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Puritanism & Islam

by Joe Escobar - Friday, October 7, 2016, 10:03 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Puritanism & Islam topic.
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Who Finds Puritans Interesting?



While Professor Patrick Mason's findings, as explained in the audio interview of Professor Casper, are surprising, relating the enthusiasm students have to studying English Puritans with the amount that their beliefs impact their lives actually makes sense when coupled with a quick look at how much influence religion has on Americans today. English Puritans displayed their desire to let their whole lives demonstrate their faith by their intense determination to worship freely. They were so convinced that freedom to worship was necessary that they packed up for a dangerous and risky voyage to a new home beset with dangers.

According to this audio interview, it would appear that the Muslim students in Egypt have the same basic drive to let their beliefs impact their lives.

Perhaps if they were not allowed to worship as they saw fit, they would also want to emigrate from their homeland. Despite the wide difference in Puritan and Islamic beliefs, this practice of faith being incorporated into life is similar, and appears to be why "Puritanism got students" (of Islamic beliefs) "really interested and made sense to students, " as Professor Casper states at the 5:18 point in the interview.

Why then do some American students relate to the Puritans and find them a fascinating part of their history while others "glaze over" this group without pondering the importance and significance of the Puritans' arrival in the New World? It would appear that those that "glaze over" the Puritans may not find it as important to incorporate their religion/non religion/beliefs into the rest of their lives. As stated in Mason's article, the Puritans lived in a culture "in which the sacred presses upon every aspect of life" while "most expressions of American Christianity no longer do" (3:46). Maybe this section of history is not as important to some American students because they do not identify with this decision, although it may be more incorporated into Muslim society.

Yes, this finding concerns me because I believe that the Puritans' arrival in the New World is an important part of U.S. history that should not be overlooked. I appreciate the Puritans' courage and perseverance as well as the importance they placed on living out their faith since I hold a similar viewpoint on my belief system, and while I relate to and understand the Puritans through several different aspects, I recognize that other students whose religious beliefs may not impact their daily lives may not deem the Puritans as much of an important part of U.S. history as other valuable historic parts.

As Mr. Escobar addressed and the Pew Research Center poll indicated in class on October 6th, some students may have identified with a certain religious group while not strictly adhering to the religion's basic principles.

Each grouping in the Moodle Religion Poll for example, could be divided into two extra groups, those whose faith impacts their daily lives deeply and those

who identify with that religion but are not so concerned over whether what they believe changes them or their lifestyle in any way or not. I propose that that first group of students may have a deeper interest in the Puritans because they share the same aspect of a faith impacted lifestyle, whether they are American or Egyptian students, and those who do not share that common ground may not be as fascinated with the Puritans.

I wish more American students would be interested in the essential elements of Puritanism, the Pilgrims, Separatists, and their reasons for coming to a new home in the New World, but am I wrong in assuming that this topic will not attract as much fascination in a history class with the students whose beliefs are not as integral to their lives as it will with those whose beliefs are? Do you agree with this or do you find some other determining factor for the differences between these two groups of students?

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Puritans, just as bad as The Royal Crown.

by Jake Preciado - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 5:04 PM

The Puritans, arguably the most influential group of settlers in the New England Colony, are they just as bad as The Royal Crown? In my opinion yes. Greatly known as the Pilgrims or separatists, they fled England with the idea of religious freedom. During the reign of King James I many had heard the stories of the new world and the puritans had seen opportunity. They had seen the chance of being able to practice their religion without the persecution inflicted by the Royal Crown. Believing God had formed a special agreement with them, they set off landing in Plymouth (1620). Leaving England with good intentions, what makes them like the people they “fled” from? Once in the New World the puritans set up their first colony, The Massachusetts bay Colony, in 1629. It became a place of refuge but also a place of strict laws. Equality was not practiced in the way we see it today. Only church members could vote, or hold political office and land was taken from the Indians and given to town building groups. The Indians, along with their land being taken they were also evangelized to. “John Elliot, pastor at Roxbury church, focused his efforts on Massachusetts Indians. He translated the Bible into the Massachusett language and gave sermons in the language” (page 66) So what makes them any different than the Anglican church? The puritans were looking for religious freedom yet once they found it the freedom of religion was gone and all were expected to be part of theirs. Building cities around churches and requiring church attendance to vote. Wasn't this exactly what they were trying to escape from?

