Paradoxes and contradictions within the American value system have been perceived by social observers dating as far back as Bryce and Tocqueville. Robin Williams, in his description of the major value orientations in American culture, notes the curious co-existence of such values as external conformity, racism and related group-superiority alongside the more frequently extolled values of individualism, freedom and equality (Williams, 1963: 466-68). Williams' analysis, while valuable, fails to probe the historical origins of such internal contradictions. To use modern American culture as an example of an ambivalent or even schizoid culture is to exaggerate its uniqueness among world societies, past and present. Such temporocentrism, unfortunately, lends credence to the oft-repeated criticism that American sociology is anti- or at least ahistorical in its approach. This paper is an attempt to move beyond the time perspective common to American sociology, and to search for some historical clues that might help explain the existence of seemingly logical contradictions in the American value system. It is not my purpose to consider Myrdal’s “American Dilemma”—i.e., the gap between the real and ideal in American culture—but to examine instead certain discrepancies within the ideal culture itself.

Consensus among contemporary sociologists on the definition of values is yet to be attained. One of the more popular definitions has been Kluckhohn’s classically simple one of values as “conceptions of the desirable.” Milton Rokeach offers a more elaborate definition: “A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence (Rokeach, 1973: 5-7). He also distinguishes between “instrumental” values
(desirable modes of conduct) and “terminal” values (desirable end-states of existence). As standards which guide conduct, values influence the person to take a particular stand on social issues, shape his presentation of self to others, help him to decide if he is as moral and competent as others, and serve as criteria by which he may rationalize his beliefs or actions that otherwise would be viewed as clearly unacceptable (Rokeach, 1973: 13).

It is important to recognize that values are “malleable,” in that they can be utilized to justify a wide range of personal goals and behavior—even courses of action which to an outsider might appear blatantly contradictory. Unlike instincts, values do not lead in some unthinking, inevitable fashion toward a predetermined pattern of gratification-behavior. Values render certain courses of social action more likely or more feasible than alternate courses of action. To some degree, however, values receive their essential formulation after the fact—as an explanation stemming from the need felt by a person or a group to “account” for certain attitudes or behavior. Therefore, internal consistency within any value system must be seen as a highly precarious condition.

In the case of the American value system, there seems ample empirical evidence supporting Williams’ assertion about the coexistence of one set of values centering on equality, freedom, and individualism, and another set which focuses upon inequality, ethnocentrism, and authoritarianism. The question of how these inconsistencies came to exist poses a problem which will require many more years to unravel. A part of the answer, I submit, might be found in that complex, misunderstood network of beliefs and values known as Puritanism, which reigned supreme in New England during much of the seventeenth century. Of all the various “heritages” adorning the rhetoric of the Bicentennial, none is more far-reaching in its consequences than Puritanism. Robert Bellah, in fact, recommends that we look at the ways in which Puritans dealt with their problems “since American culture and even American counter-culture remain Puritan to this day” (Bellah, 1975: 64). While many social scientists might not agree completely with Bellah’s statement, few would deny that Puritanism has had an extremely powerful impact upon the formation of American culture.

My goals in this study are (1) to determine whether there were, in fact, value inconsistencies within New England Puritanism; (2) if so, to determine whether such inconsistencies were similar in any
important respects to those now existing within modern American culture; and (3) to investigate the social and cultural factors which appear to have been associated with such inconsistencies in Puritanism. The problem of piecing together, in some sort of “causal chain,” all of the ideas, people and events that comprise the historic linkage between Puritanism and the modern American value system represents a task of monumental proportions—one which I will happily leave to the social and intellectual historians. I hope that my research will provide some “leads” towards an answer to this broad question; however, this study is an exploratory probe into the use of historical data for sociological purposes.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE PURITAN MIND

