MEET THE
PURITANS:
A Summary

Puritans too often have the reputation of being black-clad moralists self-righteously proclaiming the values of thrift and hard work. According to the American writer and humorist H. L. Mencken, a Puritan is a person who suspects that “somewhere someone is having a good time.” To call someone a puritan is usually not a compliment.

This negative image, however, is based on a stereotype of the 16th-century Puritans that, like most stereotypes, is full of half-truths and misconceptions. True, the Puritans did value hard work and self-sacrifice, but they also honored material success. Wealth was considered to be the reward of a virtuous life. Some Puritans, especially the early Pilgrims, wore severe black clothing because that was all they had. Those who settled the Massachusetts Bay Colony after 1630, however, were better off financially. They could afford decorative and colorful clothing—when they could find it in the colony, that is. These Puritans were even known to drink beer and other alcoholic beverages on occasion.

Puritans also value family life, community service, art, and literature. They were the first in the colonies to establish a printing press, free public grammar schools, and a college (Harvard).

On the other hand, the Puritans were arrogant in their religious faith and completely intolerant of viewpoints different from their own. Puritans who remained in England participated in a revolution that not only toppled the king but had him beheaded as well. Those who had come to North America had even freer rein for their beliefs. With supreme confidence and self-consciousness, they went about setting up their institutions as though not only God but the whole world were watching. “The eyes of all people are on us,” proclaimed John Winthrop, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. And so it was that in New England during the 1600s Puritanism gained its fullest and perhaps purest development.
PURITANISM IN AMERICA

The Puritans were a group of people who grew discontent in the Church of England and worked towards religious, moral, and societal reforms. The writings and ideas of John Calvin, a leader in the Reformation, gave rise to Puritanism and were pivotal to the Christian revolt. They contended that the Church of England had become a product of political struggles and man-made doctrines. The Puritans were one branch of dissenters who decided that the Church of England was beyond reform. Escaping persecution from church leadership and the King, they came to America.

The Puritans believed that the Bible was God’s true law, and that it provided a plan for living. The established church of the day described access to God as monastic and possible only within the confines of “church authority”. Puritans stripped away the traditional trappings and formalities of Christianity which had been slowly building throughout the previous 1500 years. Theirs was an attempt to “purify” the church and their own lives.

What many of us remember about the Puritans is reflective of the modern definition of the term and not of the historical account. Point one, they were not a small group of people. In England many of their persuasion sat in Parliament. So great was the struggle that England's Civil War pitted the Puritans against the Crown Forces. Though the Puritans won the fight with Oliver Cromwell's leadership, their victory was short-lived; hence their displacement to America. Point two, the witchcraft trials did not appropriately define their methods of living for the 100+ years that they formed successful communities. What it did show was the danger that their self-imposed isolation had put them in.

Most of the Puritans settled in the New England area. As they immigrated and formed individual colonies, their numbers rose from 17,800 in 1640 to 106,000 in 1700. Religious exclusiveness was the foremost principle of their society. The spiritual beliefs that they held were strong. This strength held over to include community laws and. Since God was at the forefront of their minds, He was to motivate all of their actions. This premise worked both for them and against them.

The common unity strengthened the community. In a foreign land surrounded with the hardships of pioneer life, their spiritual bond made them sympathetic to each other's needs. Their overall survival techniques permeated the colonies and on the whole made them more successful in several areas beyond that of the colonies established to their south.

Each church congregation was to be individually responsible to God, as was each person. The New Testament was their model and their devotion so great that it permeated their entire society. People of opposing theological views were asked to leave the community or to be converted.

Their interpretation of scriptures was a harsh one. They emphasized conversion and not repression. Conversion was a rejection of the "worldliness" of society and a strict adherence to Biblical principles. While repression was not encouraged in principle, it was evident in their actions. God could forgive anything, but man could forgive only by seeing a change in behavior. Actions spoke louder than words, so actions had to be constantly controlled.

The doctrine of predestination kept all Puritans constantly working to do good in this life to be chosen for the next eternal one. God had already chosen who would be in heaven or hell, and each believer had no way of knowing which group they were in. Those who were wealthy were obviously blessed by God and were in good standing with Him. The Protestant work ethic was the belief that hard work was an honor to God that would lead to a prosperous reward. Any deviations from the normal way of Puritan life met with strict disapproval and discipline. Since the church elders were also political leaders, any church infraction was also a social one. There was no margin for error.

The devil was behind every evil deed. Constant watch needed to be kept in order to stay away from his clutches. Words of hellfire and brimstone flowed from the mouths of eloquent ministers as they warned of the persuasiveness of the devil's power. The sermons of Jonathan Edwards, a Puritan minister, show that delivery of these sermons became an art form. They were elegant, well-formed, exegetical renditions of scriptures with a healthy dose of fear woven throughout the fabric of the literary construction. Grammar children were quizzed on the material at school and at home. This constant subjection of the probability of an unseen danger led to a scandal of epidemic proportions.

