



Empowering People to Change the World

**America: A City on a Hill
The Puritan Vision**

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Road Declaration...

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Who were these Puritans?

Puritanism was at its heart a spiritual movement, passionately concerned with God and godliness.

Puritanism was essentially a movement for church reform, pastoral renewal, and evangelism and spiritual revival; and in addition—in deed, as a direct expression of its zeal for God’s honour—it was a world-view, a total Christian philosophy, in intellectual terms a Protestantised and updated medievalism, and in terms of spirituality a reformed monasticism outside the cloister and away from monkish vows. The Puritan goal was to complete what England’s Reformation began; to finish reshaping Anglican worship, to introduce effective church discipline into Anglican parishes, to establish righteousness in the political, domestic, and socio-economic fields, and to convert all Englishmen to a vigorous evangelical faith.

In the 17th century, the Puritan Movement took off in England.

John Winthrop, the Nehemiah of the Puritan Movement

I desire to make it one of my chief petitions to have that grace to be poor in spirit. I will ever walk humbly before my God, and meekly, mildly, and gently towards all men.... I do resolve first to give myself—my life, my wits, my health, my wealth—to the service of my God and Saviour Who, by giving Himself for me and to me, deserves whatsoever I am or can be, to be at His commandment and for His Glory. (John Winthrop, age 24)

O Lord...Thou assurest my heart that I am in a right course, even the narrow way that leads to heaven. Thou tellest me, and all experience tells me, that in this way there is least company, and those who do walk openly in this way shall be despised, pointed at, hated by the world, made a byword, reviled, slandered, rebuked, made a gazing stock. (John Winthrop, age 28)

What He hath planted, He will maintain. Every plantation His right hand hath not planted shall be rooted up, but His own plantation shall prosper and flourish. When He promiseth peace and safety, what enemies shall be able to make the promise of God of none effect? Neglect not walls and bulwarks and fortifications for your own defense, but ever the name of the Lord be your strong tower, and the word of His promise the rock of your refuge. His word that made heaven and earth will not fail, till heaven and earth be no more.

In 1630, the Arbella, led by John Winthrop, sailed for America.

Matthew 22:35-40

Winthrop wrote “A Model for Christian Charity.”

This love among Christians is a real thing, not imaginary...as absolutely necessary to the [well] being of the Body of Christ, as the sinews and other ligaments of a natural body are to the [well] being of that body.... We are a company, professing ourselves fellow members of Christ, [and thus] we ought to account ourselves knit together by this bond of love....

Thus, stands the cause between God and us: we are entered into covenant with Him for this work. We have taken out a commission; the Lord hath given us leave to draw our own articles.... If the Lord shall please to hear us and bring us in peace to the place we desire, then hath He ratified this Covenant and sealed our commission, [and] will expect a strict performance of the articles contained in it. But if we shall neglect the observance of these articles...the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us.

Now the only way to avoid this shipwreck and to provide for our posterity is to follow the counsel of Micah, to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God. For this end, we must be knit together in this work as one man....We must delight in each other, make one another's condition our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our commission and community in the work, as members of the same body. So shall we keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace....We shall find that the God of Israel is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies, when He shall make us a praise and glory, that men of succeeding plantations shall say, 'The Lord make it like that of New England.' For we must consider that we shall be as a City upon a Hill....

Without doubt, a miracle took place upon Winthrop's arrival: a nearly dead colony was resurrected. And from all reports, God's single instrument in this resurrection was John Winthrop. Cotton Mather would refer to Winthrop as "Nehemias Americanus" — in reference to the Old Testament leader who had brought the Israelites back from their Babylonian exile to the Promised Land, and, had directed the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. But more important, Nehemiah had inspired them to resume their covenant with God.

[So soon] as Mr. Winthrop was landed, perceiving what misery was like to ensue through their idleness, he presently fell to work with his own hands, and thereby so encouraged the rest that there was not an idle person then to be found in the whole plantation. And whereas the Indians said they [the newcomers] would shortly return as fast as they came. Now they admired to see in what short time they had housed themselves and planted corn sufficient for their subsistence.

What can be learned from the Puritans? What was their original vision for America?

- 1. The Puritans believed America would be a City on a Hill.**
- 2. The Puritans believed that all work is worship.**
- 3. The Puritans believed in the centrality of the Bible.**

Deuteronomy 30:14-16

“But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.”

- 4. The Puritans gave us a passion for effective action.**
- 5. The Puritans gave us a stable family life.**
- 6. The Puritans gave us an ideal for church reformation.**