With a few noteworthy exceptions like Bellah, Merton and Erikson, American sociologists have contributed little to an understanding of the linkages between Puritanism and “Americanism.” Historians, on the other hand, have produced a wealth of studies and are currently engaged in a lively debate over the very definition of Puritanism. Some think of it as a “mood” or “thrust,” others see it as a special theological emphasis or a certain kind of religious language (Simpson, 1955; Hall, 1970; Kammen, 1973; Lockridge, 1970). David Hall portrays the Puritan as a “man in motion, a man possessed by a peculiar restlessness, a man who may attack the idea of a gathered church while still a minister in England, yet form such a group within his English parish and publicly defend the practice once he reached America” (Hall, 1970: 331). Perry Miller, whose writings on Puritanism remain unsurpassed, defined Puritanism in very forthright terms as “that point of view, that philosophy of life, that set of values which was carried to New England by the first settlers in the seventeenth century” (Miller and Johnson, 1963: 1). Some of the difficulty in conceptualizing Puritanism stems from the curious amalgamation of seemingly divergent, opposing elements which comprise it. On this point, McLoughlin once remarked that “historians are still wrangling over whether the Massachusetts Bay Colony was a theocentric, totalitarian society, a Christian utopia or a seedbed of the American democratic system, because it was all three” (McLoughlin, 1968: 52).

One must be wary of “Americanizing” the Puritans, for as Miller pointed out, 90 percent of the Puritan Mind was really the English Mind, and actually what come to be “American” came mainly from
this 90 percent. The 10 percent remaining, he argued, is what made
the Puritan pick up stakes and emigrate. This difference consisted
of the drive to achieve purity within the Church of England, and
also to attain a social purity through a social order dominated by
saints.

The English Puritans, unlike the Anglicans of their day, viewed
the Bible as the whole Word of God, a guide not only to theology, but
also to ethics, law, art, military tactics and all of social life. From the
perspective of their contemporaries, English Puritans were
arrogant literalists, but were not “fundamentalists” in the popular
sense of that term, since they saw no intrinsic conflict between
science and the Bible (Miller and Johnson, 1963: 43). Puritanism in
its original form in England must be understood in the context of
the status of its practitioners as an out-group with virtually no
power. The greater the powerlessness of the Puritans became, the
more heightened their conviction that the church must be freed
from the world in order to bring about the coming Kingdom of God
(Hall, 1970: 340-41). The heavily millennial emphasis of the
movement provided many Englishmen with a new identity, just as
crusades and cultic movements in all periods of history have
bestowed radically altered identities upon their converts. Puritans
shared the belief of their fellow English Protestants that God
extended His special providence toward England, and that
eventually God’s children would march to war against anti-Christ
and his hosts. The Puritans found ample opportunity to use this
rhetoric later, applying it in numerous ways to their “holy cause” in
North America.

PARADOXES IN PURITANISM

Examination of a wide range of primary and secondary source
material, such as sermon literature, missionary correspondence,
court records, descriptions of community life, and interpretations of
Puritan experience by both insiders and outsiders makes it clear
that Puritanism was not a static, monolithic ideology. It was instead
a highly complex and dynamic movement filled with inner tensions
and contradictions not unlike those observed in American culture
today. There are many spheres of Puritan thought which can be
identified as containing contradictory internal strains, but those
areas of Puritanism most germane to the purposes of this paper may
be identified under the following topical headings: (1) indi-
vidualism and “free will”; (2) freedom and equality; (3)
democracy; (4) deviance and dissent; and (5) racism.
Individualism and Free Will

Although Puritan theology emphasized Man's original sinfulness and helplessness before an autocratic God, Man was regarded as having been created a rational, autonomous and responsible being who was "good" to the degree that God's will guided the affairs of the "regenerate." Even the regenerates, however, had to be vigilant in seeking out signs of sin in themselves.

On the doctrine of predestination, often considered the hallmark of Puritan theology, the Puritans were ambivalent. Their theology unquestionably contains many elements of predestinarian doctrine, but their social behavior seems to have been marked much more clearly by voluntarism. They most assuredly did not resign themselves to fate, waiting for some inexorable divine plan to mysteriously unfold. A form of theological individualism was clearly evident in their belief that every individual must assume an active role in working out his own salvation. He could not rely upon group membership, community participation or the mediating functions of a priest. His religiosity, to use Allport's term, was to be "intrinsic," as he sought to appropriate God's grace through a vivid and highly individualistic religious experience. "Even the poor soul condemned to Hell," comments Ralph Perry (1949: 39), "received God's personal attention."

In social relations, however, Puritans were expected to form one united front. "The lone horseman, the solitary trapper are not figures of the Puritan frontier" (Miller, 1969: 42). Puritans moved about in whole groups or towns. Individuals acting outside the bounds of their communities, they believed, personified the very essence of sin. The apparent inconsistency between individualism and external conformity was reconciled, in the Puritan mind, by the concept of "collective individualism" (Perry, 1949: 37). Privacy and individualism were accorded some degree of respect, therefore, but only within the context of external discipline and public accountability.

