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The Eighteenth Century Recap: 1700-1720

Among the many events and ideas that defined the early 18th century, a few are notable in how they affected the Puritan movement: social life in England and the English church, the Calico Acts, the raid on Deerfield in America, and the direction of the church in New England. Some of these things, such as the Deerfield raid, directly impacted the Puritan movement, while others simply shaped the direction of society and indirectly influenced Puritan life.

Queen Anne ascended to the throne in 1702 and reigned until her death in 1714. She was a Protestant queen, and many of her actions reflected Queen Elizabeth's prior reign. The church in England was largely Protestant at this time, although the church was not vibrant. Everyone was expected to attend the Sunday services, but there was no life in those services. They were read the same way every week. The clergy remained separate from the people, not particularly caring for the members of their congregation, and the chaplain was generally looked down upon. Despite this, the church was intent on driving out Roman Catholicism. They annually celebrated the ascension of Queen Elizabeth to the throne, working avidly to protect the Protestant movement from Catholicism. They had experienced that in the past, most recently with King James II, and did not want to experience it again. Though the church at this time was lifeless, they held fast to their Protestant principles.

The popularity of books and essays grew during this time period, especially from the

works of Addison and Steel, which created “first a reading, then a thinking people” (Ashton 293). There were many expansive libraries, and a growth of literary curiosity. The *Daily Courant* was the first daily newspaper, and was established within days of Queen Anne’s ascension to the throne. Many of the papers during this time had a short circulation period as a result of rising taxes, but a few, such as the *Daily Courant*, the *London Gazette*, and the *Spectator*, persisted. The press gained a lot of power and influence over this time period as well.

The Calico Acts of 1700 and 1721 attempted to protect the weavers and wool spinners in Europe from going out of business and to create a monopoly on imported products from India to increase British wealth. Cotton calicoes from India were widely popular in the European countries, but their popularity was causing the wool fabric industry in London to collapse. The first Calico Act, which aimed to prevent Asian commerce in Europe (though not in the American colonies), was mostly unsuccessful, as pirates and others found ways around the laws to trade goods directly to the colonies. The second Calico Act, rather than addressing the problems with the East India Company, attacked the consumers of calico for putting the weavers out of work. This second act banned goods from India to anyone in London, but made those same products available to the American colonies only once they had passed through London, by way of the East India Company. These acts displayed a growing differentiation of the European colonies from the American colonies, specifically in how they dealt with foreign commerce.

In America, the raid on Deerfield in 1704 influenced the Puritan movement directly from the resulting Puritan Captivity Narratives. Some Frenchmen and Native Americans assembled to raid the New England town, and brought nearly one hundred captives back to Canada. Some of the captives died on the journey back and some were integrated into French or Native

communities, but most of them returned to New England. Three notable captives were John Williams and his children Stephen and Eunice. John Williams wrote his narrative, *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion*, as a *Pilgrim's-Progress*-style story of a journey home which was only fruitful once he surrendered his sorrows and internal struggles to God. The purpose of the Puritan Captivity Narratives was to display examples of God's providence in difficult times and to warn of God's punishment for disobedience. Increase and Cotton Mather wanted to publish the narratives as support for the idea that God was on the side of the Puritans, sustaining them through their settling of New England in America. Eventually, the Deerfield raid narratives took on more moral and political rather than religious functions, as ways to promote defending against enemies and preserving New England heritage rather than to promote Protestant Christianity and God's sovereignty. Nonetheless, the Puritan Captivity Narratives produced from the Deerfield raid were instrumental to the Puritan movement.

The church in New England experienced a period of "Anglicization" at the beginning of the 18th century, influenced by the developments in England, yet still referring to the foundation of the church expressed in the New England covenants. The third-generation Puritans began to emphasize moral virtue and piety in addition to traditional Congregationalist values, which was an important element of Puritan thought in the time of Jonathan Edwards. They wanted to keep in step with the times, while also holding fast to original Puritan ideas and preserving their past.

Ultimately, these developments in the early 18th century helped to shape the direction of the Puritan movement in later centuries, as they continued to proclaim the justice, sovereignty, and grace of God.

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