Great pains were taken to warn their members and especially their children of the dangers of the "worldliness" of society and a strict adherence to Biblical principles. While repression was not encouraged in principle, it was evident in their actions. For the first time in history, free schooling was offered for all children. Puritans formed the first formal school in 1635, called the Roxbury Latin School. Four years later, the first American College was established: Harvard in Cambridge. Children aged 6-8 attended a "Dame school"
where the teacher, who was usually a widow, taught reading. "Ciphering" (math) and writing were low on the academic agenda.

In 1638, the first printing press arrived. By 1700, Boston became the second largest publishing center of the English Empire. The Puritans were the first to write books for children, and to discuss the difficulties in communicating with them. At a time when other Americans were physically blazing trails through the forests, the Puritans’ efforts in areas of study were advancing the country intellectually.

Religion provided a stimulus and prelude for scientific thought. Of those Americans who were admitted into the scientific "Royal Society of London," the vast majority were New England Puritans.

The large number of people who ascribed to the lifestyle of the Puritans did much to firmly establish a presence on American soil. Bound together, they established a community that maintained a healthy economy, established a school system, and focused an efficient eye on political concerns. The moral character of England and America were shaped in part by the words and actions of this strong group of Christian believers called the Puritans.

In the beginning there was no world, no land, no creatures of the kind that are around us now, and there were no men. But there was a great ocean, which occupied space as far as anyone could see. Above the ocean was a great void of air. And in the air there lived the birds of the sea; in the ocean lived the fish and the creatures of the deep. Far above this unpeopled world, there was a Sky World. Here lived gods who were like people—like Iroquois.

In the Sky World there was a man who had a wife, and the wife was expecting a child. The woman became hungry for all kinds of strange delicacies, as women do when they are with child. She kept her husband busy almost to distraction finding delicious things for her to eat. In the middle of the Sky World there grew a Great Tree, which was not like any of the trees that we know. It was tremendous; it had grown there forever. It had enormous roots that spread out from the floor of the Sky World. And on its branches there were many different kinds of leaves and different kinds of fruits and flowers. The tree was not supposed to be marked or mutilated by any of the beings who dwelt in the Sky World. It was a sacred tree that stood at the center of the universe.

The woman decided that she wanted some bark from one of the roots of the Great Tree—perhaps as a food or as a medicine, we don’t know. She told her husband this. He didn’t like the idea. He knew it was wrong. But she insisted, and he gave in. So he dug a hole among the roots of this great sky tree, and he bared some of its roots. But the floor of the Sky World wasn’t very thick, and he broke a hole through it. He was terrified, for he had never expected to find empty space underneath the world.

But his wife was filled with curiosity. He wouldn’t get any of the roots for her, so she set out to do it herself. She bent over and she looked down, and she saw the ocean far below. She leaned down and stuck her head through the hole and looked all around. No one knows just what happened next. Some say she slipped. Some say that her husband, fed up with all the demands she had made on him, pushed her.

So she fell through the hole. As she fell, she frantically grabbed at its edges, but her hands slipped. However, between her fingers there clung bits of things that were growing on the floor of the Sky World and bits of the root tips of the Great Tree. And so she began to fall toward the great ocean far below.

The birds of the sea saw the woman falling, and they immediately consulted with each other as to what they could do to help her. Flying wingtip to wingtip they made a great feathery raft in the sky to support her, and thus they broke her fall. But of course it was not possible for them to carry the woman very long. Some of the other birds of the sky flew down to the surface of the ocean and called up the ocean creatures to see what they could do to help. The great sea turtle came and agreed to receive her on his back. The birds placed her gently on the shell of the turtle, and now the turtle floated about on the huge ocean with the woman safely on his back.

The beings in the Sky World paid no attention to this. They knew what was happening, but they chose to ignore it.

When the woman recovered from her shock and terror, she looked around her. All that she could see were the birds and the sea creatures and the sky and the ocean.

And the woman said to herself that she would die. But the creatures of the sea came to her and said that they would try to help her and asked her what they could do.
dance and sing in the rituals so that the corn, the beans, and the squash may grow to feed the people.

But the conflict of the twins did not end at the grave of their mother. And, strangely enough, the grandmother favored the left-handed twin. The right-handed twin was angry, and he grew more angry as he thought how his brother had killed their mother. The right-handed twin was the one who did everything just as he should. He said what he meant, and he meant what he said. He always told the truth, and he always tried to accomplish what seemed to be right and reasonable. The left-handed twin never said what he meant or meant what he said. He always lied, and he always did things backwards. You could never tell what he was trying to do because he always made it look as if he were doing the opposite. He was the devious one.