Freedom and Equality

The notions of liberty and equality, which were to spark the fires of revolution a century later, were not alien to Puritan culture, although both terms were hedged with careful qualifications. Puritans allowed for Christian liberty and an equality of believers. "Natural" (i.e., unregenerate) man had no such privileges, as was evident in Nathaniel Ward's remark: "All Familists, Antinomians, Anabaptists and other Enthusiasts shall have liberty to keep away from us" (Riemer, 1967: 72). Freedom was thus inextricably bound
to conversion in the Puritan mind. Even the freedom of the believer, however, was subject to the controlling influence of the “convenant,” a contract which set out a whole series of obligations governing the relationships between God and Man and between Man and Man. God was fully expected to hold up His end of the agreement. The Puritan interpretation of freedom and equality was visibly shaken as a result of the Great Awakening, which left in its wake a pronounced shift toward pietism with its “emotional excesses” and an anarchistic conception of liberty as “liberty from any laws whatever.”

The very mention of the popular sociological term “social inequality” would have produced deep frowns or expressions of utter bewilderment from the Puritans, who accepted without question the basic goodness of the social class system as part of the natural order of Creation. The reality of a social hierarchy in New England towns was in no way an embarrassment to the Puritans: to the contrary, hierarchy was incorporated into the ideals of community-builders. In an excellent historical study of the Puritan community of Dedham, Massachusetts, Lockridge asserts that there was nothing in the Puritan understanding of Christian love which necessarily implies anything like absolute equality. “This commune,” he wrote, “was not about to practice communism” (Lockridge, 1970: 11). Residents of Dedham fully accepted the idea that obedience to men of superior rank was necessary to the foundation of an orderly society, and that some persons were simply “fated,” to be incompetents and laggards. They saw no contradiction, according to Lockridge (1970: 17), between “mutuality to the point of collectivism and a recognition of a hierarchy of wealth and status,” since both were seen as inevitable and desirable in the harmonious functioning of society.

Democracy

On the subject of democratic government, the Puritans were much more ambivalent than their authoritarian image would suggest. If we look at only the official statements of two of their leading spokesmen, there would seem to be no ambiguity in their position. John Winthrop, for example, is quoted as saying that “a democracy is, among most civill nations, accounted the meanest and worst of all formes of Governmt ... and History does recorde that it hath been allwayes of least continuance and fullest of troubles” (Rossiter, 1953: 53) John Cotton added to this: “Democracy, I do not conceyve that God did ordeyne as a fitt government eyther for church or commonwealth. If the people be governors, who shall be
governed?” (Rossiter, 1953: 53). Despite these official protestations, circumstances over the course of the seventeenth century served to open the doors to the evolution of democracy as it is popularly regarded today. In their concern to maintain a pure community, many Puritans vigorously endorsed freedom from England. Their desire to maintain religious independence had placed them in the position of desiring political independence as well.

The government of the Puritan commonwealth could be described as a modified theocracy, though it embodied elements of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy as well. The agreed-upon ruler of the commonwealth was God, but He ruled through an aristocracy—the spiritual elect. His rule, however, needed constitutional limitations on absolute power, and allowed for certain constitutional freedoms to increase the number of God’s freemen and their rights. This in turn led to a dispersion of power. The oligarchy gradually changed into a near-democracy. As certain liberal elements in Puritanism (such as congregational church polity) prevailed at the expense of its more restrictive characteristics, government “of the people”—including the protection of certain basic individual rights—came into being (Riemer, 1967: 75).

Glimpses of Puritan pragmatism are evident in the development of the congregational church polity during the 1630s, a time when changes in church organization clearly preceded changes in the theoretical rationale for such innovations. Replying to inquiries from their Puritan brethren back in England, who were quite concerned about this radical change in church organization, leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony simply argued that it “worked,” and provided descriptions of how it operated. Not until a decade later, in the 1640s, did any formal ecclesiastical treatises on church polity begin to appear (Ziff, 1973: 51).

Gaer and Siegel conclude that “even New England’s limited republicanism allowed greater general participation in church and political matters than had been possible for centuries in Europe. For the elect, at least, even theocracy was an assertion of liberty and democracy” (Gaer and Siegel, 1964: 30).