What do you think? Puritans, wholesome people trying to spread the word of God. Or a different version of the country (England) they came from.

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Re: Puritans, just as bad as The Royal Crown.

by Kenzie Slocum - Tuesday, October 11, 2016, 9:42 AM

Sure, I agree that the Puritans/Protestants made some mistakes. If what our textbooks say is true, they were cruel to the Native Americans and thought better of themselves than other colonies in North America. My question is, were they all that way? Other textbooks I have read revealed what great contributions Puritans/Protestants have given to this country including the Puritan work ethic (which has benefited our economy and society) and the furthering of education by founding Harvard College along with establishing Latin grammar schools and making sure teachers were hired to educate their children. Shouldn't we recognize the Protestants for these beneficial endeavors?

Also, maybe they were trying to create freedom of religion in their colonies, but doesn't this include the freedom to tell others about what you believe? Of course, rules need to be put into place because if everyone had freedom to do whatever they pleased without consequences, wouldn't the world be a mess? As Mr. Escobar was talking about in the first week of class, there is absolute truth in history, and there is absolute truth in life as well. That needs to be enforced to prevent the downfall of society. Maybe they were taking it a bit too far, but it seems to me that they were practicing their freedom to form a society around the rules they wanted. What do you think about this perspective?

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Re: Puritans, just as bad as The Royal Crown.

by Justin Stewart - Wednesday, October 12, 2016, 12:22 PM

I think both sides can be looked at here. If you look at the puritans simply wanting religious freedom to practice their own religion, then one could argue that there is nothing wrong with that. If you look on the aspect of wanting freedom and getting so, only to revert back to becoming the type of people, they left one could argue or say that they are no better. This however has been an argument that has been going on since the dawn of religion. I will ask the questions of what is right and wrong, how do you determine who lives a proper religion and who lives an improper one? Furthermore, are we looking at this through our eyes of 2016 morals and laws when we speak about this or are we attempting to place ourselves back to the time in which this all occurred and then determine if this changes anything. I think we will find that we could reach the same conclusion in some situation but not always through either eyes. For example, stepping outside of this individual situation if we were to look at religions broadly we would find animal and human sacrifices, whipping of your own body to cleanse your soul and meditation for hours or days as we spread across the realm of religion. if we take

both sets of eyes and compare these then we will most likely come to quite different findings in the question of what is right and what is wrong. Just my two cents, what do you think?

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Re: Puritans, just as bad as The Royal Crown.

by Jake Preciado - Wednesday, October 12, 2016, 7:28 PM

I see what you're saying and can agree with you on many levels. You stated that "we looking at this through our eyes of 2016 morals and laws..." and you are right. Although it is hard to disconnect from the present to look at the past, why would they inflict the same pain they felt back home in England. Maybe it's my liberal mind set that can only see it from an "all accepting, coexist" mentality. The reason why I brought this point up is because it's obvious that not all the Puritans were accepting of this mentality. Rodger Williams proved that when he started the Rhode Island Colony. Williams left because he saw, in slang terms 'England 2.0'. Founding Rhode Island on the principals of real religious freedom, separation of church and state, and political democracy he isn't too far off from what our country was founded on. Radical to the Puritans at the time people obviously felt that the Puritans were extremists, if they didn't the Rhode Island colony may have never been founded. I also and agree with you on the subject of "what is right and wrong, how do you determine who lives a proper religion and who lives an improper one" which I believe will be a problem till the end of time. With all these facts one can conclude that there is no technical 'correct' answer.

