

The Influence of Puritan Thought on Colonial Colleges in North America

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Abstract

Puritanism is a unique philosophy that reflects the intellectual ethos of 17th century England. They believe that although man is an inherently sinful being, he is also a rational being capable of understanding his own actions and assuming their responsibilities. Moreover, it makes sense for human beings to live within the boundaries of free choice between good and evil. Drawing on the traditions and ideas of the Reformation and the Renaissance, the Puritans emphasized the unity of faith and reason, arguing that one person should empower others. For the Puritans, there was no conflict between the truth revealed by God and the natural world of man and the Puritans could even accept the knowledge of natural science as a subsidiary truth. Puritans adopted a rational rather than intuitive attitude towards life. They tried to unify faith and reason into a consistent way of thinking. This combination of faith and reason was a cornerstone of the cultural life of the New England colonies.

Keywords

Colonial college of British North America; puritanical ideology; Influence.

1. Introduction

Between 1630 and 1660, Puritan ideas and values had many influences on the political, social and economic development of the New England colonies. The Puritans came to America, as many others did, to build a "perfect and ideal Christian society". This mindset became the cornerstone of the colony. It was deeply rooted in New England and influenced the economy, society and politics of the colonies. "This is a religious plantation, not a trading plantation," said John Higgins. This statement suggests that, in the eyes of the Puritans, religion was more of a concern than the word of God and the worship of God, rather than the economic prosperity of the colonies and the design of secular interests. This shows that the Puritans thrived on their loyalty to God.

2. Puritanism Is A Rational System of Thought

2.1. The Puritans Had A Strong Sense of Divine Mission

The Puritans, who immigrated to the Massachusetts Bay colony in the 1630s, firmly believed that they were chosen by God to establish the kingdom of God in the New World. Throughout the seventeenth century ministers and historians repeated the idea of a divine mission in New England because the Puritans were very sure that they were exemplary of God's chosen people, and so they showed a strong sense of responsibility to God. This determination and hope, chiefly for the approbation of God, made work and education so important things in Puritan thought that, in order to be noble and to be saved, man must, by educational work, and by an extraordinary individual struggle, transcend his natural environment. As soon as the Pilgrims set foot on the American coast, they installed a printing press, established many schools, and

established a college. Puritanism, with its strict emphasis on work and study, developed into an ideological system extremely suitable for the frontier lifestyle.

2.2. The Infiltration of Puritan Values into Colonial North American Society

For puritans, whose religious values permeated the heart of the socio-political and economic system, it was important that the lessons learned in school gave them a commitment at a young age to remain puritanical, just as their elders had taught them. Calvinism had a definite social design and the City of God that the Puritans were trying to establish in New England was a well-ordered city, a city ruled by divine law and governed by educated men. Although the idea of an absolute monarchy under a secular king had no appeal to Calvinists, neither did egalitarian democracy. They were interested in the concept of trustee and trusteeship, and with the consent of the trustees, some of the chosen had the civil responsibility of running Earth City. As stewards, they run the government, the courts, and the school on the ground. The Church of the Kingdom has a board of trustees, as do other institutions including the school. After the colonial period, the concept of a school board developed into an elected school board, or board of education. Theologically, the defining tenet of Puritan Calvinism is fatalism, the idea that almighty God predetermines whether a person will be saved or cursed. Only those who have faith will experience inner conversion (rebirth), which shows that a person is chosen, but even so, there is a constant effort to overcome sin and live a godly life.

3. The Puritans Attached Great Importance to Education

3.1. Attach Importance to the Practical Function of Education and Its Popularization

Pious pilgrims in New England came from European civilization and sought religious freedom in the wilderness. They had an enlightened prescience in which wisdom and education were the surest foundations of piety, the safest protectors of liberty, and the cultivation of heirs to things like the fabled city upon a hill was of Paramount importance. They were emotionally independent, fearless, and intellectually literate, so among the colonists, the motivation to learn was, of course, closely related to religious piety. In 1647, a Massachusetts court passed an act requiring towns to provide education for young people. Here are the most frequently quoted words in the preface to the act: "Our learning will not be buried in the graves of our church and Commonwealth ancestors, and God will assist us in our efforts." Here you can see the academic concerns of the first Settlers of New England. For the Puritans, they established early on the practical role of education in American history and the subordination of learning to religion.