These two brothers, as they grew up, represented two ways of the world, which are in all people. The Iroquois did not call these the right and the wrong. They called them the straight minds and the crooked mind, the upright man and the devious man, the right and the left. The twins had creative powers. They took clay and modeled it into animals, and they gave these animals life. And in this they contended with one another. The right-handed twin made the deer and the left-handed twin made the mountain lion, which kills the deer. But the right-handed twin knew there would always be more deer than mountain lions. And he made another animal. He made the ground squirrel. The left-handed twin said that the mountain lion could not get to the ground squirrel, who digs a hole, so he made the weasel. And although the weasel can go into the ground squirrel's hole and kill him, there are lots of ground squirrels and not so many weasels. Next the right-handed twin decided he would make an animal that the weasel could not kill, so he made the porcupine. But the left-handed twin made the bear, who flips the porcupine over on his back and tears out his belly. And the right-handed twin made berries and fruits of other kinds for his creatures to live on. The left-handed twin made briars and poison ivy, and the poisonous plants like the baneberry and the dogberry, and the suicide root with which people kill themselves when they go out of their minds. And the left-handed twin made medicines, for good and for evil, for doctoring and for witchcraft.

When the woman awoke from her faint, she and her mother continued to walk around the earth. After a while, they knew that the girl was to bear a child. They did not know it, but the girl was to bear twins.

Within the girl's body, the twins began to argue and quarrel with one another. There could be no peace between them. As the time approached for them to be born, the twins fought about their birth. The right-handed twin wanted to be born in the normal way, as all children are born. But the left-handed twin said no. He said he saw light in another direction, and said he would be born that way. The right-handed twin beseeched him not to, saying that he would kill their mother. But the left-handed twin was stubborn. He went in the direction where he saw light. But he could not be born through his mother's mouth or her nose. He was born through her left armpit, and killed her. And meanwhile, the right-handed twin was born in the normal way, as all children are born.

The twins met in the world outside, and the right-handed twin accused his brother of murdering their mother. But the grandmother told them to stop their quarreling. They buried their mother. And from her grave grew the plants, which the people still use.

The head grew the corn, the beans, and the squash—"our supporters, the three sisters." And from her heart grew the sacred tobacco, which the people still use in the ceremonies and by whose upward floating smoke they send thanks. The women call her "our mother," and they
of them would have to vanquish the other.

And so they came to the duel. They started with gambling. They took a wooden bowl, and in it they put wild plum pits. One side of each pit was burned black, and by tossing the pits in the bowl, and betting on how these would fall, they gambled against one another, as the people still do in the New Year’s rites. All through the morning they gambled at this game, and all through the afternoon, and the sun went down. And when the sun went down, the game was done, and neither one had won.

So they went on to battle one another at the lacrosse game. And they contested all day, and the sun went down, and the game was done. And neither had won.

And now they battled with clubs, and they fought all day, and the sun went down, and the fight was done. But neither had won.

And they went from one duel to another to see which one would succumb. Each one knew in his deepest mind that there was something, somewhere, that would vanquish the other. But what was it? Where to find it?

Each knew somewhere in his mind what it was that was his own weak point. They talked about this as they contested in these duels, day after day, and somehow the deep mind of each entered into the other. And the deep mind of the right-handed twin lied to his brother, and the deep mind of the left-handed twin told the truth.

On the last day of the duel, as they stood, they at last knew how the right-handed twin was to kill his brother. Each selected his weapon. The left-handed twin chose a mere stick that would do him no good. But the right-handed twin picked out the deer antler, and with one touch he destroyed his brother. And the left-handed twin died, but he died and he didn’t die. The right-handed twin picked up the body and cast it off the edge of the earth. And some place below the world, the left-handed twin still lives and reigns.

When the sun rises from the east and travels in a huge arc along the sky dome, which rests like a great upside-down cup on the saucer of the earth, the people are in the daylight realm of the right-handed twin. But when the sun slips down in the west at nightfall and the dome lifts to let it escape at the western rim, the people are again in the domain of the left-handed twin—the fearful realm of night.

Having killed his brother, the right-handed twin returned home to his grandmother. And she met him in anger. She threw the food out of the cabin onto the ground, and said that he was a murderer, for he had killed his brother. He grew angry and told her she had always helped his brother, who had killed their mother. In his anger, he grabbed her by the throat and cut her head off. Her body he threw into the ocean, and her head, into the sky. There, “Our Grandmother, the Moon,” still keeps watch at night over the realm of her favorite grandson.