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Re: Puritans, just as bad as The Royal Crown.

by Kevin Smolek - Thursday, October 13, 2016, 7:16 AM

I agree that it is not possible to find a "right" answer, as we are not living in that time with those values. The puritans fled England with the intention of forming a close knit community that had shared beliefs. Attempting to convert the native Americans was just them trying to make sure that they never had to flee another religion again, as well as the thinking that they were saving the natives souls. Was it "right"? Not to us now, but back then I'm sure they had the same mindset that many have today, that they "know best".

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Re: Puritans, just as bad as The Royal Crown.

by Justin Stewart - Thursday, October 13, 2016, 12:40 PM

I agree that it is hard to say that all puritans were the same or extremists but this is the trouble that we run into in history. We can only go by what is documented and passed down for our information. Let us digress for a moment and look at what we have for information today. Most of the information we use today is passed down by way of the news. But just like the old times what we see is simply what was deemed important enough to pass along or important enough to write down. It is an understandable point of view to say that not all the puritans were accepting of the mentality whether or not that statement is backed with factual proof. Granted the actual proof places the statement from an opinion to a fact however I would still say the statement itself is hard to proof wrong since we cannot speak of the actions of every puritan without having the visibility of each individual one. In this instance, we can look at something like the Rhode Island colony as you stated to use as a proof of the thought process.

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Puritanism: God 24/7

by Kevin Smolek - Monday, October 10, 2016, 8:54 AM

When we first started talking about Puritans I would bet that very few of us had any idea what that actually entailed. I don't think that is all that surprising, given that most public schools avoided anything related to religion like the plague. I really didn't know anything about them until now. I had heard the word, and I'm sure I had some knowledge of how much the church was influencing life back then, but very few of us have our church and our belief in god play such a major role in our lives now. I am not at all surprised that Muslims in the middle east can relate to the way that puritans lived, given that religion is a much bigger deal there then it is in the west. Islam is the only point to life many countries. We just don't really have that here in America, where as we have progressed, we have gotten away from having church be the only thing of importance in our lives.

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Re: Puritanism: God 24/7

by Justin Stewart - Tuesday, October 11, 2016, 2:51 PM

I would have to agree on the lack of knowledge on puritans prior to this forum as well as this course. For the most part my opinion as well as personal experiences in life is that people don't have a vast knowledge of religions outside of the ones they practice. The world as well as United States specifically has changed greatly on there outlook in religions. For an example we have removed a great deal from our schools in the attempt to separate learning from religion. The interesting point

that stood out to me was the study that was conducted. As you said yourself you didn't have much knowledge on the topic prior to this course. I ask you, what do you think you would have done if you were placed in the student's shoes? Would you look at the legal aspect of the situation or influence your thoughts based on personal beliefs, or would you go somewhere in the middle?

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Re: Puritanism: God 24/7

by Riley Stromvig - Tuesday, October 11, 2016, 6:16 PM

To answer your question that you posed at the end of your response, I say this. I am a Christian. I go to church every week and all the other stuff. But in my opinion, I believe that our constitutional rights as Americans (being able to practice our religion freely) should come before any court ruling or anything of that nature. As time goes on, our nation is becoming more and more politically correct and wanting everyone to feel included and not offended (oh, I love that word). Which is why, in 2013, a federal judge ruled that the law criminalizing polygamy in the state of Utah was unconstitutional. Although, I don't agree with the idea of having multiple spouses and what not, that is their religion and our constitution requires us to respect their freedom no matter how much we disagree with it.

