William Bradford vs. Jonathan EDWARDS:
Attitudes and Relationships with Native Americans

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There are many authors who talked about the native Americans. William Bradford and Jonathan Edwards were one of them who wrote about the native Americans. Both the writers wrote about the native Americans in different perspective. The fabrication of the Native American image in the culture of white Americans began around the 1820s. It was then that the national feelings associated with the Indians turned into a kind of schizophrenic description that continues to flourish to this day. Jonathan Edwards was the exact opposite of William Bradford. William Bradford.

The main positions of William Bradford and Jonathan Edwards is occupied by two opposite stereotypes: “noble savage” (friendly, spiritual, mystical keeper of the earth, living in harmony with the world around him) and “low-lying savage” (marauder and bloody murderer, demon of hell in the flesh, scalping women and children. After subjugations: thief, hopeless drunkard, beggar and lazy man living on government handouts). At first, the stereotype about the “noble savage” was developed in Europe, and then in the USA, in those areas where the “Indian problem” was solved. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) is generally known as America’s best theologian. He is a theologian pastor and American metaphysician and a missionary to Native Americans. Like an important personality in the religious lifetime of the colonial period, he was a multi-layered philosopher, a full statement of the thoughts of which has not yet been written. Many consider him to be a thunder puritan, a preacher of fire and sulfur, depicting humanity as a spider hanging on a thin drift on the fires of hell. Although scientists long ago familiar that Edwards had one of the most imaginative and influential minds on US territory, most of them believed he was joyful to send the whole biosphere to hell (Edwards,1835).

Shortly after the arrival of the “separatists” in America, William Bradford was elected Plymouth settlers in a colony in Massachusetts Bay - their governor. He was a deeply religious man who had mastered many sciences on his own, had learned several languages, including Hebrew, in order “to see with his own eyes the ancient prophecies of the Lord in their primeval beauty.” The fact that he emigrated to Holland and was among the first settlers who arrived in Plymouth on the ship “Mayflower”, as well as the fact that he served as governor, made him perfect for the role of the first historian of the colony (Bangs, 2019).

 The Manifesto of Destiny drove off to the west, and where the Indians were defeated and did not pose a threat, they could be used to sculpt bright and unusual images. Recently, the caricature of the “low savage” emerges when the Indians begin to assert their rights, such as in the northern part of Wisconsin and Michigan, where indigenous peoples defended their right to harpoon fish or when the Indians began to pursue some economic and political success with casino revenues. Modern white Americans are angry at the Indians, when they do not fit into the image of a “noble savage” that they romanticize and foully transform it into a “low savage”. Anyway, both stereotypes depict Indians childishly naive, primitive and always different from any other race.

The Puritans were the first to speak about the “low savages” when they were in a dangerous position at the beginning of the colonization period. Pilgrims wintered on board the Meiflower, after their arrival in New England in 1620. William Bradford in Plymouth Plantation wrote: “They peered into a wild desert area full of animals and wild people, without even realizing how many of them are hiding there.” Bradford wrote about the first contacts that the savages constantly “hide” and steal tools, at the first opportunity. Soon, through the English-speaking Squanto, they became acquainted with Massasoit, the great Wampanoag sachem with whom they signed a peace treaty in 1621. This fragile peace lasted until 1661. Massasoitt died, and Wamsutta son of the Sachem, took his place.

Jonathan Edwards was the exact opposite of William Bradford. William Bradford, in fact, did not have a formal education; Edwards was a highly educated man. William Bradford acted in obedience to inner insight; Edwards connected his life with law and authorities. Edwards is known as the author of the fulfilled power and sacred horror of the sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (1741):

Edwards' sermons made the deepest impression on the flock, forcing the congregation to cry hysterically. However, their prolonged impact was the opposite - the grotesque cruelty of the sermons repelled the flock from Calvinism, which Edwards so valiantly defended. Dogmatic, in the spirit of the Middle Ages, Edwards's sermons no longer corresponded to the way of life of the colonists in the 18th century, who came to know relative peace and prosperity. After Edwards, fresh, liberal attitudes characterized by toleration are gaining momentum.

 To conclude, Both the writers wrote about the native Americans in different perspective. Both authors did best in explaining the roles of the native Americans people in US. Both were excellent writers, but at the same time they stand, as it were, at the opposite poles of the religious experience of the colonies. A heightened sense of duty and a strict puritan entourage led Edwards to defend Calvinism, in its harsh and uncompromising form, from liberalism that gradually began to flourish at that time. Without knowing it, they had come to constitute the matrix nucleus of a great nation for the civilized world.

References

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