
Questions

1. What was the context in which Mather understood the measles epidemic? What lessons did he draw from his family's affliction?
2. How did Mather respond to deaths and the prospect of death within his household? Did he respond differently as a father and as a pastor?
3. Would it surprise you to learn that in the midst of his family's distress Mather found the time to write and publish a medical pamphlet on measles? Why or why not? Mather's chief instruction to caregivers was patient submission and liberal doses of tea and honey. Was this medical or religious advice? Explain.

Questions for Further Thought

1. Some historians argue that the Puritans left a lasting mark on American culture, one that persists to the present day. From your reading of Documents 2-6 through 2-9, what particulars of the Puritan legacy can you identify?
2. Based on your knowledge of other colonial experiments in the Americas, was Puritan New England unique in its emphasis on religion as the guiding force in building a society?
3. Was Puritanism a positive or negative force in the life of the family? Explain.

The Eastern Indians' New World

Even before they began their trek across the Atlantic, European settlers conceived of the New World as a wilderness largely devoid of inhabitants. They were wrong, of course; but the indigenous inhabitants of the Chesapeake and New England colonies made much less intensive use of the land than did Europeans, a fact attributed by Europeans to their want of "civilization." Having marginalized the natives in their minds, the settlers proceeded to marginalize the Indians in fact, swamping the land with ever-growing numbers of people. Natives occasionally fought back, most fiercely in the cases of Opecananough's war on the Virginia colony in 1622 and Metacom's war on the New Englanders in 1675–1676; but such resistance invariably ended in failure and brutal suppression by the Europeans.

Most native peoples lived initially beyond direct contact with Europeans, but few escaped the consequences of their arrival. European diseases devastated Indian peoples and forced many to abandon their traditional communities and join other tribes. As Indians entered into the fur trade with Europeans, game became depleted and warfare between tribes became more common, fundamentally altering the Indian way of life. Finally, as Europeans penetrated into the interior, those natives who did not flee westward found themselves living among strangers in a land no longer their own, one in which they increasingly were forced to follow alien rules.

2-10 But What Warrant Have We to Take That Land? (1629)

John Winthrop

As John Winthrop wrestled with the question of whether to join the proposed colony of Massachusetts Bay, he committed his thoughts to paper, circulating them among his associates. These statements, which exist in several versions, are remarkable expositions of both the motives impelling Puritans to leave their homeland and the purposes to which

they wished to put what they termed the American wilderness. One objection to their scheme concerned their right to invade a land already occupied by others. Winthrop's response to this objection sets forth, with standard Puritan logic, the dominant view of the English toward the native inhabitants.

Source: From John Winthrop, General Considerations for the Plantation in New England, with an Answer to Several Objections in Eighteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology (Washington, D.C., 1899).

Obj. 5. But what warrant have we to take that land, which is and hath been of long tyme possessed of others the sons of Adam?

Ans. That which is common to all is proper to none. This savage people ruleth over many lands without title or property; for they inclose no ground, neither have they cattell to maintayne it, but remove their dwellings as they have occasion, or as they can prevail against their neighbours. And why may not christians have liberty to go and dwell amongst them in their waste lands and woods (leaving them such places as they have manured for their corne) as lawfully as Abraham did among the Sodomites? For God hath given to the sons of men a twofould right to the earth; there is a naturall right and a civil right. The first right was naturall when men held the earth in common, every man sowing and feeding where he pleased: Then, as men and cattell increased, they appropriated some parcells of ground by enclosing and peculiar manurance, and this in tyme got them a civil right. Such was the right which Ephron the Hittite had to the field of Machpelah, wherein Abraham could not bury a dead corpse without leave,

though for the out parts of the cuntry which lay common, he dwelt upon them and tooke the fruite of them at his pleasure. This appears also in Jacob and his sons, who fedd their flocks as bouldly in the Canaanites land, for he is said to be lord of the country; and at Dotham and all other places men accounted nothing their owne, but that which they had appropriated by their own industry, as appears plainly by Abimelech's servants, who in their own cuntry did often contend with Isaac's servants about wells which they had digged; but never about the lands which they occupied. So likewise betweene Jacob and Laban; he would not take a kidd of Laban's without speciall contract; but he makes no bargaine with him for the land where he fedd. And it is probable that if the cuntry had not been as free for Jacob as for Laban, that covetuous wretch would have made his advantage of him, and have upbraided Jacob with it as he did with the rest. 2dly, There is more than enough for them and us. 3dly, God hath consumed the natives with a miraculous plague, whereby the greater part of the country is left voide of inhabitants. 4thly, We shall come in with good leave of the natives.

Questions

1. By what right does Winthrop believe the English settlers are entitled to the Indians' lands? What authority does Winthrop invoke?
2. What attitudes toward the Native Americans does Winthrop exhibit? Do you think that these attitudes were typical of all English settlers? Explain.
3. Winthrop (a lawyer) argues that there are two different rights to the use of land: a "natural" right and a "civil" right. What does he mean by this, and how does it affect his response to the question in the title of this document?

2-11 Puritan Attack on the Pequots at Mystic River (1637)

John Underhill

The rapid growth of the colonial settlements in New England initiated a series of contests for land and dominion, pitting the English against the local Indians and altering relations among the natives themselves. The Pequot War in 1637 was the first major conflict involving the Puritan military forces and one of the most powerful Indian tribes of the region. Open warfare had actually begun in September of 1636, when Captain John Endicott, commanding some ninety Massachusetts volunteers, destroyed the Pequot community on Block Island (off the Rhode Island coast). Minor retaliatory skirmishes set in motion plans for a full-scale assault against the Pequots. In April 1637, after securing an alliance with the Narragansetts, another of the powerful New England tribes, the provincial