Religious Migration History and Genealogy

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At the end of class each student should be able to:

I. Explain why studying religious migrations is worthwhile.
   A. To learn the place of origin (a key to extending the pedigree).
   B. To construct more complete and accurate genealogies.
   C. To aid the study of the family in community context.
   D. To learn biographical details to add richness and depth to family histories.

II. Describe how European religious events influenced the religion of your ancestors.
   A. European Religions in 1560 (at the dawn of the exploration and settlement of America).
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      2. B.C. Jews spread in Roman Empire, 300s Germany, 1096 East Europe.
      3. 313 Constantine allows Christianity in Rome—what became the Roman Catholic faith.
      4. 330 Moves capitolin of Roman Empire to Constantinople—leads to Eastern Orthodox faith.
      5. 988 Vladimir I of Kiev officially adopts Christianity—starting Russian Orthodox Church.
   B. Events that led to various Jewish, Catholic, and Orthodox denominations in America.
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      4. 988 Vladimir I of Kiev officially adopts Christianity—starting Russian Orthodox Church.
   C. Events that led to various Protestant denominations in America.
      1411 John Huss of Prague burned—leads to Moravians and Protestantism.
      1453 Constantinople falls to Islam; 1492 Spain expels Islam.
      1525 First Lutheran ordination at Wittenberg Germany.
      1531 Instead of Pope, King Gustav I appoints first Swedish Lutheran archbishop.
      1532-1535 Münster Germany Anabaptist Rebellion leads to Mennonites/Amish.
      1534 Separation Act (Henry VIII turns England to Church of England/Episcopalian).
      1540 John Calvin’s Reformed Consistory (religious court) in Geneva Switzerland.
      1559 first French Reformed (Huguenot) Synod formed in Paris.
      1560 John Knox leads Scotland Parliament to embrace Calvinist Presbyterian Church.
      1559-1625 Puritans push for radical anti-Catholic reform of Church of England.
      1608 Pilgrims see no hope of reforming Church of England and move to Netherlands.
      1648 England Quakers break off from Puritans.
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III. Explain how trees, mountains, rivers, ports, and roads affected migration.
   A. Forest provided lumber, and blocked travel. Plains had scarce water, no lumber.
   B. Northern North America geography.
      2. Waterways: St. Lawrence, Great Lakes, Niagara River (and other connecting Great Lakes), Hudson, Richelieu, Ohio, Mississippi, Missouri, North Platte.
      4. Roads: 1690 Halifax/Grand Communication Route, 1755 Braddock’s, 1758 Forbes’ Rd.
   C. Southern North America geography.
      3. Waterways: Ohio, Mississippi, Arkansas, Missouri-North Platte.
IV. Briefly describe the immigration history of your ancestor’s religious group.

A. Map: Predominant religions of some early American settlers.20

B. Some early migration failures (no known descendants who stayed in America).

Spain (Catholic): Pensacola 1559; Virginia Jesuits 1570.21
France: (Huguenot) 1564 Jacksonville FL; (Catholic) 1598 Sable Is.; 1604 St Croix Is.22
Britain (Episcopalian): 1586 & 1587 Roanoke Island, NC 1&2; 1607 Popham, ME.23

C. Earliest successful colonies (living descendants in America).

1519 map shows Newfoundland to ME seasonal fishing villages (unofficial colonies) of England, France, and Portugal.
1583 St. John Newfoundland became the 1st official English colony.24
1520-1521 Spanish (Roman Catholics) conquer Mexico.25
1565 Spanish kill Huguenots & build St. Augustine, 1598 Santa Fe, 1716 Nacogdoches.26
1599 French (Catholics) build trading post at Tadoussac; 1605 Port Royal; 1608 Quebec;
Later: 1634 Green Bay; 1699 Biloxi, 1750 Erie PA; 1754 Pittsburgh, 1764 St. Louis.27
1607 English (Episcopalian) settle at Jamestown; 1610 Cuper’s Cove, Newfoundland;
1620 Pilgrims at Plymouth; 1630 Puritans at Massachusetts Bay.28
1624 Netherlands (Dutch Reformed) settle NYC-Albany, NJ-CT; 1674 conquered by Engl.29
1638 New Sweden (Lutheran) settles lower Delaware River; 1655 conquered by Neth.30
1670 British Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) established; 1682 York Factory settled.31
1784 Russians (Russian Orthodox) settle Kodiak, Alaska.32