The Puritan emphasis on education played an important role in the Puritan worldview, both formal and informal. Education is a means of learning true religious principles, ways of living and ways of making a living. For the Puritans, education had not only economic and social but also religious significance. In the early colonial period, the Massachusetts Education Laws of 1642 and 1647 were a product of Puritan concerns about education in New England, the first time in history that education for all was enforced by an organized society. The Puritans' main aim was to build a godly society, which they believed was best accomplished by educated citizens. When the Massachusetts Supreme Court passed the school act, they did so with the aim of furthering the Bible by promoting literacy. The law requires not only a primary school teacher in every town with more than 50 families, but also a grammar school in every town with more than 100 families. Calvinism is a book-centered religion. For Calvinists, the Bible is a good book by which God presents himself to mankind. Thus, the pious Calvinist must be literate, while the illiterate and the uneducated are not only idle, but ignorant and evil illiteracy is inextricably bound to poverty, and illiteracy is unlikely to be a producer or steward of wealth. As Calvin's theology went deeper into education, it emphasized literacy, reading, writing,

arithmetic and religion. In their simple, undecorated church, the Puritans worshiped a strict God in a purged Calvinist liturgy that emphasized bible reading and preaching. What was needed to join the Calvinist cult was literate people who were familiar with biblical citations and who heard their pastors speak the word of God.

This is a community that values education and is used to supporting it through charity. The Puritans in colonial times were relatively well educated. About one in forty households was headed by a graduate, about the same proportion as in 1640 in England. The \$400 set aside by the High Court of Education for the establishment of Harvard College, with its emphasis on education and its habit of supporting it through charity, accounted for more than half of the previous year's total tax revenue. In 1644, the New England Union required every family to contribute a shilling or its equivalent to the college. They believed that the obligation of educated persons to serve the community was a great indication of the importance of the educational system in the eyes of society. Literacy was taught in ordinary schools, so that all could read the Bible, and Latin grammar schools prepared their students for higher education, believing that as long as there was a university, it would promote learning and pass it on from one generation to the next. Moreover, there was a ready-made model in university colleges and art courses. Therefore, a university is not an ornament, but an essential element, on the top of a city hill.

Soon after arriving in the New World, the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay began to seek the education of their children. Through organized and deliberate schooling, the adult members of any society reshape their children in their own image. New England's schools were designed to nurture educated Puritans and perpetuate the religious, social, political, and economic beliefs of adults. Jeremy Wise's Sermon to the Common Court: The education of young people is huge benefits and services to the public, this is education, they control their temper, to tame the fierce side of their nature, make their thoughts into love truth, learn to let them with the respect for god, to make them easier to manage, through learning and understanding what is the government management, when it is their turn, they will know better how to manage others good education can promote the reform of religion and religious, also can promote the peace and order. The Puritan school of New England was deliberate. The basic goal of education was to produce educated ministers and literate, god-fearing and productive citizens. It was to build a community of common religious beliefs at its core.

3.2. Attach Importance to the Study of Classical Education and the Inheritance of Free Education

In the early years of the colonies, the Puritans worked hard to establish a Christian government and to cultivate a literate population. They were enthusiastic about the teaching of classics and classical languages. A common view among scholars is that classical learning is essential to success in fields as diverse as legal medicine or theology. Of ancient Greek, therefore, in-depth study of the ancient Chinese language and literature of ancient Rome, not only is a sign of a gentle or class status no matter just because of this reason, it will be attached great importance to and, more importantly, the classical knowledge is considered to be those who are doomed to deal with affairs of the state and the church of the only reliable guide.

Much of the classical education in the colonies was a direct result of a push by Puritan leaders -- grammar schools emphasized Latin, followed by Greek and Hebrew, to prepare students for college, and ultimately for ministers, government leaders, lawyers, and sometimes doctors. They tried to get the students to read all the classical writers in their original works. Emphasizing the teaching of classical languages, mainly Latin and Greek, American colonial thought and classical tradition are full of strong rational color.

Instilled with personal piety and moral justice, the unshakable faith in the efficacy of classical liberal learning was directly reflected in the early declaration of degree requirements. The

formal statutes of Harvard University during its formative years (1642-1650) provide a good example. The first degree is conferred on any scholar who is proved to be able to read the original old and New Testament texts in Latin, who is able to solve these problems logically, who lives and talks honestly, and who in any public act is approved by the superintendent and the President of the college. The second degree will be awarded to any scholar who has completed the writing of a summary or summary of logic, natural and moral philosophy, arithmetic, geometry and astronomy, and who is prepared to defend his thesis or position, as described above, with proficiency in the original work, and who continues to be honest and diligent.

