

## ENDNOTE 8

### About Savages - Noble And Bloody

Despite whatever it may mean today, the old European term *savages* (in English) / *sauvages* (in French), originally meant only people of the wilderness.

Exactly when the Euramerican idea of the *noble* Savage began may be debated, but in the period now called “The Enlightenment”, the *freedom* of *Savagery* became a philosophical contrast to the heavy *restraints* of *Civilization*. In that freedom, the Noble Savage supposedly was naively non-corrupted, in contrast to the sophisticatedly sinister civilized citizen. Both situations were thought to be inevitable. c. 1670, English Poet-Laureate John Dryden perhaps put it most succinctly: “...free as Nature first made man, Ere the base laws of servitude began. When wild in woods the noble savage ran”.

Then the period now called *Romanticism* took the Noble Savage idea to florid heights in literature – perhaps best exemplified in Portland-born Henry W Longfellow’s (1855) epic poem *The Song Of Hiawatha*. It is noteworthy that Longfellow avoided using a New England Indian as his fictional-hero, choosing instead the locale of the Upper Mid-West, but fudging even that by using the actual name of an Iroquoian leader in a Chippewa setting. Make of that whatever you wish, about the Noble Savage idea.

However, many Colonial-Period New England Puritans thought that *Savagery and Bloody Savages* were the Devil’s own contrast to the Puritans’ own Christian Civility. Some Colonial Puritan clergymen (e.g., Cotton Mather) constantly preached countless tales of the “Hellish Perfidy & Butchery” of the Native American freedom-fighters in action against “God’s Chosen People” (the invading Puritans) in New England. Whenever an English captive **stayed with** the Indians **by choice** (instead of returning home when the chance arose), these Puritan clergymen considered it both an affront to God and an indication that all of Puritan New England was being punished by God. Just maybe, the *captives* truly believed that they were *freer* among the **Noble** Savages than they had been in their former Puritan Communities!