The right-handed twin has many names. One of them is Sapling. It means smooth, young, green and fresh and innocent, straightforward, straight-growing, soft and pliable, teachable and trainable. These are the old ways of describing him. But since he has gone away, he has other names. He is called “He Holds Up the Skies,” “Master of Life,” and “Great Creator.”

The left-handed twin also has many names. One of them is Flint. He is called the devious one, the one covered with boils. Old Warty. He is stubborn. He is thought of as being dark in color.

These two beings rule the world and keep an eye on the affairs of men. The right-handed twin, the Master of Life, lives in the Sky World. He is content with the world he helped to create and with his favorite creatures, the humans. The scent of sacred tobacco rising from the earth comes gloriously to his nostrils.

In the world below lives the left-handed twin. He knows the world of men, and he finds contentment in it. He hears the sounds of warfare and torture, and he finds them good.

In the daytime, the people have rituals that honor the right-handed twin. Through the daytime rituals they thank the Master of Life. In the nighttime, the people dance and sing for the left-handed twin.
“Song of the Sky Loom”

Traditional Tewa\(^1\) Song

O our Mother the Earth, o our Father the Sky, Your children are we, and with tired backs
We bring you the gifts you love.
Then wave for us a garment of brightness; May the warp\(^2\) be the white light of morning May the weft\(^3\) be the red light of evening May the fringes be the falling rain
May the border be the standing rainbow Thus weave for us a garment of brightness That we may walk fittingly where birds sing
That we may walk fittingly where grass is green
O, our mother the earth
O, our father the sky

\(^1\) Tewa: The Tewa, who live along the Rio Grande in what is now northern New Mexico, are one of the Pueblo peoples. They are probably descended from the Anasazi and moved into this area from the San Juan River region of Colorado between A.D. 1000 and 1200. They were once a strong nation allied with the Hopi, but they were overpowered first by Plains Indians in the early 16th century and then by the Spanish beginning in 1598.

\(^2\) warp: n. the threads that run lengthwise in a woven fabric

\(^3\) weft: n. the threads interlaced at right angles through the warp threads in a woven fabric

“Evolution”

by Sherman Alexie

Buffalo Bill opens a pawn shop on the reservation right across the border from the liquor store and he stays open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

and the Indians come running in with jewelry television sets, a VCR, a full-length beaded buckskin outfit it took Inez Muse 12 years to finish. Buffalo Bill takes everything the Indians have to offer, keeps it all catalogues and filed in a storage room. The Indians pawn their hands, saving the thumbs for last, they pawn their skeletons, falling endlessly from the skin and when the last Indian has pawned everything but his heart, Buffalo Bill takes that for twenty bucks

closes up the pawn shop, paints a new sign over the old calls his venture THE MUSEUM OF NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURES charges the Indians five bucks a head to enter.

“Prayer”

Yokuts\(^2\) Meditation

"My words are tied in one with the great mountains,
with the great rocks, with the great trees, in one with my body and heart.
All of you see me, one with this world."

Yokuts (from Central California) Prayer

\(^2\) The Yokuts are an ethnic group of Native Americans native to central California.
Puritan Creation Myths

Genesis is the first book of the Bible, which includes the stories of the creation of the world, Noah's Ark, the Tower of Babel, and the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. The name Genesis was given to the first book of the Old Testament in the Greek translation of the Bible (the Septuagint) and was kept in the Latin translation (the Vulgate). The name itself comes from the Greek word for "generation" or "creation," and today in English means "the origin or mode of formation of something."

GENESIS 1: The Creation of the Universe

1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." 7 And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. 8 God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

11 And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. 16 And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. 17 And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

20 And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." 21 So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." 23 And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

24 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. 25 And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them
GENESIS 2: The Creation of Man and Woman

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

5 When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, 6 and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— 7 then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

8 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. 11 The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land is good; beryl and onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. 14 And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

18 Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” 19 Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

GENESIS 3: The Fall of Man

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” 2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” 4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delightful to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God.
among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” 10 And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” 11 He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” 12 The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

14 The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

16 To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

17 And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

20 The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. 21 And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

22 Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever”—23 therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

*Cherubim: n. a winged angelic being described in biblical tradition as attending on God, and regarded in traditional Christian angelology as an angel of the second highest order of the ninefold celestial hierarchy.*
I'm honored that this often shows up on the internet. Here's the correct version, as published in Omni, 1990.

**THEY'RE MADE OUT OF MEAT**
by Terry Bisson

"They're made out of meat."

"Meat?"

"Meat. They're made out of meat."

"Meat?"

"There's no doubt about it. We picked up several from different parts of the planet, took them aboard our recon vessels, and probed them all the way through. They're completely meat."

"That's impossible. What about the radio signals? The messages to the stars?"

"They use the radio waves to talk, but the signals don't come from them. The signals come from machines."

