a Scottish philosopher, satirical writer, essayist, historian and a mathematics teacher; French philosopher Victor Cousin (1792-1867), a French writer Germaine de Stael (1766-1817), and Swedish philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg (1668-1772) and his mystical spiritualism, their influence preceding the German idealism of Emanuel Kant (1724-1804).⁹¹ It is worth introducing some of their ideas so as to understand the extent to which the Christian religion and more particularly its Puritan branch could be incorporated in the new Transcendental doctrine.

Neo-Platonism, founded by Plotinus (204-270), takes its source from Greek philosopher Plato. It stresses the belief of intellectual thinking over material reality; in other terms, there "are ideal forms existing in an absolute reality, and in the world all objects and phenomena are imperfect representations of these ideals...Our entire lives are spent trying to perfect ourselves and our environment in hopes of attaining an ideal existence." But Emerson added that

⁹⁰ Joanne E Fraser, review of *Waldo Emerson* by Gay Wilson Allen, The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, Vol. 106, N0 3 (July., 1982), p. 441.

⁹¹ from Samantha Harvey, *Transatlantic Transcendentalism: Coleridge, Emerson, Nature*, in Review 19, www.nbol 10. org, Edinburgh, 2013.

ideas are the only reality: the tangible world exists solely as a manifestation of pure ideas.⁹²

With regard to Coleridge, Emerson owed to him much of his doctrine of Correspondence and his intuitionism as well as the concept of Transcendental reason. This doctrine claims that "moral principles are clear and obvious truths that do not need to be supported by argumentation." R. Goode explains that the moral inherent sense that individuals possess provided "Emerson with a metaphysical alternative to the Calvinist belief in human depravity," the latter implying man being corrupt.⁹³

Thomas Carlyle's influence on Emerson was through his translation of Goethe's works, and his meeting with him in Europe in 1831. Both were inclined to find a way how to combine philosophy, theology, philosophy and literature, while promoting idealism in the Age of Reason, and to reconcile feeling and freedom with historical and political fact. The important notion of the individual and hero was explicitly stated in his work *On Heroes, Hero Worship & the Heroic in History*, "the Great Man was always as lightning out of Heaven; the rest of men waited for him like fuel, and then they too would flame."⁹⁴

Madame de Stael was also influential because of her devotion to liberty as advocated by Locke, and power and authority of the mind as emphasized by Kant. With respect to William Wordsworth, his influence concerned the

⁹² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoplatonism>

⁹³ Edmund R Goode, *Enlightened Puritan*, *The Review of Politics*, Vol.72, No4 (Fall 2010), pp736-738, CUP, p 737] Text of Neal Dolan, *Emerson's Liberalism* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2009, and Robert Giuffrida, review of Waldo Emerson by Gay Wilson Allen, *Transactions of the Charles S Peirce Society*, Vol. 18, No 4 (fall, 1982), pp. 383-387 p 386, and <http://transcendentalism-legacy.tamu.edu/roots/rwe-tc.html>

⁹⁴ Carlyle, Thomas. *On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1840, p. 90. quoted in Wikipedia on Thomas Carlyle), and <http://transcendentalism-legacy.tamu.edu/roots/rwe-tc.html> about Carlyle.

importance of an active and powerful mind which can be traced in Emerson's *Nature* where he writes of nature as "obedient" to spirit and counsels each of us to "Build ... your own world."⁹⁵

A less important influence on the Transcendentalists came from French Victor Cousin's Eclecticism that combined elements of German Idealism and Scottish Common Sense Realism. His Eclecticism underlined the objective existence of both the external world and the human mind through the existence of 'free will' by the fact of consciousness'. Clarifying his *Common Sense Realism* philosopher Thomas Reid refers "to man's innate ability to perceive common ideas." ⁹⁶

