

# Characteristics of Puritans

1. Wanted to restore simplicity to church services.
2. Felt the Anglican Church of England too close to Roman Catholic Church (King Henry VIII of England broke with the Roman Catholic Church; he issued the Act of Supremacy in 1534, which declared the King of England to be the head of the Church of England.)
3. Felt the "established Church of England" was open to influence of politics; this led to corruption in church.
4. Accepted the humblest to the loftiest in rank into their midst.
5. Thought themselves a chosen people.
6. Thought that if any challenged them, they were opposing God's will.
7. Were intolerant of others not of their views; they even persecuted them
8. Made laws about private morality.
9. Opposed pleasure and arts; suspected joy and laughter as symptoms of sin
10. Drove from their colonies all who disagreed with them - Quakers - Roger

Williams (He was democratic in his view of church government; this led to his exile from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He was banished from Bay Colony in the middle of winter for his views on religious toleration. He founded Providence, Rhode Island. With Williams begins religious toleration in America and separation of church and state.

Puritan thought comes from Calvinistic thought, which came from John Calvin, founder of the Presbyterian Church in Geneva, Switzerland. (1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian church founded in Scotland in 1557 by John Knox.)

## Notes On Puritans

Native Inhabitants (Indians) had cultural values and literary traditions of their own – literature entirely oral – had not developed writing systems.

**PURITAN ETHIC** or Puritan work ethic (ethic – a system of moral standards or values – achieve good only through continual hard work and self-discipline [hard work, frugality, self-improvement, self-reliance = basic American virtues = from Puritans.])

How affect us? Blue laws and lay offs

Colonists from Europe did not begin arriving on the East Coast of North America until the late 1500's.

- 1607 - 1<sup>st</sup> permanent English settlement at Jamestown, Virginia (Virginia colony established) – commercial venture – wanted to make money.
- 1620 - On Mayflower, Pilgrims or Separatists (ex-Puritans who had given up hope of “purifying” church from within) sail to New World and establish a settlement at what is now Plymouth, Massachusetts. Eventually engulfed by Massachusetts Bay Colony, a much larger settlement to the north.
- 1630 - Colony founded at Massachusetts Bay by Puritans. First leader = William Bradford

The Pilgrims had broken away from the Anglican Church of England and were call Separatists. Puritans of 1630 wanted to remain a part of the Anglican Church, but they gradually moved to complete separation of church and state. Puritans and Pilgrims finally joined into one colony.

Puritan means “want to make pure the religious beliefs and practices.” Opponents of Puritans coined the word Puritans and applied it to them with scorn. People felt that the Puritans thought themselves holier and better than others. Puritans adopted the name as a badge of honor.

## Puritan and Calvinistic Thought

1. **Man** is infected, cursed, and sinful ever since his fall from grace in the Garden of Eden.
2. Man is incapable of obtaining release from this curse and infection by himself.
3. Christ as God-Man, through his crucifixion, reunited God with man and man with God.
4. God is omnipotent - all-powerful.  
God is omniscient - all knowing.  
God is omnipresent - present everywhere.
5. Man is weak in responding to the work and word of Christ.
6. Faith is given to man; this reunites man with God and makes man feel righteous. Faith makes man God-like and purified.
7. Election - Nothing man can do can save him from eternal damnation. God elects who goes to heaven and who goes to hell. This is a belief in predestination. (John Calvin's doctrine that God has already decided who will achieve salvation and will not.)
8. God's elect or church should control the state (God's damned). Authority to discipline should be given to the ministers and elders of the church. These elders or magistrates are required by God to enforce correct or superficially correct behavior from the damned. These elders should control education, recreation, and business. They should have rigid control = theocratic government (church and state are one.)

literary heritage. Not great names in literature -- they are the founders -- laid groundwork for others.

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# Puritan Writing

1. Were preoccupied with sin and salvation; religion dominated their lives and writings.
2. Believed in plain style of writing - clear statement. Felt ornate or clever style was a sign of vanity.
3. Types of Writing:

Theological studies

Hymns

Histories

Biographies

Autobiographies

Purpose = to provide spiritual insight and instruction

Journals

Diaries

For serious self-examination

Poetry = vehicle of spiritual enlightenment; message very important

**NO FICTION OR DRAMA**