

An Analysis of Puritanism's Influence on Democratic Political System in America

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Abstract

According to the knowledge concerning English-speaking countries part of interest for the author, the essay focuses on the inconspicuous connection between Puritanism mentioned in English history, the reason of Puritans' departure from Europe and their influence on the system of politics in early American society. The main part is composed of Puritanism's origins and their deeds in New England, Northern America especially in American politics. Then, the text analyzes what effect Puritans brought for American political form today. At last, evolving the spirit in institutions of the US, a critical thinking is indicated.

Keywords

Puritanism; New England; American political system; democracy; republic.

1. Introduction

In 16th century England, there were a group of people against Catholicism. Instead, they held utterly different doctrines from it. With unsuccessful people like them, they left for a new land to fulfill their respective ideals. Unexpectedly, their contributions shaped great souls for a powerful state in the future.

2. Organization of the Text

2.1. Puritanism Under the Church of England Section Headings

In 1534, the Reformation was going on. Since then, literally, England became a protestant country without control of Catholic Church. However, the reform was not thorough. There were various types of Catholic customs left.

In 1660s, those who opposed creed of luxury and waste were called nonconformists assembled to form "Puritanism", holding principles diligence and thrift. From the 1670s to 1680s, the Puritans proliferated and broke away from the State Church to establish independent religious organizations. In the 1680s, according to their demands and means, Puritans were divided into two groups, Presbyterians and Independents. Representing the interests of emerging middle and small bourgeoisie, the latter were more radical ones. They advocated the independence of churches and the establishment of only federative organizations, and disapproved of the setting up of State Church.

In essence, in an embryonic form, the thought of republic appeared. Beyond expectations, the above also were leading ideas of the political institutions in the United States today.

2.2. System of Political and Law in Early New England

2.2.1. Mayflower

"Mayflower", a "common" British three masted Galen of Virginia company, which was launched in 1615. On September 6, 1620, Puritan separatists of 36 and some Europeans who less favored in life boarded it. But their course changed due to bad weather. The destination they had hoped

to reach was the Hudson River area under the jurisdiction of Virginia. Meanwhile, their supplements were almost exhausted, and they were forced to land at a port in Massachusetts, so the land licenses they held were invalid. In order to effectively manage immigrants, the leaders worked out a management charter, the Mayflower Convention.

It gave birth to the sprout of the American nation, dominated the mainstream culture of the United States, and had a far-reaching impact on the United States and current American characters. Therefore, "Mayflower" is honored the most significant ship in American history.

2.2.2. Control in Colonials

In the 1620s and 1630s, Puritans founded the New England colonies of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. It was registered in New England First Fruits that 50 towns and villages, 30 or 40 churches, and more houses for priests, a castle, a university, prisons, forts, driveways were built by Puritans without the help of public.

In New England, locals achieved self-control. Each town had its own characteristics, and tried to avoid external control by making harmony within it. Nominally, the colonials were in the charged of the English government, while in fact they were gradually independent.

Puritan beliefs about religion, education, and government greatly influenced life in colonial America. Although the 17th century was full of turbulent times in Europe, harmony prevailed in New England until the end of this century. Compared to European society, Massachusetts' social cohesion was remarkable and miraculous. Admittedly, the core of "liberalism" in self-rule was practicable, and opened a new path for governance.

2.3. Influence on Political Institutions in America

2.3.1. Separation of Religion from Politics

Because there were many Protestant sections in North America, a unified and powerful church had never been formed, and the church did not play an important role in the country's political life as in Europe.

At first, Puritans were in a scattered and independent position, and kept a considerable distance from the official. Because there were many religious sects, and there was no economic foundation and official unity.

Puritans in New England had different opinions on many issues, but they were consistent on the separation of Religion from Politics. People insisted that they enforce God's commandments and maintain pure religious duties. The separation of church and state was a feature of early American society, which laid a great foundation for the establishment development of American politics.

2.3.2. Local Self-government

During the period of American colonization, a community first emerged, then a government. People lived together based on common ideals and beliefs. In order to perform duties as the government, they must rely on the consultation, self-consciousness and personal initiative among members. They appointed their own administrative officials, concluded peace treaties and declared war, formulated their own public security regulations, and legislated for themselves. They usually did not look for the source of power from the suzerain state, but established their own self-governing institutions to exercise power.

2.3.3. Liberalism

In England, only through church organizations, or individual will and ideas could not have an independent position. However, The Protestant reformers advocated "salvation through faith", and individuals could communicate directly with God, which improved the status of individuals. It also strengthened the spirit of personal self-discipline, because when a tangible person faces invisible God, he is expected to introspect and be cautious. In this process, individual wills have

its independence and sacredness. Individualism has its philosophical and religious meaning, also the core of liberalism.

2.4. American Polity Today

2.4.1. Constitution

Two obvious characteristics are presented in it, “checks and balances” and “respective powers of the federal government and of the state government”, revealing “democracy”.

2.4.2. Government

“Independence” is its kernel. As is illustrated in the Constitution, the government consists of three branches: the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. Each branch has a way of counteracting and limiting actions by other branches.

2.4.3. Political Parties

Two major parties in US are the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. Though different value proposition and interest demands that they propose, their overall pursuit can be merged as an integrated one.

2.5. Conclusion

Puritanism laid early and solid basis for American society pattern, not only in politics, but economy and culture. Essentially, the impact lies in American core values, expressing via the form of appearance. However, current political conditions do not truly show the essence of “democracy”, “republic”, “liberalism” inherited from their ancestors.

3. Literature References

There have been many documents and essays exploring Puritanism’s significance for America which is associated with this essay. They are of great help for it.

3.1. Domestic

In 2016, Jing Jin published a paper in which she described the influence of Protestantism on American politics, pointing to “individualism” and “equality” in it.

In 2020, Tong Wu investigated inherence of American polity, and conducted the study from four levels, superficially and deeply.

3.2. Aboard

In 2019, Milan Petrović explored Puritanism’s role in the political system of the USA.

4. Conclusion

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