Swedish philosopher and scientist, Emanuel Swedenborg refers to rebirth or regeneration of man because he believed that Bible describes a human's transformation from a materialistic to a spiritual being, and how Christ freed himself from materialistic boundaries through the glorification of his human presence by making it Divine. He denied the Trinity as a Trinity of Persons and he explained how the Divine Trinity exists in one Person, in one God. For Swedenborg, there is one God who is the perfect union of infinite love acting through infinite wisdom. Humans are created in the image and likeness of God and accordingly have a love and wisdom component to their lives." He adds that "Human life is to be lived in freedom in accordance with reason. God zealously guards human freedom. But with our freedom comes the injunction to live rationally. Our rational mind is formed by study of the Bible, theology and by our life's experience. This wisdom works on our emotions and modifies them into spiritual loves."⁹⁷ On the other hand, he rejected the concept of salvation

⁹⁵ Richard Poirier (ed), *Ralph Waldo Emerson*, The Oxford Authors, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 6.

⁹⁶ Wikipedia on *Common Sense Realism*

⁹⁷ from David J Fekete, *Spirituality in a New Light*.htm, " Information Swedenborg.

through faith alone, for both the latter and charity are necessary for salvation. He further states that faith and charity must be exercised by doing good out of willing good whenever possible, which are good works or good uses.⁹⁸

German idealism was a movement in the late 18th and early 19th century linked to Romanticism and the Enlightenment, following the attempt of German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) to reconcile two eighteenth century dominant philosophical schools: the rationalist and the empiricist. While the first held that knowledge could be attained by reason alone prior to experience (a priori), the second stressed that such knowledge could be obtained only through the senses after experience (a posteriori). Kant used the term 'transcendental' to mean knowledge which is "concerned, not with objects, but with the human mode of knowing objects so far as this is possible a priori, that is independent of reason." Kant also asserts that reason is the source of morality or moral obligation, called the "Categorical Imperative," a requirement that is absolute and unconditional, to be obeyed in all circumstances, and which constitute an end in itself.⁹⁹

These theological and philosophical sources certainly contributed to development of the Transcendentalist trend through its *Transcendental Club* and its own journal *The Dial*, respectively established and sponsored by Frederick Henry Hedge (1805-1890), a Unitarian minister and later Professor at Harvard Divinity School, a vocal opponent of slavery in the 1830's and a champion of women's rights in the 1850's. The movement had a number of writers, namely Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Amos Bronson Alcott Charles, Walt Whitman and female writers namely Margaret Fuller, Louisa May Alcott, and

⁹⁸ Swedenborg, E. *The True Christian Religion*, particularly sections 163–184 (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1951); Swedenborg, E. *The Doctrine of the Lord* (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1946), quoted in Wikipedia, *Emanuel Swedenborg*

⁹⁹ *Kant's Moral Philosophy*, first published Mon Feb 23, 2004; substantive revision Sun Apr 6, 2008, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/>

Elizabeth Palmer Peabody.¹⁰⁰ They introduced a new literary genre in novels, short stories, and poems, and their romantic literature was personal and intense; it expressed more emotion than in neoclassical literature¹⁰¹, the great source of which was partly freedom and independence of their country.

The main doctrine of the movement revolves around the source of knowledge and primacy of the self-reliant individual. In 1842, Charles Mayo Ellis writing *An Essay on Transcendentalism* clarified that "the ideas that a man has do not come through the five senses or the powers of reasoning, but they are either the result of direct revelation from God, his immediate inspiration, or his immanent presence in the spiritual world."¹⁰² The power and purity of the individual when truly self-reliant and independent was very important because such individuals possess a piece of the "Over-soul or God, and would form consequently a true community."¹⁰³ Above all, the Transcendentalists believed in the importance of a direct relationship with God and with nature, and freedom of man. They were in fact opposed to slavery and by 1834 an Anti-Slavery Society was formed in Concord. They were engaged in women's suffrage and Native American education.

The Transcendentalists were part of the a great intellectual, philosophical and literary world, for The very important changes taking place in the country at different levels in the nineteenth century produced a large number of thinkers

¹⁰⁰ Gura, Philip F. *American Transcendentalism: A History*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2007: 7–8.

