

The Puritans

© Rebekah D.

This first website: <http://www.puritansermons.com/banner/hulse1.htm> though I didn't read everything on the webpage, I discovered some interesting facts about Puritans. They really believed in a good education, and many Puritans graduated from Oxford and Cambridge. Unlike the Anabaptists, the Puritans were involved in politics. They also endorsed service in the military to defend one's country. They believed an individual should be involved in all aspects of life. I enjoyed looking at this website, because it showed a side of the Puritans which is not often revealed.

The second website: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/holidays/halloween/features/puritans.html>, had an interview with Dr. Stout of Yale University on the subject of Puritans. The article is very worthwhile to read because it shows different myths that people believe about Puritans. I found that Puritans were actually very thirsty for knowledge- therefore Harvard and Yale Universities were established by them while the colonies were still being built. They taught classes in Latin. Puritans were also very joyful, passionate people with a vision in life, and enjoyed beauty (colorful clothing and houses). I found a lot of interesting facts about them which people tend to ignore.

LECTURE QUESTIONS:

(3) What is your take on the Puritans and the Christian world they created?

Looking at the overall picture, the Puritans certainly seemed to be the right people needed to colonize the United States. Have we ever considered that without an orderly and rigorous system such as those in Puritan colonies, based on morals and values, it would've taken longer for the United States to develop into a nation? Before the colonies, the American continent/region was partially unsettled. If we come to think of it, Puritan contributions to American society are of huge impact even today. The first contribution can be found in the Mayflower Compact. Their initiative in creating the Mayflower Compact was the first step in developing a system of government and democracy.

It was their Biblical principles such as that "all humans are created equal", which was the foundation of many freedoms we enjoy today. Why should we misinterpret their belief in varying degrees of authority (husband to wife, child to parent) as endorsement of superiority and inferiority? The Bible doesn't talk about superiority and inferiority- but about roles in the societal system. Aren't we using the same principles today in everyday relationships (bosses to subordinates, employers to employees, military ranks, president to citizens)? Don't we all expect our children to obey us as their authority?

In fact, Puritans were against inferiority- they left the Anglican Church who believed in hierarchy of bishops and other ministers who were "holier" or "better" than the average person because of their position in the hierarchy.

All the concepts of "human rights", "natural liberty", and separate authority of church and state come from the Puritan belief that they had covenants with God and with each other, as author John Witte, Director of the Center for the Study of Law and Religion at Emory University, said in his book: *God's Joust, God's Justice: Law and Religion in the Western Tradition*. Founding father John Adams himself admired the Puritans for creating an organized structure of pluralism within society, state, and church.

So based on these positive aspects, I think the Christian values that the Puritans brought to America, and the nation they created is worth praising and admiring. Would you all agree? After all, where else in the world would you find a more democratic nation than America?

(4) Were Puritans in your estimation truly reformed or were they civil people pretending to have a covenant with God?

When it comes to the question of being reformed, it depends what definition of reformed we are seeking. Were they reformed Christians? Did they have a reformed society?

If the question is posed at whether they were truly reformed Christians, then the answer is yes.

If the Puritans were not reformed Christians, then who was back then? Both the Anglican and Catholic churches were true to tradition and not into "reformation". Puritans sought a "pure" Christianity, where relationship with God was not based on personal accomplishments, but on true faith in God, like the lecture said.

Therefore, it was on the basis of personal relationship to God that they 'denounced the civil man'. Puritans were not against civility, social order, morality etc. On the contrary- they encouraged that at the horizontal level of interaction. But on the vertical level- God to man- Puritans explained that morality is not enough to bring you in a relationship with a perfect God. Did Puritans ever claim to be perfect? No, but they strived to live better lives in their covenant with God. And I don't think that is condemnable. Because of their lifestyle, they managed to reform society and lead it toward a better government (if anyone wishes to read further about the history of Puritans). We must bear in mind that back then, Europe and England overall were Christian countries. Therefore it was not unusual for the general population to discuss Christian matters, or for the Puritans to apply "Christian" policy in colonial society. The historical context is important in interpretation. Because we live in a post-Christian era, don't we tend to be a little biased toward them? Why do we find it easy to disapprove of the Puritans and stereotype them, but not other historical people groups?