

Puritans essay sample

[Philosophy](#), [Freedom](#)



Introduction

The Puritans refers to a group of religious people who aimed at reforming the church in England. This group was different from that of the Pilgrims that wanted to isolate themselves fully from the English church. The Puritans wanted the way of worship that was very simple. This group was very powerful in England and the majority of them were so much educated merchants and businessmen. The Puritans were more aware that the English church was not operating in accordance with the modern times and thus the group requested for a charter in order to establish Massachusetts Bay Company in the New England (“ The 13 English colonies” 4).

This Puritans group therefore sailed all the way to New England where they established their colony in the region of Massachusetts. The elected governor of this colony was known as John Winthrop. The new governor passed laws without the say from the people and the colonists were heavily taxed. Later, the governor realized the importance of involving the people’s opinion in order to make the government activities to run smoothly. The establishment of Massachusetts Bay Company was under the rule of Winthrop and the other Puritans granted up their assembly so as to govern themselves, and this is called the General Court. The town grew under the leadership of Winthrop and later it was named Boston. The Puritans came to America because they were trying to run away from religious persecution. Winthrop set up the Puritan colony of Massachusetts Bay so as to allow the Puritans freedom of worship and give a godliness example of worship to those living around them (“ The 13 English colonies” 4).

The group landed in America in June 1630, and they were much involved in

the revolution during that time. Their main target was to 'purify' the England church since they believed that all Catholicism traces should be removed in order that the blessings of God are bestowed upon their people. They believed that each person has a personal relationship with God, and thus they wanted to get rid of the hierarchy in the church as well as the rituals performed by pope because they felt it hinders personal and simple Christian faith (qtd. in Polakoff, Rosenberg, Bolton, Story, Schwarz 32). They also believed that leaving England would allow them to establish a colony that would practice the bible teachings by setting up their own form of government, religion, and society (Tuck 2).

Even though the group moved to America to get the freedom to worship, they were not successful because their own government had excessive powers and strict laws that made some of them to depart from the place, for instance, in May 1636, approximately hundred settlers, led by Thomas Hooker (Puritan minister), left the Massachusetts Bay Colony and went to the west settling in Hartford. This was because Hooker felt that the established Puritan government had excessive power. Therefore, Hooker wanted to establish a new government with less strict laws and limited government powers ("The 13 English colonies" 6).

The community is in a position to restrict individuals' right for the better of all the community if such individuals' rights threaten the unity of the community. For instance, Roger Williams, who was one of the settlers disagreeing with the Massachusetts Bay Colony, also believed in toleration of religion. Toleration refers to the willingness to allow others to practice what they believe. In 1635, the Massachusetts court ordered Williams to depart

from the colony because he was seen to be a threat to the government due to its excessive powers, and this was done for the sake of the entire Puritans community. The Massachusetts court was the one established by the Puritans to determine what was good for the entire community. For example, several crimes were punished through the death penalty, and such crimes include witchcraft. Twenty Puritans' women and men were executed as witches in the village of Salem, Massachusetts ("The 13 English colonies" 12). I do believe that individual freedom and individualism are the modern notions because some Puritan rebellious individuals, such as Roger Williams among others, left the community and went ahead to start their own governments in order to give each individual freedom to worship whom they believe and to reduce the excessive powers vested on the government. Later in history, the notion of modernization has become rapid resulting in more freedom to worship, and hence individuals are now free to worship comfortably whom they want. This shows that due to modernity, people have become more informed and thus they can fight for their freedom rights, which include worship and voting. This is illustrated by Roger Williams who later became a missionary in the midst of Massasoit Indians and also began the Baptist Church. His major contribution was to open the minds of the inflexible Puritan teachings, which made some of them to start questioning the biblical interpretations as well as the other teachings summoned by the Puritan ministers (Tuck 4).

I think freedom of religion is a right which must supersede all the other freedoms because individuals have different beliefs and customs without which they cannot be comfortable in life as human beings. This means that

there should be absolute more freedom of religion due to difference of faiths among the individuals. This is because it will cause more harm to the innocent hearts of people when they are forced to believe and worship what they do not want. However, the community can have the right to restrict freedom of religion if such freedom tends to threaten the stability of the community. For instance, when such individual freedom tend to rebel or overthrow the existing government through the expression of what is termed as dangerous opinions or remarks (Tuck 3).

The Puritans did not practice religious freedom because the church of the Puritan was ruling Massachusetts Bay with excessive power. There was no other part in the entire America that had such a strong religious hold on its people as compared to this place. Total power was vested on the Puritan church-state up to the point that no any other citizen may become part of their colony unless the church decides. The magistrates were very powerful men in the Puritan community, and they assisted in the formation of laws in this colony. Because of the use of an extreme inflexible set of guidelines to govern the people, critics of this system started to surface from both the inside and outside the church. The Puritan people lived in a community where the leaders of the church set rules for the entire community and the church. In addition, the same church leaders decided upon the punishments for those committing crimes within the Puritan society (Tuck 3).

Works cited

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