¹⁰¹ Neo classical literature writers (1660-1798) focused on order, accuracy, and structure; they portrayed man as inherently flawed in contrast to Renaissance writers who saw man as basically good, they put the stress on restraint, self-control, and common sense

¹⁰² Paul Reuben's PAL site at California State University-Stanislaus and Ann Woodlief's Transcendentalism Web at Virginia Commonwealth University.

¹⁰³ James D. Hart and Phillip W Leininger, *Oxford Companion to American Literature*, OUP, Current Online version 2013, p 770.

and writers, the latter amounting to almost 304 (as listed in Wikipedia) and increase in more than 50 woman writers.

Since the object of the memoire is to trace Puritan influence on American literature, it is quite impossible to search in all the literary works of that century, and thus it is necessary to find out the most prominent ones expressing or advocating Puritanism, some its values already examined in Chapter One, and eventually the introduction of reformed ones. There was a variety of philosophical and literary trends among which the Transcendentalist or Romantic one. The latter opposed the exclusive materialistic view of life and attempted to come back to moral and religious values and consolidate them through writings. The important proponents of this movement in America were Waldo Emerson.

2. Ralph Waldo \Emerson

Waldo Emerson was born in Boston in 1803, his father was a pastor of the First Church in Boston, whose Puritan ancestors founded Concord by 1635. His mother, a woman of strong devotion, had to raise the large family on her own after her husband's death in 1811. She was known as being conservative and liberal minded at the same time, and had strongly influenced her child Waldo.

After attending the grammar school and the Boston Public Latin School, he entered Harvard College 1817-1821 and again in 1825 at the Harvard Divinity School, but due to his poor health he had to interrupt his studies. He was granted an honorary degree from Harvard in 1866.

After graduating from Harvard, he taught for a short period (1821-1824) at a Girls' school before he decided to devote himself to the ministry. By 1829 he became pastor of the Unitarian Second Church of Boston, but given his divergence with the Church officials as regards the Lord's Supper, he resigned in 1832. But he resumed church work as a supply minister in various Unitarian parishes after his return from Europe where he met famous intellectual authors, Taylor Coleridge, Thomas Carlyle, William Woodworth. Back at home in the 1830s, he met Margaret Fuller, Bronson Alcott, and Henry David Thoreau and others known as the Transcendentalists. As it has been stated above, the group created a club and started a journal, *The Dial*. This was not the only means used to expound their ideas. Reading, journalizing and lecturing for many years enabled Emerson to give lectures and write a number of essays, poems and books to defend his arguments (see appendix). His major lectures comprise:

The Uses of Natural History (1833), *Biography* (1835), *The American Scholar* (1837), *Divinity School Address* (1838), *Literary Ethics* (1838), *The Present Age* (1840), *New England* (1843), *Emancipation in the British West Indies* (1844). As to his poems, they include *The Concord Hymn* (1837), *The Problem* (1839), *Threnody* (1842), *Poet*, (1844) *The Humble-Bee*, *The Rhodora*, *Uriel* (1904), *Give All to Love*, *Brahma*, *Merlin* (1847), *Boston Hymn* (1863). The major books and essays are *Nature*, (1836), *American Scholar* (1837) and *Divinity School Address* (1838), *Essays* (1841 and 1844), *Representative Men* (1850), *The Conduct of Life* (1860), *Society and Solitude* (1870), *Letters and Social Aims* (1875)

Generally, historians of literature and critics agree that *Nature* and *The American Scholar* and *Self-Reliance* constitute the basic writings regarding Emerson's Transcendentalism. *Nature*, Emerson's first book, was published anonymously in 1836 three years after he had returned from Europe and *The*

American Scholar one year later as a speech to Harvard's Phi Beta Kappa Society, an honorary society of male college students whereas *Self-reliance* was in was first published in 1841 in the collection *Essays, First Series*.