"So who made the machines? That's who we want to contact."

"They made the machines. That's what I'm trying to tell you. Meat made the machines."

"That's ridiculous. How can meat make a machine? You're asking me to believe in sentient meat."

"I'm not asking you, I'm telling you. These creatures are the only sentient race in that sector and they're made out of meat.""

"Maybe they're like the orfolei. You know, a carbon-based intelligence that goes through a meat stage."

"Nope. They're born meat and they die meat. We studied them for several of their life spans, which didn't take long. Do you have any idea what's the life span of meat?"

"Spare me. Okay, maybe they're only part meat. You know, like the weddilei. A meat head with an electron plasma brain inside."

"Nope. We thought of that, since they do have meat heads, like the weddilei. But I told you, we probed them. They're meat all the way through."

"No brain?"

"Oh, there's a brain all right. It's just that the brain is made out of meat! That's what I've been trying to tell you."

"So ... what does the thinking?"

"You're not understanding, are you? You're refusing to deal with what I'm telling you. The brain does the thinking. The meat."

"Thinking meat! You're asking me to believe in thinking meat!"

"Yes, thinking meat! Conscious meat! Loving meat. Dreaming meat. The meat is the whole deal! Are you beginning to get the picture or do I have to start all over?"

"Omigod. You're serious then. They're made out of meat."

"Thank you. Finally. Yes. They are indeed made out of meat. And they've been trying to get in touch with us for almost a hundred of their years."

"Omigod. So what does this meat have in mind?"

"First it wants to talk to us. Then I imagine it wants to explore the Universe, contact other sentiences, swap ideas and information. The usual."

"We're supposed to talk to meat."

"That's the idea. That's the message they're sending out by radio. 'Hello. Anyone out there. Anybody home.' That sort of thing."

"They actually do talk, then. They use words, ideas, concepts?"

"Oh, yes. Except they do it with meat."

"I thought you just told me they used radio."

"They do, but what do you think is on the radio? Meat sounds. You know how when you slap or flap meat, it makes a noise? They talk by flapping their meat at each other. They can even sing by squirting air through their meat."

"Omigod. Singing meat. This is altogether too much. So what do you advise?"

"Officially or unofficially?"

"Both."

"Officially, we are required to contact, welcome and log in any and all sentient races or multibeings in this quadrant of the Universe, without prejudice, fear or favor. Unofficially, I advise that we erase the records and forget the whole thing."

"I was hoping you would say that."

"It seems harsh, but there is a limit. Do we really want to make contact with meat?"

"I agree one hundred percent. What's there to say? 'Hello, meat. How's it going?' But will this work? How many planets are we dealing with here?"
"Just one. They can travel to other planets in special meat containers, but they can't live on them. And being meat, they can only travel through C space. Which limits them to the speed of light and makes the possibility of their ever making contact pretty slim. Infinitesimal, in fact."

"So we just pretend there's no one home in the Universe."

"That's it."

"Cruel. But you said it yourself, who wants to meet meat? And the ones who have been aboard our vessels, the ones you probed? You're sure they won't remember?"

"They'll be considered crackpots if they do. We went into their heads and smoothed out their meat so that we're just a dream to them."

"A dream to meat! How strangely appropriate, that we should be meat's dream."

"And we marked the entire sector unoccupied."

"Good. Agreed, officially and unofficially. Case closed. Any others? Anyone interesting on that side of the galaxy?"

"Yes, a rather shy but sweet hydrogen core cluster intelligence in a class nine star in G445 zone. Was in contact two galactic rotations ago, wants to be friendly again."

"They always come around."

"And why not? Imagine how unbearably, how unutterably cold the Universe would be if one were all alone ..."
Good evening. Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes or in their offices: secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers, moms and dads, friends and neighbors. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror.

The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge — huge structures collapsing have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger.

These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed. Our country is strong. A great people has been moved to defend a great nation.

Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve. America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.

Today, our nation saw evil—the very worst of human nature—and we responded with the best of America. With the daring of our rescue workers, with the caring for strangers and neighbors who came to give blood and help in any way they could.

Immediately following the first attack, I implemented our government's emergency response plans. Our military is powerful, and it's prepared. Our emergency teams are working in New York City and Washington D.C. to help with local rescue efforts.

Our first priority is to get help to those who have been injured, and to take every precaution to protect our citizens at home and around the world from further attacks.

The functions of our government continue without interruption. Federal agencies in Washington which had to be evacuated today are reopening for essential personnel tonight and will be open for business tomorrow. Our financial institutions remain strong, and the American economy will be open for business as well.

The search is underway for those who were behind these evil acts. I have directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.

I appreciate so very much the members of Congress who have joined me in strongly condemning these attacks. And on behalf of the American people, I thank the many world leaders who have called to offer their condolences and assistance.