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Re: Puritanism: God 24/7

by Justin Stewart - Wednesday, October 12, 2016, 9:57 AM

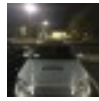
I find your respond very interesting. I am a Christian myself to set a background of were my logic is coming from on the topic, a fact in which I neglected on purpose prior to now. I looked at the opposite side of the coin on this topic but I do have to say that I can see where you are coming from. My initial thought was that if it is ruled a law then it is followed meaning that if polygamy is voted illegal you just can't do it. From my understanding of your response back to me, you believe we should be free to practice our religion as we see fit. I don't argue with you on this point, and in fact mostly agree with you however, I do have to pose another question that your response invoked. If you believe that we should be free to follow our believes freely without interference and have that come before court ruling, then how would we measure what can and cannot be allowed. For example, let's look at the movie Apocalypto that was shown in class. They conducted sacrifices to worship their gods. Now I don't by any means think that your saying we could do this in today's standards, rather I am simply using it as an example of something that was used in their beliefs that most if not all people would

consider wrong by today's standards. How would we go about measuring what a religion can do and can't do, or do you think that this is something that shouldn't be measured by the courts?

Just to clarify i am not asking to question to pick at believes or anything of the sort i'm actually curious what your thoughts on the topic are.

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Re: Puritanism & Islam

by Riley Stromvig - Wednesday, October 12, 2016, 1:11 PM

Yeah I got ya. And it's a tough question. And to be honest, I'm not 100% sure. Where do we draw the line? What is reasonable and what is not? If something is not harming another person and/or causing trouble within a community, city, state, or even the nation itself, why shouldn't we be allowed to worship our God (or gods for some) in whatever fashion we want, like you said?

In today's society, the government is doing so much to try and keep people from getting offended and/or their feelings getting "hurt". And I, frankly, don't get why they are. What's wrong with being offended? What's wrong with having a different opinion or point of view than someone else? You cannot change or make laws simply based on being offended because being offended is completely subjective. It has to do with each person individually and how they identify (religion, political party, and other views).

So stuff like political correctness really bothers me because I don't think we should be changing our constitution in order to make some groups of people feel 'included'.

Just for some extra fun I am including a link to a YouTube video that backs up my opinion.

http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ceS_jkKjlgo

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Re: Puritanism: God 24/7

by Kenzie Slocum - Wednesday, October 12, 2016, 3:43 PM

Certainly, there does not appear to be an easy answer to these questions of what the correct balance should be between toleration and leniency with order and law. One of the problems I am noticing is along with the differing views of

religion or beliefs, there are also different views of what harms society and what does not. For instance, I could think that polygamy harms society, especially over the long run, but even if I cite examples in history of this, others may still think the exact opposite. Even if we all decided to allow freedom to the extent of “harming another person or causing trouble,” we may all have a different definition of what that would be. Do you see what I am getting at?

It would appear to me that the Puritans/Protestants were just setting their rules and systems according to their understanding of right and wrong (from what I read on pages 65 to 67 of Liberty, Equality, Power), using the Bible as their guide for their definition of what was right and acceptable and what was wrong and not allowed. In part, at least, it appears to me that they were not forcing their religion on others so much as setting these standards as guidelines for their community. Since Americans, in particular, have so many differing forms of deciding what is right and wrong, acceptable and detrimental, we have to rely on systems such as the Judicial System and supreme court to decide things such as this.

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Re: Puritanism: God 24/7

by Kevin Smolek - Wednesday, October 12, 2016, 9:22 PM

You make some great points! The issue is that laws reflect the values and agendas of the people writing them at the time. For the Puritans this worked great, while the population was all coming from the same place, and had shared values and could agree where to draw the line. However to us now, the beliefs and laws that they lived under are totally crazy town. We simply can't relate to a community that is so humongous that they can agree to live under laws so closely tied to the bible. I agree that they didn't seem to be forcing their religion on others, as much as they were deciding to only live with people that shared their common beliefs.