Deviance and Dissent
The notion of free will, as was mentioned previously, was a constituent part of the Puritan Mind. The deviant was held fully accountable for his deviance. Publicly, the Puritans expressed hope that the deviant, through the chastening experience of harsh
punishment, would acknowledge and renounce his waywardness. It appears improbable, however, that such punishment was in any real sense “reform-oriented.” The criminal was held up to public view as a bad example, and the harsh treatment accorded him was mainly intended to prevent the re-appearance of that form of behavior within the community (Erikson, 1966: 197).

The possibility that any honest differences could exist among the saints was not seriously entertained by the Puritan fathers. To act in accordance with one’s conscience was a hallmark of Puritan thought, but precisely what constituted a valid or authentic “act of conscience” was invariably defined in terms of “official” Puritan theology and policy. Any dissent was likely to be seen as an attempt to shatter the unity of the body, thus jeopardizing the convenant. Sin was not simply a form of deviance occurring within the group; it was seen as a deliberate attack on the very integrity of the group (Owens, 1974: 17-18). Roger Williams consequently found himself in the rather curious position of being informed by his Puritan brethren that the reason they were persecuting him was because he was acting in violation of his own conscience!

From a Durkheimian perspective, one might argue that New England Puritanism defined itself by constantly defining deviancy from it, and therefore it “needed” its quota of sinners. The saint vs. sinner dichotomy seemed always uppermost in the Puritan mind. During the seventeenth century more and more groups—both real and imaginary ones—came to know the opprobrium of Puritan labeling. Some implications of this behavior are suggested by Robert Bellah: “When the allegedly sinful group was external to the society, the dialectic of saint and sinner could fuse with the notions of chosen people and holy war to justify extraordinary hostility and aggression against the despised group” (Bellah, 1975: 101).

Racism

A consideration of the history of Puritan-Indian relations seems germane to the present discussion, because of the intricate ways in which racial attitudes were linked to virtually all the Puritan values, and also because of the ways in which racial attitudes serve to highlight the many tensions and contradictions within those values. Certainly the history of Puritan racial beliefs carries with it some distinctively modern overtones. From the beginning, the Puritans held contradictory images of the Indian. Before embarking on their Atlantic crossing, Puritans had been exposed to the hostile images of the Indian as circulated by Spanish and
Portuguese explorers (as “naturally vicious, lazy, inclined toward bestiality and heathen worship”), but these were countered by Hakluyt’s description of the Indian as “simple and rude, but by nature gentle and tractable, and most apt to receive the Christian religion” (Taylor, 1935: 164).

Another theory growing in popularity at that time held that the Indians were in fact the descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel, and were actually white people whose skin had simply darkened by the sun. During the first few years of the Puritan settlement, the Indian was not viewed as an enemy to be driven out, but instead as an unfortunate heathen in need of saving grace and anglicization. Indians were, in Puritan eyes, obviously inferior, culturally speaking, but this defect was remediable.

Problems were to arise, however, as the expansionist goal of the Puritan community came to the fore. Theologians lent their support to expansion by reasoning that if the Indians had been intended to hold this vast land all for themselves, why would God have shown the English the way to the New World? After the smallpox epidemic in 1633, which claimed the lives of several thousand Indians, Winthrop surmised that God must be clearing the way for the Puritan occupation (Vaughan, 1965: 104). In addition, Puritans began interpreting their Bible to mean that only if Man subdues the land through agriculture does he have the right to legitimate possession of the land (Owens, 1974: 179).

Puritan-Indian relations deteriorated during the 1630s. The mounting economic interests of the Puritans seem to have led to situations in which the Indians were given little choice but to react with violence. This in turn activated the “self-fulfilling prophecy” by reinforcing the distinctly unfavorable image of the Indian in the Puritan mind. By 1659, Puritans were identifying the Indians unequivocally as Satanists. In fact, as Owens observes, “the Indian could now be used as a standard against which Puritans could measure other groups suspected of being in league with the Devil” (Owens, 1974: 128). Besides the pressures felt from the increasing land interests of the Puritans, the Indians also came to feel—at least indirectly—the effects of an internal religious problem within the Puritan community. This was the problem of “declension.”

It is perhaps unfortunate that the New England Puritans did not have a Max Weber in their midst to warn them of what to expect during the transformation from sect to church. For having become established on Massachusetts soil, the Puritans were no longer the
persecuted minority, but the reigning majority. Their preachers, Hall writes, “who had whetted their fiery preaching on targets that the Church of England had to offer, underwent an agonizing adjustment to a new life style” (Hall, 1970: 342). There were also some inherent conflicts in their dual mission to create (a) a moral covenanted community, and (b) a genuinely reformed church within this community (Pope, 1969: 261). The numerous social functions of Puritan churches served to draw them into the community, whereas the stress on pietism and “visible sainthood” served to separate church and community.

