

Puritans college essay



Puritanism is one of the most important aspects of the American culture. Many of this countrys beliefs come from puritanism background. What is Puritanism and the meaning of it in American history? Puritanism is a term that originates from the religious group called the Puritans. They were a denomination formed by the great Protestant Reformation in Europe. They were known as nonconformists and dissenters because of their refusal to submit to the Church of England. Because of this, the Puritans and their theology soon died out in Europe. However, the puritan ideas and beliefs flourished in the New World. Puritanism starts with the theology of the Puritans. First they believed in the sovereignty of God. That is, only God had the highest power or rank. This meant that a man did not have the power to hold authority over other men. In essence, this belief coincides with the concept of the divine nature of kings. The English monarchy wanted its people to believe that the king was appointed by God Himself. Therefore, the king was responsible only to God. The first concept of Puritanism states that all Christian men are responsible only to God. Another concept of puritanism and probably the most important is the idea of Salvation by Grace. In Puritan theology, God created mankind and cosmos. He gave mankind a beautiful garden to live, the Garden of Eden. Unfortunately, mankind committed sin and was banished. However God, sent His grace to mankind. He gave His people salvation and therefore they were able to live by faith. Out of this belief, came the Covenant of Grace. A covenant is an important agreement or promise. The Covenant of Grace states that God approached mankind, not the other way around and all mankind had to do was accept this covenant of grace. This allowed mankind, as sinful as they were, the chance to return to God. The Puritans perceived their coming to America as Gods grace. They

viewed their life in England, with all of the persecution and hardship, as a kind of banishment from Eden by God. America was a wilderness to the puritans. In the Old Testament of the Bible, Moses led the Israelites into the wilderness and wandered for forty years before reaching Canaan, the Promised Land. The New World was, at the same time, the Wilderness and the Garden of Eden. It was uninhabited (at least in their view), pristine, and beautiful. Having created this concept of the Covenant and the sovereignty of God, the Puritans believed that everything they did was for the will of God. This meant that they could take over the land of the Indians and exploit these heathen. And they did. In 1636, Puritans in Massachusetts massacred hundreds of Pequot Indians in what they called a sweet sacrifice. The concept of puritanism did not end with the Puritan community. As they joined the rest of the other English colonies, many of the puritanism beliefs permeated into society. As we look back in history, we can see how this has affected the history of America. During each period in time, the United States has felt that they had a special mission. This special mission can be interpreted as the will of God. The Puritans thought that anything they did was for Gods will and that Gods will was their mission. During the colonial times, the mission was to gain independence from tyrannical England. After that, the mission was to give African slaves their freedom. Then, there was the westward movement to expand land. During the 20th century, the United States fought to protect the world from the Axis, the Communists, and the Iraqis. In each case, America has always had this special mission which they fulfilled sometimes using questionable methods. We can see how puritanism relates to the beliefs of America by studying the history of America. And we can see the prominent role puritanism has played to American society. Just

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look at the remnants of the Indian culture. Using the name of God, the Americans stole their land, wiped out their people, and destroyed their culture. Perhaps the sovereignty of God isn't such a good idea after all. It seems as though with no authority to answer to except God, America was able to do almost anything and state that it was for the greater good.

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