D. Catholics: wherever Spanish/French settled; and 1634 Maryland.33

1. Spanish colonies: 1565 St. Augustine FL, 1598 Santa Fe NM, 1716 Natchitoches TX.34
2. French colonies: 1699 Biloxi, 1701 Detroit, 1702 Mobile, 1715 Natchitoches, 1716
Natchez, 1718 New Orleans, 1754 Pittsburgh, 1764 Acadians in LA, 1764 St. Louis.35

E. Episcopalians: 1607 Virginia, and North Carolina.36

F. Huguenots (French Reformed)/Dutch Reformed/Ger. Reformed (settled with Lutherans).

1. Huguenots first to Ger, Eng, Neth.; 1620 Chesterfield & Powhatan Co VA; 1624 New
Netherlands; 1678 New Pfalz NY from Mannheim Ger.; bef. 1685 Charleston SC & Edict of Nantes revoked; 1689 La Rochelle, NY; 1700 Manakintown VA; 1704 Bath NC.37
2. Dutch Reformed 1628 New Netherlands.38

G. New England: 1620 Pilgrims; 1630 Puritan Great Migration (Congregationalists).39

H. Lutherans: 1638 New Sweden; 1682 PA; Midwest; 1763-1874 Russia invites Germans with tax, religion, military breaks—after 1874 to ND, SD, plains, Manitoba, Saskatchewan.40

J. Baptists: 1639 Roger Williams RI, growth slow; 1680s Philadelphia attracts Baptists from RI, Ireland, Wales and becomes the focus of strength; 1707 Philadelphia Baptist Assoc.; 1740s-1750s due to Great Awakening many Congregationalists convert; New England converts go to rural South: 1758 form Sandy Creek NC Assoc.; 1764 Brown University in RI; 1776 church/state separation doctrine makes Baptists popular after the Revolution.41

K. Quakers: 1656 2 Quaker women missionaries from Barbados to Boston, imprisoned, books burned; deported back to Barbados; More came, imprisoned, deported; MA laws fined ships bringing Quakers; Quakers built own ship - arrived in RI 1657; 1659-61 4 hang in MA; almost lost charter; 1657 Flushing NY 1st petition after flogging; 1661 VA expels burgess for loving Quakers; 1670 parts of NJ sold to 2 Quakers; 1672 George Fox visits RI to NC; 1682 William Penn gathers Quakers, Mennonites, Lutherans from Emden Germany to settle PA & East NJ.42

L. Hutterites/Mennonites/Amish: 1683 Wm Penn brought German and Swiss Mennonites/Amish to Germantown PA; 1800s Mennonites took up frontier OH IN VA NC MO ONT; After 1865 Germans-from-Russia Mennonites to KS NE SD; After 1918 Germans-from-Russia Mennonites to Saskatchewan; Amish are conservative Mennonites; Hutterites are
Swiss from Russia who settled SD in 1879 & spread to ND MT Manitoba and Alberta.43

M. Presbyterians/Scots: 1640 Southampton Long Island, NY 1st church; 1683 Francis Makemie arrives from Ireland and begins work in East NJ; 1684-1686 Stuarts Town SC wiped out; 1706 1st presbytery in Philadelphia; 1735 Darian GA; 1746 Log College slowly evolves into Princeton University; many Scots-Irish Presbyterians in Appalachian Mountains and Canada.44

N. Moravians: 1735 Savannah R. GA--evicted for pacifism; 1740 to Nazareth PA; 1741 Bethlehem; 1742 mission to NY Indians; 1756 Littitz; 1759 Emmaus; Wachovia NC: 1753 Bethabara, 1759 Bethania, 1766 Salem, 1769 Friedberg, 1772 Friedland, 1775 Hope, 18 states and 3 provinces.45

O. Methodists: 1760s a renewal in Anglican church moves from Engl. to MD/VA where way prepared by Great Awakening; & in cities of middle colonies; 1st churches: 1766 NY, 1768 Philadelphia; 1771 Francis Asbury arrives and sets up HQ in Baltimore; 1773 at 1st conference members in five colonies; 1776 Loyalist ministers leave, forcing Asbury & Americans to work alone; 1784 M.E. Church formed in Baltimore; 1780s frontier circuits in SC, NC, TN, KY, western PA, and New England result in explosive growth.46

