

AMERICA'S CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

As taught by Pastor Ron Baity

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We are now researching the very beginning of our nation by visiting the people who came here with the determination to begin a nation where God is Supreme.

I. COVENANTS AND SCRIPTURES WERE IMPORTANT TO THE PURITANS IN AMERICA

A. The Boston Church Covenant said:

1. We do give up our selves unto that God whose name is Jehovah—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. We do also give up our offspring unto God in Jesus Christ.
3. We do also give up our selves one unto another in the Lord.

B. The Plymouth Colony stated: "Laws... are so far good and wholesome, as by how much they are derived from, and agreeable to the ancient platform of God's Law."

C. The New Haven Colony stated: "All of them would be ordered by the rules which the Scriptures held forth to them."

D. The Connecticut Colony (Hartford): "God's Word shall be the only rule for ordering the affairs of government in this Commonwealth."

E. The articles of the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut included these provisions:

1. "The choice of magistrates belongs to the people by God's own allowance."
2. The people must not cast votes "in accord with their humors, but according to the will and law of God."
3. The foundation of authority is laid in the free consent of the people."
4. The power of government rests with the people, not the magistrates.
5. "The Word of God requires that to maintain... peace and union... there should be an orderly and decent government established according to God."

F. In early New England, the single source of authority for both magistrate and minister (Church and State) was the Bible.

II. THE PURITAN MINISTER IN EARLY NEW ENGLAND

- A. The Puritan minister was the most important person in early New England villages because:
 - 1. He was the figure expected to preach the truths of the Bible to the people.
 - 2. He was the best educated person in the village.
 - 3. He had the largest library in the village.
 - 4. He held services on special days:
 - a. Election day sermons
 - b. Thanksgiving day sermons
 - c. Artillery day sermons
 - d. Anniversary sermons
 - e. Fast day sermons
 - 5. He was routinely consulted by the legislatures, and put on committees with the governor or magistrates.
- B. The importance of the New England Sermon:
 - 1. It was the one event that brought the entire community together.
 - 2. They came together on Sundays for public worship.
 - 3. They came together on Thursdays for the minister's teaching lecture.
 - 4. The average length of the sermon was two hours.
 - 5. The New England Puritan could expect to listen to about 15,000 hours of Gospel preaching in his or her lifetime.

III. VOTING IN NEW ENGLAND

- A. The Puritans abolished the English practice of tying the privilege of voting to one's rank in society.
- B. In Massachusetts, there were two requirements for voting:
 - 1. Property ownership
 - 2. Belief in the Christian faith

IV. THE PURITANS AND GOVERNMENT

- A. They taught that Christians:
 - 1. Are to be "salt and light" in their society.
 - 2. Are to bring the redemptive love of Christ and God's justice into every area of life.
 - 3. Are to continually engage the culture.
 - 4. Are to reform the government, not to withdraw from it.

- B. They believed that the Bible teaches that government authority is only valid where the people have given their consent to be governed.
- C. The Puritans taught that because God has revealed through Holy Scripture the nature of His government, that therefore He would never do anything contrary to His Word.
- D. Both Government and Church looked to the Bible as their final source of authority.

V. THE PURITANS AND EDUCATION

- A. The Puritans developed a strong emphasis on universal education so that all children could read the Bible and hear God for themselves.
- B. The "Old Deluder Satan Law."
 - 1. The Puritans believed it was their responsibility to spiritually educate their children.
 - 2. The Puritans believed that either Satan or Scriptures would fill the minds of their children and they determined it would be the latter.
 - 3. The "Old Deluder Satan Law" mandated that:
 - a. If the number of families or householders reached 50 in a village, they had to appoint a teacher and start a school.
 - b. If the number in the community reached 100, they must set up a grammar school.
- C. The term "university" was a word coined by the Puritans.
 - 1. It comes from the word "universal".
 - 2. The Puritans believed that a successful university education would guarantee that the student would graduate with a universal and Bible-based worldview of every area of life.
- D. Mothers would teach their children the alphabet by using the ashes in the fireplace as their blackboard.
- E. After their children learned the alphabet, the first book they learned to read from was the Bible.
- F. Reverend Jonathan Dickinson, the first president of the Log College of New Jersey (later Princeton) said of education: "Cursed be all that learning that is contrary to the Cross of Christ."