In order to trace any kind of Puritan influence in his writings, it is certainly useful to underline that Emerson served as pastor in the Unitarian Church. However, as a result of his readings and contact with other philosophical and intellectual circles, he started to review some of the Puritan beliefs and practices. Despite his disapproval of some of them, he remained, according to Parker, profoundly religious. Parker states that "no living man has done so much as Emerson to waken this religion in the great Saxon heart of the Americans and Britons."¹⁰⁴ In fact, the importance of religion to him is well expounded in his essays with a view to attaining a perfect relationship with God. In *Nature*¹⁰⁵

3. Emerson and Puritanism

Emerson declares that God is perfection, and that, through his connection to God, man is perfectible. In the introduction he writes:

We must trust the perfection of the creation, God is revealed through nature, and is best understood as a spirit, an ideal. Patrick Labriola explains that at the root of all Emerson's nature writings there is the Puritan belief that God speaks to man through nature, and the nature itself is the great moral educator.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Parker, *Revival of Religion* (Works III, p 254 ff) quoted in Regis Michaud "Emerson's Transcendentalism" *The American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 30, No.1 (Jan., 1919), p. 77, see also Elizabeth Hurth, *Between faith and Unbelief: R.W Emerson on Man*, American Studies, Vol. 48, No. 4 (2003), p. 483

¹⁰⁵ It is composed of an introduction and eight chapters dealing or entitled respectively: nature, commodity, beauty, language, discipline, idealism, spirit and prospects.

¹⁰⁶ Patrick Labriola, "Ralph W Emerson's Nature: Puritan Typology and German Idealism," *The Concord Saunterer, New Series*, Vol.10 (2002), p.125.

Emerson simply expresses the Puritan belief that God is all powerful and works upon the life of man. It is through nature that the human feels the Omnipresence of God . Emerson writes in Chapter of *Nature* : "The stars were made to allow him to perceive the "perpetual presence of the sublime." Visible every night, they demonstrate that God is ever-present." and he continues in Chapter Seven stating :

behind nature, throughout nature, spirit is present; one and not compound, it does not act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves: therefore, that spirit, that is, the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old. As a plant upon the earth, so a man rests upon the bosom of God; he is nourished by unfailing fountains, and draws, at his need, inexhaustible power.¹⁰⁷

Like the Puritans, Emerson insists on the importance of moral law as it is clearly stated in Chapter 5 of *Nature* : " every natural process is a version of a moral sentence. The moral law lies at the centre of nature and radiates to the circumference." In other words, nature forms the basis for ethics and that moral law lies at the centre of nature. In his essay *Robinson* shows that Emerson considered moral action as the fundamental end of religious experience and moral law had to be obeyed.¹⁰⁸

Unlike the Puritans , Emerson believed that man did not need any mediator between himself and God, he could experience the religious feeling or sentiment directly and not mediated through a church, even preacher or what he referred to as second hand. He underlines this in the fifth paragraph of *The*

¹⁰⁷ Emerson, W, *Nature*, Chapter Seven.

¹⁰⁸ Cynthia A. Cavanaugh, review of "A Historical Guide to Ralph Waldo Emerson, "by Joel Myerson, *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, Vol. 55, No1 (2001), p. 111.

Divinity School Address" delivered before the Senior Class in Divinity College, Cambridge, July 15, 1838:

Meantime, whilst the doors of the temple stand open, night and day, before every man, and the oracles of this truth cease never, it is guarded by one stern condition; this, namely; it is an intuition. It cannot be received at second hand.¹⁰⁹

His idea direct accessibility of God to all people being unmediated or not through the established Church was at the root of divergence with the Calvinists or Puritans. This implies that second hand knowledge from passive scholars could be a danger, for Emerson, the ideal is creative imagination. In his *The American Scholar*, he cites in paragraph six of section II:

The book, the college, the school of art, the institution of any kind, stop with some past utterance of genius. This is good, say they, — let us hold by this. They pin me down. They look backward and not forward. But genius looks forward: the eyes of man are set in his forehead, not in his hindhead: man hopes: genius creates.¹¹⁰

Emerson avoided to consider the knowledge of the past as the only and exclusive source of knowledge. He aimed at avoiding exclusive dependence on second hand knowledge because this would keep the scholar away from original thought and prevent him from exploring new ideas and seeking the truth. This attitude of mind was to be, according to Emerson, guided by action, in other terms labor, for it would provide the scholar with a better and richer type of existence. This can indicate Emerson's adherence and support for Puritan work ethics. He writes in paragraph 5 and 8, section III of the *American Scholar*:

¹⁰⁹ Emerson, W, *The Divinity School Address*, 1838, paragraph 5.