The Puritans not only focused on learning from the classics and great men of education, but they also focused on the other disciplines of liberal education because traditional liberal education was an essential intellectual tool for the development of other skills. Such as grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music, these are general intellectual skills that are used in learning or doing anything. Logic is the study of the structure and rules of rational thought, which is accomplished through the study of Aristotle's traditional logical system. Rhetoric is a subject that studies the rules of persuasion. Its objects of study include writers such as Cicero, the great teacher of Rhetoric and the great practitioner of rhetoric of Aristotle, the great theorist of rhetoric. Learn from St. Augustine, who used the skills he learned from these great thinkers to illustrate the truth of Christianity. Classical education's goal is to study classic works written in the original language and humanities: what people think and say the best of things, and make the intelligence of students with critical thinking skills it is classics by learning and development basic critical thinking skills to cultivate wisdom and virtue, to develop into a basic qualification for the social citizen.

4. The Religious Purpose of Pursuing Purity Was the Direct Cause of the Establishment of Colonial Colleges

The main body of the Colonial society in British North America was composed of different religious sects, and the most important force influencing the cultural life of the colonies was the religious tradition inherited from the Protestant Reformation. In the early period, among the first settlers in British America, there was a strong desire to establish higher learning institutions. "God has brought us safely to New England, we have built houses, provided the necessities for our livelihood, established convenient places for the worship of God and civilized government, and the next thing we desire and care for is to promote learning and perpetuate it to future generations."

Harvard's first published rules proclaimed the main goal of the institution: that every man should consider the primary end of his life, and learn to know God and Jesus Christ, which is eternal life, and therefore take Christ as the foundation, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning. Each scholar reads the Bible twice a day in order to be able, at the request of his tutor, to demonstrate his proficiency in the theoretical observation and practice of language and logic, and spiritual truth, according to his ability. Every student should listen to the teacher carefully in class, strictly abide by the rules and regulations of the school, do not speak foul language, do not associate with promiscuous people; No one is allowed to leave school and go to another town without official permission.

The new schools were also given the task of cultivating cultured and cultured men, those destined for responsibility and leadership in society. Harvard's first President took pains to enrolled students emphasize to them: you shall, according to the different ability of students in the learning of all, both divine and human, to each one by you care now or in the future, students should take care all the more, to make progress, pay particular attention to their behavior to be noble, there can be no mistakes. A commencement speaker in the 1670s made no doubt that

the civic function of the university was as important as its religious purpose. He acknowledged that if it had not been for the founding of Harvard by the first Puritan settlers, the ruling class would have been subject to machinists, shoemakers and tailors. Gentlemen will be drowned in the lewdness of the inferior, the sewage of corruption, the dregs of society, which are judged more by emotion than by truth. Nor will we have rights, honors, or decrees of authority worthy of preservation, nor will we have referendums calling for basic passions and revolutions. The success of Harvard in continuing to discharge its duties depends on the fate of religion and established social order.

Founded before the American war of independence of the eight other colleges all have the same dual goal with Harvard University, namely cultivation civic leaders and learned the clergy, although our main purpose is to establish a seminary education the priest of the Gospel, we hope this will be a means of training young people, in other learned profession, both state and church is useful. Among the first settlers in British America, the desire for an institution of higher learning was strong. In October 1636, the eighth year of the establishment of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, the Court granted a grant of four hundred pounds for the establishment of a college at Newtown (later renamed Cambridge). Thus was born higher education in British North America. Teaching began in the summer of 1638, and a few months later the untimely death of a benezer decided the question of naming the new university. Edward Johnson's story is as follows: this year, although the pilgrims' real estate people waste more, see the benefits, however, the accumulation of the church of Christ and civil government, by the blessing of the Lord, in the study, they began to build a university, in his thrift of hand the Lord gave his approval work, send a faithful god and his servant, Mr Minister John harvard, he suddenly died with Christ, as a result, the government thinks, in order to commemorate him, called the college of harvard college is the most appropriate.

5. Conclusion

From the birth of Harvard College in the New World in 1636 to the American War of Independence in 1776, a total of nine universities were established in the British colonial North America. Other colonial colleges followed the precedent of Harvard College and basically followed the same teaching philosophy and educational mode. These institutions later became the mainstay of American Ivy League universities. It has trained a large number of outstanding talents for the United States and other countries in the world, and is still the world leader in the field of higher education. These colonial colleges have gone through more than 300 years of trials and hardships in their early years, and they have accumulated the cultural deposits of the American history and are the most proud cultural treasures in the historical development of the United States.

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