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Re: Puritanism & Islam

by Justin Stewart - Monday, October 10, 2016, 10:38 AM

I found the study Professor Scott Casper spoke about from Patrick Mason's essay *What's so bad about polygamy* to be quite interestingly done. To take a group of students and to post a topic such as polygamy and ask them to study it as the supreme court did. The students then in turn assume the role of the supreme court and give their findings on it. I thought this was a quite interesting approach to the topic and one that leaves me to wonder how much of the student's findings will be

factually based and how much will be swayed by personal beliefs. I would be very interested in doing a study like this myself since he does not give the students the outcome of the supreme court findings prior to their input. I find myself wondering if my opinion would be the same or different than the supreme court on the topic, and how much would myself as well as the other students in the group weigh our own personal beliefs on the topic rather than looking at why polygamy is practiced and if it should be allowed. I also find myself quite looking forward to reading the other posts on this topic to see the differences on the stances of something like this. I guess I would have to say my stand point after hearing it would be that regardless of if I do or don't believe in polygamy on a moral standpoint or not that should be set aside. Instead the focus should be placed on whether allowing it to occur will change, modify and/or hurt our society on a legal aspect. I look forward to some feedback on this post since I am fairly new to forums.

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Glazed over is right

by Riley Stromvig - Monday, October 10, 2016, 8:43 PM

Growing up as a Christian in a religious family and going to church my entire life as well as private middle school and high school, I can say that the idea of Americans kind of brushing off the Puritans and their significance to this country is very true. I am guilty of this as well. In my high school Bible/world religion classes, we would study all kinds of religions (ranging from Judaism to Islam, and all the way to Atheism and Agnosticism) and their resemblances and their many obvious differences. But we never really studied the impact of each specific religion on America or the New World, so this is actually an interesting thing for me to hear.

It does not necessarily 'concern' me that me and a majority of Americans don't know the impact that Puritans had on our country but I do find it a little strange that we know more about Martin Luther and his 95 theses that took place in Germany but don't know about the religious history of the Puritan people that directly affected us!

On another note, I had never really thought about Mormons and the whole polygamy thing. But it seems reasonable that they should be able to practice their religion however they please because, as he says in the audio clip, that is the basic religious freedom we are guaranteed in our constitution. Even though I agree with how the Supreme Court ruled, I don't really understand why. I feel like that is infringing on our rights as Americans.

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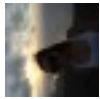
Re: Puritanism & Islam

by Samuel Gibson - Monday, October 10, 2016, 10:38 PM

It doesn't really surprise me. The Puritans were religious fundamentalists who tended to stress modesty and rigid social norms. They organized their lives around religion, and obedience to that religion was mandatory if you wanted to exist within their communities. Sounds an awful lot like a great deal of the Islamic world.

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Re: Puritanism & Islam

by Shelby Say - Wednesday, October 12, 2016, 1:19 PM

My personal take on this situation is that the Muslim students may connect to the topic of Puritanism more than American students simply because they have a more unified connection to a certain religion. In America today, our religions are quite diverse. As we seen in our class Religion Poll, there was a wide spread of difference religions and although majority were Protestant, there was still variation amongst our people. I agree with Joe when he mentioned in class that religion causes a lot of conflict. The difference in peoples religion causes people to not see eye-to-eye on certain issues. So to have students in Egypt that were all Muslims, believing in a single religion, created this unified environment that they were able to engage in a conversation about another religion. I think that since America has people who believe in a wide variety of religions, it sometimes creates an uncomfortable environment for people to talk about this topic because we are not sure of other peoples view on religion.

Personally, I was never really comfortable talking about my religion or any religion in general growing up, so I think that it can cause an issue for some people to “glaze over” the topic. Thus creating a lack of knowledge in the subject. Versus a society that has a single religion, they may be more comfortable to talk about religion in general, whether it is their own or others.