P. Jews: 1790 first synagogue in RI; orphanage Charleston 1801; school NYC 1806.47

Q. Latter-day Saints: 1830 Colesville NY to Kirtland OH; 1831 Kirtland OH to Jackson Co. MO; 1838 Fox Islands ME to Nauvoo IL; 1840 Britain/N. Europe; 1842 MS to Nauvoo IL; 1846 MS to Pueblo CO, and Nauvoo IL to Winter Quarters NE; 1847 to SLC; 1847-1877 350 colonies in UT ID WY AZ CA NV CO NM; by 1900 500 including Mexico and Canada.48

V. Describe some characteristics of their religiously motivated immigrant ancestor.
A. Reasons for migration were a mixed: 3Gs = God, glory, gold, plus international rivalry too.
B. The same factors that hindered and helped other migrations influenced religious migrations.
C. Most religions kept detailed records of members and community history.
D. Every migrant brought along his or her religion and culture.
E. Some (e.g. Pilgrims) were motivated by the desire to be part of ideal religious communities.
F. Some like the Huguenots hoped to avoid religious persecution.
G. Many religions started settlements primarily for religious purposes.
1. Moravians, Anabaptists, LDS (communal religions) tended to continue that pattern.
2. The other religions blended into the melting pot more quickly.

VI. Explain principles that help research an ancestor who migrated for religious reasons.
A. Do an exhaustive search. Study entire family during all parts of each family member’s life.49
B. Proximity may imply kinship in tight-knit religions. Study a family in community context:50
1. Study nearby families:
   • in church records as witnesses or godparents
   • in census and land record maps (12 before/after).
2. Study any nearby family with:
   • with similar surnames, or
   • with similar given names
   • with similar origins or occupations.
3. Ignore county/state lines when studying “nearby.”
C. Good documentation (source footnotes) aids in the research of religious migrants. Organize and document AS YOU GO.51
D. All data give clues. Cite more than birth, marriage, & death events on a family group.
E. Correlate ALL records, even non-religious ones, to form a more complete family picture:52
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   • in all jurisdictions
• in all periods of life, and
• in all repositories.

F. When you know where a family settled, you can often deduce their place of origin:
   1. from their neighbors
   2. from geography.

G. You can skillfully interpret the evidence regarding religious migrants only after:
   • an exhaustive search for the entire family
   • all events are properly source footnoted
   • you have correlated all the evidence.

VII. Explain how to find sources about the history and genealogy of religious migrants.

A. Family History Research Wiki:
   • search for phrases like Churches of Ohio or Roman Catholic or Baptist Church in the United States or Wales Church History
   • United States Church Records
     https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_Church_Records
   • Massachusetts (or any other state) Emigration and Immigration
     https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_Emigration_and_Immigration
   • Tracing Immigrant Origins Research Outline

B. Wikipedia
   • British colonization (or Dutch, French, Russian, Scottish, Spanish, or Swedish)
   • Huguenot, Dutch Reformed, Pilgrims, Puritan, Quakers in North America, Hutterite, Mennonite, Amish, Presbyterianism, Moravians (religion), Methodism, or History of Jews in America, Martin Luther, John Calvin, George Fox, or Roger Williams.

C. Family History Library Catalog
   • Place Search: [State] — Church history,
   • Subject Search: [Religion] — [State], e.g. Presbyterians New Jersey


E. Books — See the endnotes of this syllabus.

Homework Assignment
1. Thoroughly research an ancestor who immigrated with a religious group or for primarily religious reasons. Research the family in community context. Document (source footnote) your findings.
2. Write a report comparing and contrasting your ancestor’s migration experience with his religion’s history and the experience his fellow believers of the time. Share the results with your family.

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1 Map adapted from Edward McNall Burns and Philip Lee Ralph World Civilizations, 5th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), 545.
4 “Constantine I.”
34 “Spanish Florida,” and “New Mexico,” and “Nacogdoches . . .”
36 Ahlstrom, 184-92, and Flanders, 53-54.

41 Carroll, 41-42.


46 Carroll, 44-45, 130.


50 Elizabeth Shown Mills, “Censuses: Analysis, Interpretation & Correlation” (lecture presented in Course 4 Advanced Methodology & Evidence, Institute for Genealogical and Historical Research at Samford University, Birmingham, Ala., 13 June 2005), 4M2.

