

How did religious beliefs justify and disrupt the inherited social order

[Religion](#)



How did religious beliefs justify and disrupt the inherited social order? How were religion and ity intertwined and/or opposed? what effect did religion have on the development of Colonial America?

Natural law and free will conjoin in Enlightenment thought to form the basis for the ideals of democracy such as liberty, equality, and justice in Colonial America. The Protestant Reformation movement and Anglicanism questioned the most sacred aspects of Papal authority and Catholic theological interpretation, thereby encouraging a spirit of reform in Europe that led to the further questioning of royal hierarchies in feudalism. The social order changed for the Germans and the English when they were free to practice their own interpretation of Christianity without allegiance to Rome, and this transition from the Middle Ages to the Era of Enlightenment also gave birth to a new social order based in democratic theory. Nevertheless, it is also clear that many of the early American settlers such as the Puritans and Pilgrims experienced persecution in Europe for their religious beliefs, even in reformed communities. Thus, religious freedom became an important aspect of human rights, civil liberties, and natural law as something that required specific protection that could only be achieved by limiting State power in the ideals of the Founding Fathers.

The theological doctrine of free will in Christianity is a fundamental prerequisite for the democratic ideals that define humanism in Enlightenment thought, as freedom is viewed as a natural and God-given right that exists under divine law where the State does not exist or assert arbitrary control. Whereas royal rule is inherently justified by a religious theology or priest class in establishing hierarchies of power, democracy

emerged from many theorists such as the Founding Fathers of America who had converted to Protestant faiths independently of their own volition and who held their own egalitarian theologies. This shows the unified manner in which scientific rationalism progressively reformed religion and the foundation of the modern State itself. The Puritans' theological disagreements with James I and Anglicanism are also historically related to political reform and the freedom to express religious faith independent of State authority or interference. Psychologically, it is possible that those who would convert to a reformed version of Christianity would also be attracted to democratic theory where it targeted the royal authority that also persecuted these groups. While Benjamin Franklin's Quaker faith is well known for its pacifist basis, the majority of the Founding Fathers in America held Protestant or reformed church viewpoints while simultaneously positing scientific rationalism and democracy. In their writings, they saw no distinction between their faith, morality, and values.

Nevertheless, the lessons of the Reformation in religious persecution in Europe and the belief of the Founding Fathers in the individual right to choose a religious viewpoint free from the dictates of the State or national authority caused them to focus on religious freedom by building a " wall of separation" between the church and State. (Concordat Watch, 2011) The degree to which this has been successful is questionable, as the Judaeo-Christian moral framework remains the essential basis of common law. The evolution of democracy in America can be seen as a type of secularization of Judaeo-Christian values into law through a scientific process of averaging votes, building coalitions, parties, and movements in forming a social

consensus on values. Cotton Mather's ability to motivate his crowd through religious fervor is seen repeatedly in the Evangelical Christian movement as a type of social archetype, and this is little different from the effect that leaders such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson have had on politics in recent history. Scientific rationalism in America has evolved to be the dominant mainstream viewpoint by majority consensus in a pluralistic modern society, but it was clearly a progressive development which was won through a political struggle with people motivated by religious values, morality, and passions.

Sources Cited:

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