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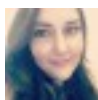
Re: Puritanism & Islam

by Kenzie Slocum - Thursday, October 13, 2016, 9:46 AM

Your thoughts on this subject about unified religion versus diverse religions is exactly what I am thinking. Certainly, diversity can cause division and conflict, as we see here, and while having a unified religion does not mean the end to internal disputes, it certainly clears up a lot of questions for a group of people.

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by Heather Shepherd - Wednesday, October 12, 2016, 2:51 PM

To me it makes perfect sense that Islamic students would relate better to the Puritans than most American students do. The U.S. has been moving toward a separation of church and state for a long time, while in most Islamic countries there's little to no separation at all. Those students in Cairo know what it's like to live in a society where religion dictates what you eat, wear, say, etc. and to live under a government that operates by those same rules, which is similar to how the Puritans lived. But most Americans value freedom above all else and a religion-centered government is not compatible with freedom for all, especially in a society of immigrants with differing faiths, cultures, morals and values.

On the issue of polygamy, I agree with the Egyptian students. The First Amendment guarantees us the right to religious freedom, and as long as polygamy doesn't hurt or take advantage of others, it should be legal.

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Straying from the Religious Culture

by Miranda Marshall - Friday, October 14, 2016, 7:55 PM

This finding actually makes a lot of sense to me. In today's society, at least in America I feel like our generation is almost completely detached from religion. My eyes definitely "glaze over". It makes sense that they would vote as the supreme court in favor of religious freedom. I feel that we are becoming a less and less religious nation as our generation increasingly becomes aware of other options such as agnostic and atheist, detaching themselves from their parents religious views that they might have grown up with. Students in America aren't being educationally informed of topics like this; therefore, they are unable to make an educated guess of what the supreme court may have voted back then. In class, when we were shown the map of the United States and what states were religious, they were almost all found on the East Coast (except for Utah). Notre Dame is found more so on the East Coast, so they would be more inclined to have more information on the subject at hand. I am Catholic; however, I haven't been a practicing catholic since I was a child and forced to go to church with my family so I can see myself falling on the spectrum of voting for religious freedom if I "played a part" on the supreme court. I am just part of the vast majority who is straying from the religious culture, like many in our generation.

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Re: Straying from the Religious Culture

by Kevin Smolek - Friday, October 14, 2016, 8:39 PM

Yeah after class the other day I am able to understand where the puritans are coming from a little better, but I really have no idea about the actual thoughts and feelings that they had about religion. I totally agree that most students can't relate, and I'm not even sure that it's a bad thing. I'm super glad that I don't live in a place that I can relate to them. Living for religion, and living in a place that religion is the driving force behind everything you do sounds awful. We get to decide for ourselves what is important to us, and what we should spend our time on. I can understand wanting to live with people that share your values, however I am glad that religion isn't the driving force behind western culture anymore.

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Re: Straying from the Religious Culture

by Kenzie Slocum - Saturday, October 15, 2016, 10:09 AM

My first thoughts about these last few posts has been, “Why has living with religion being the driving force behind everything we do such an unappealing thought to our society today? What keeps us from living religious-based lives anymore? Why have our whole communities changed from what they were hundreds of years ago when religion was such an integral part of the way people lived?”

Although there are probably a dozen answers for these questions, the one that was talked about in class this past week seems to be a likely piece of this change. The pursuit of self-interest has been built upon to encourage trade, among other things, and consequently, has not been stifled over the years. Is this a good thing or a bad thing? I think it could be some of both, but could the growth of this pursuit of self-interest from when The Navigation Acts were established to today's culture be a part of why everyone desires to live how they want to instead of following a religion (usually thought of as a strict lifestyle that is not fun or appealing and has lots of rules)? I certainly would not want to sign up for that - self-interest again. Of course, this could lead to a huge discussion about what the term “religion” means and how there's a difference between a religion and a relationship, but coming back to the original topic, the pursuit of self-interest could be a major factor regarding how a lot of people do not live lives based on religion today or at least not as much as the Puritans and Separatists of the past chose to live.

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