¹¹⁰ Emerson, W. *The American Scholar*, Section 2, paragraph 6.

Of course, he who has put forth his total strength in fit actions, has the richest return of wisdom.....The mind now thinks; now acts; and each fit reproduces the other...he has always the resource *to live*... A great soul will be strong to live, as well as strong to think.¹¹¹

This Puritan work ethic is related to Puritan virtues which Emerson refers to in paragraph 12 of Section III of *Nature* and in paragraph 2 in Division 1 of *Self-Reliance*:

In self-trust, all the virtues are comprehended. Free should the scholar be, — free and brave." and ".. but God will not have his work made manifest by cowards.¹¹²

Hard work and self reliance would keep the scholar independent in thinking and would build up a new society. In his essay *Self Reliance*, paragraph 34, he shows that such self reliance can be great:

It is easy to see that a greater self-reliance must work a revolution in all the offices and relations of men; in their religion; in their education; in their pursuits; their modes of living; their association; in their property.¹¹³

As far education is concerned, the Puritans insisted that it should aim at the success of and enlightenment of the community so as to oppose the devil and establish high moral standards. Emerson's view was that it the education of the scholar should be by nature, books and by action. In his essay *Self Reliance* Emerson was of opinion that the greatness of the scholar would rest upon the inner resources, where lies his illumination. "A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than

¹¹¹ Emerson, op cit, Section Three, paragraph 5 and 8.

¹¹² Emerson, *Self reliance*, Division One.

¹¹³ Ibid

the luster of the firmament of bards and sages," Emerson states in *Self-reliance* paragraph 34.

When referring to the influence of Puritanism upon American literature, one may not confine reference exclusively to what was adopted by Puritans, but the latter's rejection of the ideas and practices of others could have influenced as well the subsequent generation to produce new ideas and pattern of society. The Puritan's rejection of considering women as equal partners with men influenced Emerson in a way that though he required personally their submission, he was a prominent advocate of women's rights and became the Vice President of New England Women's Suffrage Union. In his lecture, *Woman*, at the Women's Rights Convention that took place in Boston on September 20th 1855, he underlined that "women are, by this and social influence, the civilizers of mankind" and he continued showing the importance of women in various societies in paragraph 13 of the same text:

And in every remarkable religious development in the world, women have taken a leading part. It is very curious that in the East, where Woman occupies, nationally, a lower sphere, where the laws resist the education and emancipation of women,--in the Mohammedan faith, Woman yet occupies the same leading position, as a prophetess..."¹¹⁴

As far as literary aspects are concerned, Emerson used metaphors related to his idea that language reflects physical images and spiritual ideas. The basic constituents of nature that he most refers to are water, light and fire. In his notes Cliff explains that Emerson attributes to water several meanings among which there are the basic concepts of independence, transcendence and spiritual insight. Cliff

¹¹⁴ R Waldo Emerson, *Woman*, a lecture read at the Women's Rights Convention in Boston on Sept. 20, 1855 in <http://transcendentalism-legacy.tamu.edu/authors/emerson/essays/woman.html>

traces this in *Nature* when Emerson asks, "Who looks upon a river in a meditative hour and is not reminded of the flux of all things?" The flowing river not only reminds the thoughtful person of the ongoing flow of time, it is a figure for the passing days of an individual's life. And he continues with other examples from *Nature* such as

The only mode of obtaining an answer to these questions of the senses is to forego all low curiosity, and, accepting the tide of being which floats us into the secret of nature, work and live, work and live, and all unawares the advancing soul has built and forged for itself a new condition, and the question and the answer are one. ¹¹⁵