The tide of declension was strong. Spontaneity was lost, piety became formalized, charisma became routinized, and visionaries became organizers. It was simply not possible for Puritan children to recapture the vivid religious experiences of their elders, whose identities had been forged by continual assault upon enemies the children could not know. In a furious counter-attack on what the Puritan divines believed to be the work of Satan in their midst, the churches shook with Jeremiad sermons, consisting of lamentations, desperate calls for repentance, and predictions of impending doom.

As the Puritan leaders bemoaned the continued declension in their ranks, they seem to have resorted to the now-familiar tactic of “scapegoating.” The Indian, predictably enough, was selected for the role of scapegoat. As an external, highly visible, relatively powerless and already unpopular group, Indians came to bear much of the brunt of the collective failings and frustrations of the commonwealth. After the Puritans had clearly identified their scapegoat, the implication was both simple and urgent: destroy that enemy and things will return to normal. Perceiving the Indian as one of the “shapes of the devil,” to use Erikson’s phrase, represented an attempt to regain Puritan group solidarity and to strengthen a rather shaky identity.

By 1675, Cotton Mather and other Puritan writers were referring to Puritan-Indian conflicts in genuinely racial terms—i.e., as a confrontation between White and Red. It was not that the situation had developed into a purely racial confrontation, however. The Indian was simply one among many despised classes of deviants, including Quakers, witches, Papists and such “wayward Puritans” as Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson. No longer was there any talk about Indians as a lost tribe of Israel: they were now seen as Philistines, and therefore as arch-enemies of God’s New Israel. By the 1690s, the Indian came to assume great psychological
importance for the Puritan. For, as Nash and Weiss point out, the
failure to control the Indian "would mean the loss of control over
one's new environment, and ultimately, of oneself" (Nash and Weiss,
1970: 8).

Three hundred years have passed since the Puritan experiment
but only recently have Americans begun to ponder the criminality
of their treatment of Indians. Why has it taken so long? The answer,
according to Bellah, "lies in the ambiguities of choseness. There
are similarities between John Winthrop and John Foster Dulles'
easy identification of the free world with those nations willing to do
the bidding of the American government" (Bellah, 1975: 37).

PURITANISM AND THE AMERICAN VALUE SYSTEM

One of the most consequential ideas within the entire American
cultural tradition is what has come to be called Manifest Destiny.
The roots of this doctrine are deeply embedded in Puritan thought.
No society was ever more convinced of being God's elect than were
the New England Puritans. As saints in covenant with God, their
identity was supported by the unshakable conviction that history
was moving rapidly toward the establishment of God's Kingdom,
and that they were to be His agents who would usher it in. This
belief, I suspect, functioned to anesthetize the Puritan Mind—and
later the American Mind—to any sensitivity to value inconsistenc-

ies.

The history of religious interpretations of American destiny has
been thoroughly documented by such scholars as Conrad Cherry,
Sydney Ahlstrom and Sidney Mead, to cite only a few. Cherry, for
example, has traced the idea of a divinely-sanctioned American
destiny through Puritanism, the Great Awakening, the birth of the
American Republic, the westward expansion, the Civil War, the
Spanish-American War and the Philippine acquisition, the massive
industrialization and immigration of the late nineteenth century,
World War I and II (as well as the "limited" wars that followed), the
struggle of minority groups for equal rights, and the whole
"communitarian impulse"—a movement which has a long and rich
history of its own in this country (Cherry, 1971). Manifest destiny
has been subject to varying definitions and varying degrees of
popularity throughout American history. It seemed to reach a peak
of intensity in the latter part of the nineteenth century, at least
among "mainstream" Protestants. For that segment of America's
populace, Ahlstrom contends, “a denial of America’s manifest destiny bordered on treason” (Ahlstrom, 1972: 845).