America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism.

Thank you. Good night. And God bless America.
Sayings from *Poor Richard’s Almanack*
Ben Franklin’s 18th-Century Guide to Success in America

A  An empty bag cannot stand upright.
B  Be always ashamed to catch thyself idle.
C  Cheese and salty meat should be sparingly eat.
D  The Doors of wisdom are never shut.
E  Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.
F  Full of courtesy, full of craft.
G  God helps them that help themselves.
H  Hunger never saw bad bread.
I  If you’d have a servant that you like, serve your self.
J  If Jack’s in love, he’s no judge of Jill’s beauty.
K  Keep thy shop and thy shop will keep thee.
L  A Lie stands on one leg, the truth on two.
M  A Man without a wife is but half a man.
N  Nothing but money is sweeter than honey.
O  One today is worth two tomorrow.
P  Pay what you owe and you’ll know what’s your own.
Q  A Quarrelsome man has no good neighbors.
R  The Rotten apple spoils his companions.
S  Speak little, do much.
T  Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead.
U  Up, sluggard, and waste not life; in the grave will be sleeping enough.
V  Visits should be short, like a winter’s day.
W  Well done is better than well said.
X  A good example is the best sermon.
Y  You may delay, but time will not.
Z  There are lazy minds as well as lazy bodies.
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN’S 13 VIRTUES

1. TEMPERANCE
   Eat not to dullness and drink not to elevation.

2. SILENCE
   Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself. Avoid trifling conversation.

3. ORDER
   Let all your things have their places. Let each part of your business have its time.

4. RESOLUTION
   Resolve to perform what you ought. Perform without fail what you resolve.

5. FRUGALITY
   Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself: i.e., Waste nothing.

6. INDUSTRY
   Lose no time. Be always employed in something useful. Cut off all unnecessary actions.

7. SINCERITY
   Use no hurtful deceit. Think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly.

8. JUSTICE
   Wrong none, by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are you duty.

9. MODERATION
   Avoid extremes. Forebear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.

10. CLEANLINESS
    Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes, or habitation.

11. CHASTITY
    Rarely use venery but for health or offspring; Never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another’s peace or reputation.

12. TRANQUILITY
    Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.

13. HUMILITY
    Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America (1784)
By Benjamin Franklin

Savages we call them, because their manners differ from ours, which we think the perfection of civility; they think the same of theirs.

Perhaps, if we could examine the manners of different nations with impartiality, we should find no people so rude, as to be without any rules of politeness; nor any so polite, as not to have some remains of rudeness.

The Indian men, when young, are hunters and warriors; when old, counselors; for all their government is by counsel of the sages; there is no force, there are no prisons, no officers to compel obedience, or inflict punishment. Hence they generally study oratory, the best speaker having the most influence. The Indian women till the ground, dress the food, nurse and bring up the children, and preserve and hand down to posterity the memory of public transactions. These employments of men and women are accounted natural and honorable. Having few artificial wants, they have abundance of leisure for improvement by conversation. Our laborious manner of life, compared with theirs, they esteem slavish and base; and the learning, on which we value ourselves, they regard as frivolous and useless. An instance of this occurred at the Treaty of Lancaster, in Pennsylvania, anno 1744, between the government of Virginia and the Six Nations.

After the principal business was settled, the commissioners from Virginia acquainted the Indians by a speech, that there was at Williamsburg a college, with a fund for educating Indian youth; and that, if the Six Nations would send down half a dozen of their young lads to that college, the government would take care that they should be well provided for, and instructed in all the learning of the white people. It is one of the Indian rules of politeness not to answer a public proposition the same day that it is made; they think it would be treating it as a light matter, and that they show it respect by taking time to consider it, as of a matter important. They therefore deferred their answer till the day following; when their speaker began, by expressing their deep sense of the kindness of the Virginia government, in making them that offer; “for we know,” says he, “that you highly esteem the kind of learning taught in those Colleges, and that the maintenance of our young men, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We are convinced, therefore, that you mean to do us good by your proposal; and we thank you heartily. But you, who are wise, must know that different nations have different conceptions of things; and you will therefore not take it amiss, if our ideas of this kind of education happen not to be the same with yours. We have had some experience of it; several of our young people were formerly brought up at the colleges of the northern provinces; they were instructed in all your sciences; but, when they came back to us, they were bad runners, ignorant of every means of living in the woods, unable to bear either cold or hunger, knew neither how to build a cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy, spoke our language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for hunters, warriors, nor counselors; they were totally good for nothing. We are however not the less obliged by your kind offer, though we decline accepting it; and, to show our grateful sense of it, if the gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of their sons, we will take great care of their education, instruct them in all we know, and make men of them.”
Mr. President: No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the House. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and, therefore, I hope it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen if, entertaining as I do opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve.