On the other hand, light and fire are associated with strong feelings and transcendent illumination. Cliff shows that Emerson points to this in *The Over-Soul*

But the soul that ascends to worship the great God is plain and true; has no rose-color, no fine friends, no chivalry, no adventures; does not want admiration; dwells in the hour that now is, in the earnest experience of the common day, — by reason of the present moment and the mere trifle having become porous to thought and bilulous of the sea of light. ¹¹⁶

In other cases, Emerson resorts to questions in *The American Scholar* such as in paragraph seven about the scholar and further down about books:

Him nature solicits with all her placid, all her monitory pictures; him the past instructs; him the future invites. Is not, indeed, every man a student, and do not all things exist for the student's behoof? And, finally, is not the true scholar the only true master? ...Books are the best of things, well

¹¹⁵Cliff notes, *R. Waldo Emerson*, <http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/e/emersons-essays/critical-essays/emersons-use-of-metaphor>

¹¹⁶ Ibid

used; abused, among the worst. What is the right use? What is the one end, which all means go to effect?"¹¹⁷

The same style is used in the introduction of *Nature* when Emerson attempts to suggest an alternative to previous conceptions:

The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs?¹¹⁸

Conclusion

Nineteenth century Romanticism and Transcendentalism formed only part of the literary American society, it can be seen as an attempt to balance between the traditionally-based conception of Puritan society and the newly-emerging and attractive materialist conception of society.

¹¹⁷ Emerson, *The American Scholar*, paragraph 7

¹¹⁸ Emerson, *Nature*, Introduction.

General Conclusion

Since literature can be considered as a mirror of the society in which it is produced, it is possible to say that it expresses the changes within it and at the same time it undergoes itself changes in the themes it deals with as well as in the forms of writing. The literary works examined in this study can attest of this rule.

The new European settlements in America, initially based on Puritan values, had to face like in other areas, changes all along their development due to the emergence of new ideas putting into question the supremacy of Puritan theological and political doctrines during the first three centuries of their existence, which are covered under this study. In fact, Calvinistic theocracy of the seventeenth century had to meet the challenges of a Deist aristocracy in the following century before witnessing the emergence of democratic Transcendentalism half a century later.

The first trend represented people who viewed themselves as having a divine mission, and this was reflected in the sermons, diaries, journals and poetry in the form narratives and symbols. Their writings could be considered as an interpretation of the colonial American society before the Enlightenment Period on one hand, and the reflections of an ideal on the other. The few writers chosen for this purpose, Winthrop, Bradstreet and Rowlandson can constitute a true sample of the prevailing literary trend at that time, with the Bible, being a source of reference and expressed in symbols. Almost everything revolved around God, and whatever the circumstance God had to be praised. The style which critics characterized as a plain style was used to communicate information, teaching thus Christian values and not for entertainment.

As change is inherent to human society, the Age of Puritan supremacy was gradually put into question by the makers and advocates of the eighteenth century Enlightenment. Some of the latter tried to balance between Puritan idealism and the new age of reason. Cotton Mather and Benjamin Franklin could represent such trend and show Puritan influence in their writings.

Since the door for further exploration and scientific progress was to remain open and never shut and unlocked, spiritualism had to fight the strongly emerging materialism of the nineteenth century. This was the case of a number of intellectuals forming part of the Transcendentalist movement, whose representative, Waldo Emerson was the case study.

It is quite interesting to notice that the initial forms of writings consisting primarily of exploration reports, description of society with reference to first personal pronoun, sermons, poetry, included gradually narratives, essays and novels. A more noticeable factor was the increasing number of writers all along the three centuries, especially that of women, influenced by theological issues and advocating Puritan values as the case of Bradstreet and Rowlandson. It should be noted that the writing style was inspired partly from biblical writings, and then became a little bit more complex. This can only apply to the texts that have been examined. Further research as regard the writing styles during this period will be desirable so as to compare them with the subsequent ones.

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