**Objectively Summarizing Source Materials**

**Short Research Topic: Puritanism**

**Source 1: Encyclopedia Britannica Article**

"Puritanism". *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.*

Encyclopædia Britannica Inc. Copyright 2012. Researched June 26 2012.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/484034/Puritanism>.

Puritanism, a religious reform movement in the late 16th and 17th centuries that sought to “purify” the Church of England of remnants of the Roman Catholic “popery” that the Puritans claimed had been retained after the religious settlement reached early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Puritans became noted in the 17th century for a spirit of moral and religious earnestness that informed their whole way of life, and they sought through church reform to make their lifestyle the pattern for the whole nation. Their efforts to transform the nation contributed both to civil war in England and to the founding of colonies in America as working models of the Puritan way of life.

Puritanism may be defined primarily by the intensity of the religious experience that it fostered. Puritans believed that it was necessary to be in a covenant relationship with God in order to redeem one from one’s sinful condition, that God had chosen to reveal salvation through preaching, and that the Holy Spirit was the energizing instrument of salvation. Calvinist theology and polity proved to be major influences in the formation of Puritan teachings. This naturally led to the rejection of much that was characteristic of Anglican ritual at the time, these being viewed as “popish idolatry.” In its place the Puritans emphasized preaching that drew on images from scripture and from everyday experience. Still, because of the importance of preaching, the Puritans placed a premium on a learned ministry. The moral and religious earnestness that was characteristic of Puritans was combined with the doctrine of predestination inherited from Calvinism to produce a “covenant theology,” a sense of themselves as elect spirits chosen by God to live godly lives both as individuals and as a community.

King Henry VIII separated the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church in 1534, and the cause of Protestantism advanced rapidly under Edward VI (reigned 1547–53). During the reign of Queen Mary (1553–58), however, England returned to Roman Catholicism, and many Protestants were forced into exile. Many of the exiles found their way to Geneva, where John Calvin’s church provided a working model of a disciplined church. Out of this experience also came the two most popular books of Elizabethan England—the Geneva Bible and John Foxe’s Book of Martyrs—which provided justification to English Protestants to view England as an elect nation chosen by God to complete the work of the Reformation. Thus, Elizabeth’s accession in 1558 was enthusiastically welcomed by these Protestants; but her early actions while reestablishing Protestantism disappointed those who sought extensive reform, and this faction was unable to achieve its objectives in the Convocation, the primary governing body of the church.

Many of these Puritans—as they came to be known during a controversy over vestments in the 1560s—sought parliamentary support for an effort to institute a presbyterian form of polity for the Church of England. Other Puritans, concerned with the long delay in reform, decided upon a “reformation without tarrying for any.” These “Separatists” repudiated the state church and formed voluntary congregations based on a covenant with God and among themselves. Both groups, but especially the Separatists, were repressed by the establishment. Denied the opportunity to reform the established church, English Puritanism turned to preaching, pamphlets, and a variety of experiments in religious expression and in social behaviour and organization. Its successful growth also owed much to patrons among the nobility and in Parliament and its control of colleges and professorships at Oxford and Cambridge.

Puritan hopes were again raised when the Calvinist James VI of Scotland succeeded Elizabeth as James I of England in 1603. But at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 he dismissed the Puritans’ grievances with the phrase “no bishop, no king.” Puritans remained under pressure. Some were deprived of their positions; others got by with minimal conformity; and still others, who could not accept compromise, fled England. The pressure for conformity increased under Charles I (1625–49) and his archbishop, William Laud. Nevertheless, the Puritan spirit continued to spread, and when civil war broke out between Parliament and Charles in the 1640s, Puritans seized the opportunity to urge Parliament and the nation to renew its covenant with God. Parliament called together a body of clergy to advise it on the government of the church, but this body—the Westminster Assembly—was so badly divided that it failed to achieve reform of church government and discipline. Meanwhile, the New Model Army, which had defeated the royalist forces, feared that the Assembly and Parliament would reach a compromise with King Charles that would destroy their gains for Puritanism, so it seized power and turned it over to its hero, Oliver Cromwell. The religious settlement under Cromwell’s Commonwealth allowed for a limited pluralism that favoured the Puritans. A number of radical Puritan groups appeared, including the Levelers, the Diggers, the Fifth Monarchy Men, and the Quakers (the only one of lasting significance).

After Cromwell’s death in 1658, conservative Puritans supported the restoration of King Charles II and a modified episcopal polity. However, they were outmaneuvered by those who reinstituted Laud’s strict episcopal pattern. Thus, English Puritanism entered a period known as the Great Persecution. English Puritans made a final unsuccessful attempt to secure their ideal of a comprehensive church during the Glorious Revolution, but England’s religious solution was defined in 1689 by the Toleration Act, which continued the established church as episcopal but also tolerated dissenting groups.

The Puritan ideal of realizing the Holy Commonwealth by the establishment of a covenanted community was carried to the American colony of Virginia by Thomas Dale, but the greatest opportunity came in New England. The original pattern of church organization in the Massachusetts Bay colony was a “middle way” between presbyterianism and Separatism, yet in 1648 four New England Puritan colonies jointly adopted the Cambridge Platform, establishing a congregational form of church government.

The New England Puritans fashioned the civil commonwealth according to the framework of the church. Only the elect could vote and rule. When this raised problems for second-generation residents, they adopted the Half-Way Covenant, which permitted baptized, moral, and orthodox persons to share the privileges of church membership. Other variations of the Puritan experiment were established in Rhode Island by Roger Williams, who was banished from the Massachusetts Bay colony, and in Pennsylvania by the Quaker William Penn.