This is no time for ceremony. The question before the House is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part, I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at truth, and fulfill the great responsibility which we hold to ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained—we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of hosts is all that is left to defend the liberties of this country. For my own part, I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at truth, and fulfill the great responsibility which we hold to ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained—we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of hosts is all that is left to defend the liberties of this country.

Speech to the Virginia Convention

By Patrick Henry (March, 1775)

Until the mid-1700s, American colonists largely had been content to be under British rule. However, tension grew between Great Britain and her American colonies after the end of the French and Indian War in 1763. Although Britain had defeated the French and their Indian allies, thousands of British troops remained quartered in the colonies, which caused resentment among the colonists. Their resentment increased and angry protests ensued when, beginning in 1764, the British Parliament passed a series of harsh laws and taxes.

To discuss the growing crisis, the First Continental Congress, composed of delegates from all 13 colonies except Georgia, met in Philadelphia in 1774. The delegates held out hope that they could restore the colonies’ relationship with Great Britain, and they sent formal petitions to King George III and the British people, asking for their rights as British subjects. Six months after this meeting, in March 1775, the Second Virginia Provincial Convention was called to vote on whether Virginia should take up arms to defend against a feared British attack. Patrick Henry, the most famous orator of the American Revolution, delivered a fiery speech to convince delegates of the need for armed resistance. Less than a month after this speech, Massachusetts volunteers fought British troops in the battles at Lexington and Concord. About 15 months after the speech, the Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence.

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An OMISSION from the DECLARATION

Thomas Jefferson, who in 1801 became the third President of the United States, was born in Virginia of a slave-holding family and himself owned slaves; but he was a cultivated man whose political conventions were influenced by his study of great liberal philosophers: Rousseau, Locke, and Montesquieu.

As chairman of the committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote into his first rough draft a paragraph condemning human bondage in which he denounced George III for the propagation of slavery in the colonies and said of the English sovereign:

“He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of distant people who never offended him, capturing and transporting thither. This practical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the Christian King of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! Their gales are heard in every ear the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, “Peace! peace!”—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north! Will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be preferred to the chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God!

I know not what course others may take but as for me: give me liberty or give me death!

FACT AND FICTION: Demythologizing American Icons

Patrick Henry, like many of America’s founding fathers, is so prominently lionized in American mythology that most Americans have come to accept him as the iconic American patriot that courageously defied the tyranny of Great Britain, paving the way for American independence. But this is simply not the case. Henry’s brave and eloquent challenge to monarchy appears to have been entirely invented 41 years after his speech was made, 17 years after Henry died, by a priggish biographer named William Wirt, who had never met, seen, or heard of Henry. Thomas Jefferson, who was at the Virginia Convention, made no comment about the accuracy of Wirt’s account of events on that day, but he did freely offer the opinion that Wirt’s effort was “a poor book, written in bad taste, and gives an imperfect idea of Patrick Henry.” Nor is there any evidence that Patrick Henry ever uttered the other famous remark attributed to him: “I know not what course others may take but as for me: give me liberty or give me death!” Indeed, there is no evidence that Henry ever said anything of substance or found space in his head for a single original thought. He was a country bumpkin, unread, poorly educated, and famously lazy. His manner of expression was comically provincial and frequently ungrammatical. He did, it is true, have certain oratorical powers, but these appeared to owe more to a gift for hypnotic loudness than to any command of thought or language. His style of speech was a kind of verbal trickery that, in the words of one contemporary, “baffled all description.” Thomas Jefferson once recalled: “When [Henry] had spoken in opposition to my opinion, had produced a great effect, and I myself had been highly delighted and moved, I have asked myself when it ceased, ‘What the Devil has he said,’ and could never answer the enquiry.”

But slavery was too profitable a business in the colonies, and this paragraph was not acceptable to the Southern delegation. It was omitted from the final version of the Declaration as adopted by the Continental Congress of the United States on July 4, 1776. So, from the beginnings of the new nation’s history, the vote-less Negro bondsman influenced the policies and documents of the new republic.

King George III
WAS THE SAGE A HYPOCRITE?
By Annette Gordon-Reed | Time Magazine | 5 July 2004

Of all the Founding Fathers, it was Thomas Jefferson for whom the issue of race loomed largest. In the roles of slaveholder, public official and family man, the relationship between blacks and whites was something he thought about, wrote about and grappled with from his cradle to his grave. Jefferson's first memory was of being carried on a pillow by a slave when he was two years old; on his deathbed, the last face he saw was that of the slave who attended him in his final hour. The interest in Jefferson's racial views, long the subject of scrutiny, has reached a crescendo in our time. As Americans attempt to build a more egalitarian, multiracial future, we crave a better understanding of what the man credited with most eloquently expressing the American creed felt about race. What did Jefferson think about black people? How does his relationship with Sally Hemings complete our picture of him? How should we, in a more racially enlightened era, interpret what we know about his thoughts and actions?

