



## Religion & Reason: The Puritan Discussion in Eighteenth-Century Colonial New England

Complete the table below to help you parse the various positions of the Puritan thinkers. Several are done as examples.

PURITAN THINKERS	STATEMENT from sermon or essay	POSSIBLE RESPONSE from another Puritan thinker	
Rev. Cotton Mather	"Philosophy [i.e., science] is no Enemy but a mighty and wondrous Incentive to Religion."	Response from: <i>Rev. Thomas Prince</i>	<i>Perhaps, but man should not use his knowledge of God's natural laws to obstruct God's will, as may be the case with lightning rods.</i>
Rev. Benjamin Colman	"God deals with us as rational Creatures: And if Sinners would but hearken to Reason they would repent."	Response from:	
Rev. Andrew Eliot	"There is nothing in Christianity that is contrary to reason. God never did, He never can, authorize a religion opposite to it, because this would be to contradict himself."	Response from:	
Rev. Samuel Langdon	"Reason is his [God's] law given to man, indelibly imprinted on his mind . . ."	Response from:	
Rev. James Allin	". . . to resolve all events into natural Causes is derogatory to the Honour of GOD, and the direct Course to banish all Religion out of the World"	Response from:	
Rev. Thomas Prince	". . . what we call the <i>Laws of Nature</i> are only the usual Methods in which [God] is pleased to Work in the World"	Response from: <i>Rev. Thomas Paine</i>	<i>True, but we must remember that God can and does act outside his own laws of nature — "super"-naturally — to send messages to man.</i>
Prof. John Winthrop	"[Although earthquakes] may justly be regarded as the tokens of an incensed DEITY; yet it can by no means be concluded from hence, that they are not of real and standing advantage of the globe <i>in general</i> ."	Response from: <i>Rev. Cotton Mather</i>	<i>Earthquakes occur <u>only</u> as the result of man's sinfulness. They are warnings from God. While they follow his laws of nature, they never produce beneficial results in the natural world, only in the souls of men who repent.</i>
Add statements from texts by Puritans and other Protestant thinkers in #6: Science, and #7: Health, e.g.:			
Rev. Increase Mather	On the morality of smallpox inoculation: "[People] not only may use the method of inoculation to save their lives, but they even <i>ought to do it</i> , if they can. They keep not in good terms with the Sixth Commandment if they do it not."	Response from:	
		Response from:	
		Response from:	