**Source 2: Victorian Web Article**

Cody, David. “Puritanism in New England.” *The Victorian Web: Literature, History, and Culture in the Age of Victoria.* Updated December 29, 2009. Researched June 26, 2012. < http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/puritan2.html>.

In 1608 a group of Puritan separatists, attempting to escape religious persecution, fled England for the Netherlands. They remained there until 1620, but, fearing that they were losing their cultural identity, they decided to settle in Delaware in the New World. A mixed group of Puritan emigrants (the "Pilgrims") and adventurers from England sailed to America on the Mayflower and landed, accidentally, on Cape Cod in November 1620. Within five months half of the original 101 colonists were dead. During the course of the early seventeenth century, however, increasing numbers of immigrants, many but by no means all of them Puritans, managed to establish a group of autonomous North American colonies, including Plymouth (1620), Massachusetts (1628), New Hampshire (1629), Connecticut (1633), Maine (1635), Rhode Island (1636), and New Haven (1638). Like their counterparts in Britain they were extreme Calvinistic Protestants who viewed the Reformation as a victory of true Christianity over Roman Catholicism. They believed that the Universe was God- centered, and that man, inherently sinful and corrupt, rescued from damnation (if indeed he was) only by arbitrary divine grace, was duty-bound to do God's will, which he could understand best by studying the Bible and the universe which God had created and which he controlled.

Their isolation in the New World, their introversion, the harshness and dangers of their new existence, their sense that they were a new Chosen People of God destined to found a New Jerusalem -- a New City of God in the midst of the wilderness -- insured that American Puritanism would remain more severe (and, frequently, more intellectually subtle and rigorous) than that which they had left behind. The American Puritan tended to interpret the Bible, which had supreme literary value because it was the perfect word of God, even more literally than did his British counterparts. Though many of the original American Puritans -- many of whom were both preachers and authors -- had attended English Universities, they tended to form religious oligarchies and sought to establish a purified church -- which meant the frequently harsh imposition of religious uniformity upon an unwilling populace.

It was to escape Puritan religious persecution that Roger Williams, a minister from Salem, established his colony in Rhode Island in 1636. The overt remnants of Puritanism did not die out in New England until well into the nineteenth century, and it echoes in American society today. In coming to the New World in the first place, Puritans altered the course of history, for better or for worse. There were approximately 4,000,000 English- speaking people in the entire world in 1603: less than four centuries later there are over seventy-five times that number.

**Source 3: PBS Article**

*Public Broadcasting Station. God in America Series.* “People and Ideas: The Puritans.” WGBH Educational Foundation. Updated October 11, 2010. Copyright 2012. Researched June 26, 2012. < http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/people/puritans.html.>

Like the Pilgrims, the Puritans were English Protestants who believed that the reforms of the Church of England did not go far enough. In their view, the liturgy was still too Catholic. Bishops lived like princes. Ecclesiastical courts were corrupt. Because the king of England was head of both church and state, the Puritans' opposition to religious authority meant they also defied the civil authority of the state.

In 1630, the Puritans set sail for America. Unlike the Pilgrims who had left 10 years earlier, the Puritans did not break with the Church of England, but instead sought to reform it. Seeking comfort and reassurance in the Bible, they imagined themselves re-enacting the story of the Exodus. Like the ancient Israelites, they were liberated by God from oppression and bound to him by a covenant; like the Israelites, they were chosen by God to fulfill a special role in human history: to establish a new, pure Christian commonwealth. Onboard the flagship Arbella, their leader John Winthrop reminded them of their duties and obligations under the covenant. If they honored their obligations to God, they would be blessed; if they failed, they would be punished.

Arriving in New England, the Puritans established the Massachusetts Bay Colony in a town they named Boston. Life was hard, but in this stern and unforgiving place they were free to worship as they chose. The Bible was central to their worship. Their church services were simple. The organ and all musical instruments were forbidden. Puritans sang psalms a cappella.

The Puritans were strict Calvinists, or followers of the reformer John Calvin. Calvin taught that God was all-powerful and completely sovereign. Human beings were depraved sinners. God had chosen a few people, "the elect," for salvation. The rest of humanity was condemned to eternal damnation. But no one really knew if he or she was saved or damned; Puritans lived in a constant state of spiritual anxiety, searching for signs of God's favor or anger. The experience of conversion was considered an important sign that an individual had been saved.

Salvation did not depend on outward behavior, but on a radical undertaking that demanded each individual to plumb the very depths of his heart and soul. This "Covenant of Grace" contrasted with the "Covenant of Works," which stressed the importance of righteous behavior. Faith, not works, was the key to salvation. The experience of conversion did not happen suddenly; it proceeded in fits and starts punctuated by doubt, as divine power worked its way on fragile human material.

But it was not only individual salvation that mattered; the spiritual health and welfare of the community as a whole was paramount as well, for it was the community that honored and kept the covenant. The integrity of the community demanded religious conformity. Dissent was tolerated, but only within strict limits.

John Winthrop understood that people were bound to disagree and was willing to tolerate a range of opinion and belief. But he also recognized that if dissent were not kept within bounds, it would undermine the community. And that is precisely what happened. Two members of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson, challenged the religious authority of the Puritan commonwealth and threatened to destroy Winthrop's vision of "a city upon a hill."

The colony survived, but over time its religious fervor diminished. Scholars disagree about when and why this happened. The Puritans themselves found it difficult to maintain a society in a state of creative uncertainty. In 1679, a Puritan synod met to deliberate the causes of widespread spiritual malaise. Blame was assigned to an increase in swearing; a tendency to sleep at sermons; the spread of sex and alcohol, especially in taverns, where women were known to bare their arms and, upon occasion, even their breasts; and, most telling, the marked increase in lying and lawsuits.