Two documents authored by Jefferson have served as templates for examining his racial beliefs. The Jefferson we know from the Declaration of Independence pronounced "all men are created equal," a phrase that provided a central argument for ending slavery and bringing blacks into citizenship, and it still offers the best hope for conquering the doctrine of white supremacy. As unbelievable as it may seem to modern observers who have a knee-jerk sensitivity to signs of Jeffersonian hypocrisy, this language genuinely alarmed many of Jefferson's contemporaries. Even though Jefferson was a slaveholder, the sentiments in the Declaration, when added to his well-known antislavery stance and his support for the hierarchy-shattering French Revolution, made him seem a radical bent on leveling the social order. Whether he truly believed in the equality of mankind or not, they argued, it was dangerous for him to express the thought--people would get ideas. They were exactly right. People did get ideas, and continue to do so.

Then there's the Jefferson of the Notes on the State of Virginia, who in the time-honored fashion—"I'm no racist but..."—proclaimed whites' superior beauty and ventured his "suspicion" that although racial intermixture improved them, blacks were intellectually inferior to whites. Although he qualified his disparaging remarks because he hadn't observed blacks in their natural state of freedom in Africa, Jefferson's presentation leaves no doubt that he, like a typical white person of the 18th century, believed in white supremacy. Consider Abigail Adams, who upon seeing Othello expressed her "disgust and horror" at the thought of a black man touching a white woman. And the Jefferson-Hemings connection places Jefferson firmly within the world of Southern plantation society, where the rules of the game featured public denunciations of "amalgamation" but private practice of it at all levels of white society.

Perhaps most challenging to America's present aspirations is Jefferson's belief that blacks and whites could never coexist as equal citizens of the U.S. Whites, he said, would never give up their prejudices against blacks, and blacks would never forgive what whites had done to them. This is often cited as another example of how wrong Jefferson could be about the future of the American experiment. In reality, it shows that Jefferson had a deeper understanding of the true nature of America's racial dilemma than many are comfortable admitting. Yes, blacks are citizens. But look what it took to achieve that status and maintain it: a civil war followed by an endless procession of lawsuits, legal initiatives, commissions and efforts at social engineering, all designed to prop up blacks' civil and social rights. It has been a hard road, and the Jefferson of the Notes would be astounded that we have come this far. The Jefferson of the Declaration, who at the end of his life voiced the hope that the document's mandate would one day apply "to all," would understand that we still have ground to cover.
MARCH 31, 1776 ABIGAIL ADAMS TO JOHN ADAMS

"I long to hear that you have declared an independency. And, by the way, in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would Remember the Ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember, all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or Representation.

That your Sex are Naturally Tyrannical is a Truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute; but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up—the harsh tide of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend. Why, then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity? Men of Sense in all ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the (servants) of your sex; regard us then as beings placed by Providence under your protection, and in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power only for our happiness."

APRIL 14, 1776 JOHN ADAMS TO ABIGAIL ADAMS

"As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, I cannot but laugh. We have been told that our Struggle has loosened the bonds of Government everywhere; that Children and Apprentices were disobedient; that schools and Colleges were grown turbulent; that Indians slighted their Guardians, and Negroes grew insolent to their masters. But your letter was the first intimation that another Tribe, more numerous and powerful than all the rest, were grown discontented. This is rather too coarse a Compliment, but you are so saucy, I won't blot it out.

Depend upon it, We know better than to repeal our Masculine systems. Although they are in full Force, you know they are little more than theory. We dare not exert our Power in its full Latitude. We are obliged to go fair and softly, and, in practice, you know we are the subjects. We have only the Name of Masters, and rather than give up this, which would completely subject us to the Despotism of the Petticoat, I hope General Washington and all our brave heroes would fight. I am sure every good Politician would plot as long as long as he would against Despotism, Empire, Monarchy, Aristocracy, Oligarchy, or Ochlocracy—a find Story indeed. I begin to think the Ministry as deep as they are wicked. After stirring up Tories, Landjobbers, Trimmers, Bigotts, Canadians, Indians, Negroes, Hanoverians, Hessians, Russians, Irish Roman Catholics, Scotch Renegadoes, at last they have Privileges and threaten to rebel."

MAY 7, 1776 ABIGAIL ADAMS TO JOHN ADAMS

"I cannot say that I think you are very generous to the ladies; for, whilst you are proclaiming peace and good-will to men, emancipating all nations, you insist upon retaining an absolute power over wives.