Puritanism in its original form was not to survive long. Perhaps this utopian experiment, demanding such absolute commitment and unswerving conformity, and riddled with so many internal tensions and logical inconsistencies, was doomed from the start. Kammen has noted that the Puritans shared with other colonial societies a strong tendency toward value contradictions, since such societies are inheritors of old inconsistencies as well as creators of new ones (Kammen, 1973: 20-26). English society in Puritan times was torn by internal conflicts, such as Catholic vs. Protestant, Mary vs. Elizabeth, and other tensions related to an age of colonization. These were compounded, in the case of the Puritans, by the uprooting influences of movement, migration and mobility—Pierson’s “M-Factor” (Pierson, 1962). Such influences are conducive to social and cultural change by forcing accommodation, hence increasing the likelihood of conflict, compromise and modification of values. It would be naive to maintain (as some have) that such influences have some innate power to “cause” certain types of social values to emerge inevitably. “Wilderness” and “frontier” are really cultural constructs which are amenable to a remarkably diverse variety of definitions and resultant behavior.

The survival of Puritanism as a viable tradition may be accounted for by its robust ideological offspring, who oftentimes resemble their parent very little, and each other even less! Fundamentalistic revivalism, rationalism, enlightenment philosophy, transcendentalism, the social gospel, rugged individualism and communitarianism can all legitimately trace their ancestry back to Puritanism. Its pervasive influence can be explained not only by its “primacy,” its idealism and its aggressiveness, but also by its extraordinarily literate and educated tradition, which sent out its roots in the form of a vast and rich literature. Motivated by the conviction that reason and faith are natural allies, Puritans founded Harvard University in 1636 for the express purpose of providing their prophets with the best available education in the sciences and humanities.

A great many “heroes” of American history, each in his/her own way, played some part in the Americanization of Puritanism. If any one of them could be singled out as having been the key link connecting Puritanism with modern American culture, there would be no better candidate than Benjamin Franklin. His famous
autobiography has been described as "the record of what Puritan habits detached from Puritan beliefs were capable of achieving in the eighteenth-century world of affairs. The diary technique of soul-searching for signs of the presence of grace was adapted to a review of the day's external accomplishments, and the boundless belief in salvation through fellowship in a community of the saved adapted to schemes of social betterment through association" (Ziff, 1973: 218). Franklin said, in effect, that if one wishes to succeed, he must hold to the classic Puritan values as the necessary means to achievement. Qualities like temperance, frugality, resolve, industry, justice and sincerity are—to put it bluntly—"useful." Franklin could be described as an eighteenth-century man of affairs as well as a Puritan in his austere moralism—even though he found Calvinistic theology distasteful. Schneider sees Franklin and Jonathan Edwards as representing the two opposite poles of Puritan thought: "It was Edwards who attempted to induce New England to lead a godly, not a sober, life; it was Franklin who succeeded in teaching Americans to lead a sober and not a godly life . . . " (Schneider, 1969: 153). To employ Rokeach's constructs Franklin could be said to have laid heavy emphasis upon the instrumental, not the terminal, values of Puritanism, thus furthering the cause of pragmatism in American culture. Despite Franklin's unique and enormously influential interpretation of Puritan values, Puritanism's influence in America was not restricted to sure-fire formulae for worldly success. "Puritanism had become a reflex way of perceiving reality: of how to engage in social intercourse, interpret the implications of daily events with a disciplined conscience, and retain a consciousness of one's own identity as an individual and as a member of a people" (Ziff, 1973: 218-19).

Can the modern American value inconsistencies—freedom, individualism and equality on the one hand, with racism, group-superiority themes and external conformity on the other—really be traced back to similar inconsistencies in Puritanism? The similarities are striking. Puritans valued freedom, individualism and equality—with qualifications, of course. As understood within the context of their whole ideology and culture these values were by no means "unpuritan." Similarly, modern Americans hedge these same values with elaborate sets of customs, taboos, rules and qualifications. It is widely accepted by modern Americans that individuals are "equally" individual—that persons ought to be judged on the basis of their achievements or failures as individuals. Members of minority groups are not exempt from the demands of
individualism. "After all," the saying goes, "should minority groups be treated any differently from anyone else? Why should a person blame anybody but himself for his own failures?" It is true that Americans overwhelmingly reject theories which speak of the innate biological superiority or inferiority of racial groups. Yet all too frequently one hears questions like: "Isn't it too bad that blacks, Indians or Chicanos don't have the motivation to get ahead?" "Why don't they want to be more like us?" "Why don't those foreigners just accept our superiority and model themselves after us?" "Why are they so ungrateful when we try to help them?"

These are very modern American questions indeed—but they have an unmistakably Puritanical ring.

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