

# religion in colonial american literature essay sample

[Religion](#)



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## Abstract

This paper tells about religion and the major role it played during the Colonial Era. You will read about three men who were instrumental in establishing different religious beliefs. The three men are William Bradford, John Winthrop, and Cotton Mather. These men help produce evidence of the bond of religion to early American life. This paper examines the word pilgrim and puritan to help better understand their origins. Religion in Colonial American Literature

As people immigrated to America from England, they brought their religious ideals with them. These strong religious beliefs are evident in the writings of Colonial American literature. Religion affected all aspects of life, and literature serves to provide evidence of the bond of religion to early American life colonial literature written in simple and expressive style presents history of Colonial times, rules to live by according to pilgrim and puritan ideals and the punishment that goes along with violating these ideals. Religion in England during the early 1600s followed King James' Protestant ideas yet remained very similar to Catholicism. Religion was governed by the state, and citizens were expected to follow state religion under the rule of King James. Some people disagreed with King James interpretation of the bible and his religion and decided to flee England.

These people traveled to America among them was William Bradford. Bradford and the pilgrims arrived in America in 1620. They were united by their strong religious beliefs and the desire to live in a community free of the religious persecution they would have suffered in England for their beliefs.

The Pilgrims separated from the protestant religion of England, but others  
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would follow them to the New World who held on to the Biblical teachings of the church. The Puritans agreed with the pilgrims that Protestantism was too closely related to Catholicism and should be purified. Ten years after the first pilgrims arrived in America John Winthrop and the Puritans landed in the Massachusetts Bay colony (PBS2012) Puritan life strictly followed the teachings of the Bible and the community followed the English practice of combined church and state. Examples of Religion in Colonial Literature

In "Of Plymouth Plantation" William Bradford writes about his experience traveling to the new world and early colonial life in America. His commentary shares views of the separatist religious beliefs. Bradford offers examples of "God's providence and when God intercedes to assist the pilgrims on their way, such as when sailors who mistreat them are punished through illness or death. "There was a proud and very profane man.... he would...condemning the poor people. But it please God. To smile this young man with a grievous disease" (Baym, 2008, p61, para1) Bradford goes on to write "praise the Lord because his his good, and his mercies endure forever, let them which have been redeemed of the Lord, show how he hath deliver the them from the hand of the oppressor"(Baym, 2008. p61; para1) Even Bradford is name for the people "pilgrim" offers religious connotations because pilgrim is known as someone who journeys out of religious devotion (Dictionary. comLLC, 2013) Bradford's account includes numerous religious reference.

"A Model of Christian Charity" By: John Winthrop

John Winthrop also includes many religious passages in his literary works. On the journey to America Winthrop offered "A Model of Christian Charity" as a sermon of expectations for the puritans in the New World? This Sermon reminds the people of their obligations to God. Winthrop writes "there are to two rules whereby we are to walk one toward another, justice and mercy. The moral law or the law of the Gospel"(Baym, 2008p. 77 para2) Winthrop's writing offers examples of Puritan beliefs, such as that human exist to serve God, the Bible provides proof of God's will, provides proof of God's will, predestination original sin, and that good can be accomplished with hard work and sacrifice. John Winthrop provides readers with an interesting view of puritanism in America.

#### "Wonders of the Invisible World"

Another Puritan who includes religion in his writing was Cotton Mather. Mather served as a pastor in the second church of Boston (Baym, 2008) although he wrote many sermons, and theological works, he is best known for his historical accounts of the Salem witch trials. In Mather's "The Wonders of the Invisible World" Mather shares his views of the battle between god and the devil for his people. Mather writes "the new Englanders are a people of god settled in those which were once the devils territories (Baym, 2008. p144para3) Cotton Mather gives a historic account of the witch trials relating how these people were influenced by the Devil as witches to do his bidding. Martha Carrier was indicted for the bewitching of certain persons" (baym, 2008. p146 para3) He concludes his writing in "The Trial of Martha Carrier" with Martha Carrier was a person of whom confessions of the witches. Agreed that the devil had promised her she

should be Queen of the Hebrew” (Baym, 2008. p149 para2) Mather’s religious views are evident in his writing which were frequently seen in colonial literature. Colonial Literature was also dominated by religious influence. The formats for these writings were theological studies, hymns, biographies and autobiographies.

## References

Baym, N (Ed) (2008) The Norton Anthology of American Literature Dictionary.  
comLLC (2013)  
PBS (2012) God in America.

Note: [Place all tables for your paper in a tables section, following references (and, if applicable, footnotes). Start a new page for each table, include a table number and table title for each, as shown on this page. All explanatory text appears in a table note that follows the table, such as this one. Use the Table/Figure style, available on the Home tab, in the Styles gallery, to get the spacing between table and note. Tables in APA format can use single or 1.5 line spacing. Include a heading for every row and column, even if the content seems obvious. A default table style has been setup for this template that fits APA guidelines. To insert a table, on the Insert tab, click Table.] Figures

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